

A Democracy at War: The American Campaign to Repeal Chinese Exclusion in 1943

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“It is with particular pride and pleasure that I have today signed the bill repealing the Chinese exclusion acts. . . . An unfortunate barrier between allies has been removed. The war effort in the Far East can now be carried on with a greater vigor and a larger understanding of our common purpose.”¹

The words are taken from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s address to Congress made on December 17, 1943, on the occasion of his signing the bill that repealed the Chinese Exclusion Acts. They not only demonstrate Roosevelt’s eagerness to eliminate the “unfortunate barrier” between the United States and China, but also suggest that a transformation of America’s East Asian policy had taken place during World War II.

Scholarship on U.S.-East Asian relations during World War II has long concentrated on the complexity of political affairs, especially on military strategy, while racial issues in international relations have been largely ignored.² On the other hand, studies of Asian immigration into the United States have usually focused on the enactment of racially discriminatory legislation.³ There has been little research on how Asian immigration, especially from China, was affected by American foreign policy during World War II.⁴ Nevertheless, the war in fact

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played a crucial role in altering America's exclusionist anti-Chinese immigration policy. It also showed that American immigration policy toward Asians was overwhelmingly influenced by its foreign policy.

This paper will explore how American foreign policy influenced its immigration policy during World War II. It will focus on the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1943. By examining the interaction between American domestic politics and its foreign policy, it will show that the abrogation of the Chinese Exclusion Acts not only marked a historic turning point in American immigration policy, but also had a great impact on the policy-making process regarding East Asia, especially towards China.

I FORMATION OF ASIAN EXCLUSION POLICY

The first Asian immigrants to enter the United States were Chinese, lured to California by the Gold Rush of 1848. The construction of the American railroad in the 1860s further accelerated the influx of Chinese laborers. Chinese immigration to the United States peaked at 15,740 in 1870, over ninety percent of whom settled on the Pacific Coast.⁵

As the number of Chinese increased, Caucasian workers in California began to resent Chinese laborers. The Chinese were considered "culturally and racially inferior" and a threat to wage levels and working conditions. By the mid-1870s, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, the growth of the white labor force in the West, and the nationwide economic depression all encouraged white working men to turn against the Chinese. Responding to the pressure of anti-Chinese sentiment on the Pacific Coast, on May 6, 1882, Congress enacted a bill prohibiting Chinese immigrants from entering the United States.⁶

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first restrictive immigration law in American history. The emergence of this discriminatory legislation initiated a gradual process of immigration restriction based on race. The enactment of this legislation marked the end of the free immigration era in American history. This discriminatory law not only had long-term repercussions for America's relations with China, but also affected overall immigration policy and internal politics. On the other hand, it can also be considered as merely one step in the growth of anti-Asiatic legislation. Following enactment of the act, Asian immigration became a constant target of American nativism and

racism. Subsequently, the Immigration Act of 1924 completely stopped the flow of immigrants from Asia into the United States.

II THE WAR AND CHINESE EXCLUSION

This restrictive immigration policy, which excluded “aliens” defined by race, did not change until after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. That sudden attack directly led to a crucial transformation of America’s anti-Chinese immigration policy.

Immediately after the attack, President Roosevelt signed a presidential proclamation permitting the apprehension of any alien Japanese “deemed dangerous to the public peace or safety of the United States.”⁷ Although Kido Saburo, president of the Japanese-American Citizens League, explicitly declared in a radio broadcast the next day that Japanese Americans were “loyal Americans,” agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation picked up hundreds of Japanese Americans. Subsequently many of them were drafted into the U.S. army in order to test their “loyalty” to the United States.⁸

In contrast to this deterioration in U.S. relations with Japan, the war united China and the United States. The day after the attack, the United States together with China declared war on Japan, and the two countries became allies immediately. The special wartime alliance between China and the United States resulted in the transformation of America’s East Asian policy, especially its China policy.

(1) Transformation of America’s China Policy

Traditionally, America’s China policy had been based on the Open Door doctrine, which sought to maintain the balance of power in East Asia while pursuing commercial interests in China. The essence of this policy did not include defending China’s independence and sovereignty. During World War I, the Chinese were disappointed by Woodrow Wilson’s policy towards China. Throughout the 1920s, the United States failed to give any effective support to Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese Nationalist movement. In the 1930s, America’s policy of appeasement toward Japan led it to sacrifice the interests of China. Typical of this policy was Henry L. Stimson’s non-recognition policy towards Japan’s Manchurian occupation; the United States made every effort to avoid involvement in the Sino-Japanese War. Nevertheless, as Japan’s aggression in China became more widespread, the United

States became anxious about the China crisis, as Japanese troops were occupying most areas of China and menacing vital American interests in Asia. In November 1940, as soon as Japan recognized the Wang puppet regime in Nanjing, the United States responded vigorously by offering lend-lease aid to Chiang Kai-shek.⁹ However, the crucial transformation of America's China policy did not occur until late 1941, after Japan's sudden attack at Pearl Harbor.

Upon hearing of the attack, Chiang immediately summoned the American Ambassador to China, Clarence Gauss, and proposed a military alliance of Allied nations fighting against the Axis powers.¹⁰ On December 13, Secretary of State Cordell Hull asked Maxwell M. Hamilton, Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs "to draw up a draft of a declaration to be made by the nations fighting the Axis, which would bind them together until victory and would commit them to the basic principles that we uphold."¹¹ On January 1, 1942, a Joint Declaration by the United Nations was issued, with China listed as the fourth signatory, following the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.¹² The inclusion of China as a major power in the Declaration demonstrated that China had become indispensable to America's war strategy.

In the early part of the war, nevertheless, the United States adopted a "Europe First Policy." This policy implied that the war in Asia was secondary in America's global strategy. Although the outbreak of the Pacific War altered American concerns and forced the United States to focus on the war in Asia, the United States' primary aim was to "keep China in the war" in order to tie up millions of Japanese troops until the ultimate Allied victory in Europe. As Stanley K. Hornbeck, Adviser to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, pointed out when the United States decided to lend China five hundred million dollars in January 1942, it was "the time for us to tie China into our war (which still is her war) as tight as possible."¹³

For the United States, China's importance in the war was twofold. America intended to make use of Chinese resistance forces to fight against the Japanese. Meanwhile, from the perspective of America's own military strategy, bases on the Chinese mainland would permit American bombers to strike Japan. Admiral Harry E. Yarnell, former Commander in Chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, testified before the House Committee that the Chinese mainland was "the only area from which long-range bombers can reach Japan." This led to the conclu-

sion that allied success against Japan required the continued participation of China in the war.¹⁴

By early 1943, the United States had begun developing concrete plans for using Chinese bases as the launching pad for an air offensive against Japan. In March, President Roosevelt suggested organizing a five-hundred-plane air force in China for launching air attacks.¹⁵ This plan was considered the most effective means to demonstrate the strategic cooperation between China and the United States. Thus the continuation of Chinese resistance and cooperation was certainly an important American objective.

In order to achieve this goal, the United States attempted to buttress China. Politically, one of the most important measures taken was to aid China's participation in international affairs, recognizing China as a "Great Power" on the world stage. This strategy emerged in the spring of 1942. On May 2, 1942, President Roosevelt declared that "in the future an unconquerable China will play its proper role in maintaining peace and prosperity not only in Eastern Asia but in the whole world."¹⁶ Soon after, in discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov in May-June, 1942, Roosevelt emphasized the importance of postwar cooperation among the "four policemen," which included China together with the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.¹⁷ In December 1942, in a conversation with Owen Lattimore, American special adviser to Chiang Kai-shek, Roosevelt stressed the role of China as a member of the "Big Four" after the war.¹⁸ Moreover, the treaty reached with China on January 11, 1943, to relinquish extraterritoriality, further demonstrated that the United States intended to give formal expression to China's "Great Power" status. Besides military and political considerations, however, another factor played an even more fundamental and decisive part in forcing the United States to alter its China policy.

(2) The Pacific War as a Propaganda War

Soon after the outbreak of the Pacific War, another battlefield, which used propaganda, started. On this battlefield to establish a new world order, the conflicts between Japan and the United States became more aggravated as the war developed.

Five days after the attack, Japan began to call the war "The Great East Asia War" and to assert that the purpose of the war was to "overthrow the American and British imperialists, who have oppressed and

squeezed one billion Asians, in order to establish an ideal order of co-prosperity and co-existence in East Asia.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, Japanese propagandists utilized “psychological weaponry,” emphasizing the discriminatory racism of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, to fight against Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms, from which racial equality was excluded.

In February 1942, an article entitled “A New Step Towards the Emancipation of Asiatics” appeared in *Toa Kaihou* [Emancipation of Eastern Asia]. It proclaimed that the essence of “injustice and inequality” was rooted in the American exploitation of “the yellow race.”²⁰

In early 1942, with the guidance of the Japanese Army, *FRONT*, one of the most important wartime propaganda magazines, began publication, condemning Western oppression in Asia and extolling “racial harmony” in “the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Japanese propagandists claimed that equality slogans from the United States were “hypocritical” and that the essence of “so-called equality” was the “beast-like treatment or semi-starvation pay to the Asiatics.”²¹ “Asia must be one—in her aim, in her action and in her future,” it insisted; “when Asia becomes one in truth, a new order will be established throughout the world.”²²

As mentioned above, the alliance between China and the United States was established as soon as the Pacific War broke out, because China, according to President Roosevelt, was “the first to stand up and fight against aggression in this war.”²³ This formal alliance, however, did not alter the unequal relations (both internationally and racially) that existed between China and the United States. The continuing existence of the Chinese Exclusion Acts was one example of this unaltered inequality.

Under these circumstances, Japanese propagandists found valuable ammunition for their appeals to other Asians and began to utilize the Chinese issue in their fight against the Allied powers, pursuing a campaign of “Asia for the Asiatics.”

As the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the Nanjing Treaty, the first unequal treaty made between China and the Western colonial powers, approached, the Japanese government decided to make full use of this event to condemn British and American imperialism and their brutal invasions in Asia. On August 17, 1942, Shigemitsu Mamoru, Japanese Ambassador to Nanjing, sent a confidential telegram to the Foreign Ministry proposing that this unusual opportunity be used to further anti-British propaganda.²⁴ Two days later, the Japanese

government decided that this action would be the best method for launching a vehement propaganda offensive against the British invasion of Asia and decided to set up a special week called "A Week to Attack Britain," in order to condemn the hypocrisies contained in the Allied espousal of democracy and freedom.²⁵

At the same time, Japan manipulated its puppet government in Nanjing to denounce the "hypocritical democracy and equality" of the Allied powers. On August 29, 1942, on the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the Nanjing Treaty, the Wang puppet regime in Nanjing convened a momentous mass meeting. At this meeting, Wang Jing-wei condemned the unequal treaty forced upon the Chinese by "the British and American imperialists," as well as American racial discrimination against Chinese. He also appealed to the Chinese to unite with the Japanese, to "drive away all the American and British imperialists from Asia" in order to "vitalize East Asia."²⁶ Simultaneously, Japanese propagandists denounced British imperialism as a "vampire" in Asia, and appealed to Asians to unite to eradicate this "Asian humiliation."²⁷

As a result of the verbal offensive of this Japanese propaganda, demands to abolish the symbols of inequality in relations with China appeared in the United States. On May 18, 1942, an article entitled "Exclusion and Extraterritoriality" was published in *Contemporary China*. The author denounced the "white Supremacy" of American immigration laws and the perniciousness of the extraterritorial system in China, and demanded that "the era of the unjust system" applied to the Chinese must "come to an end."²⁸ Three months later, in order to silence Japanese propaganda, another article came out, entitled "This Is No Racial War," which called for freedom and equality to be given to "all the oppressed races and nations."²⁹

In response to public opinion, on August 13, Roger S. Greene, a former U.S. diplomat in China and a prominent wartime pro-China lobbyist, wrote to his friend Stanley Hornbeck to ask the State Department to concern itself with this issue, since it would "help to convince some doubters in Asia that we really do mean that the Atlantic Charter shall apply to the Far East as much as Europe."³⁰ The State Department decided to deal with the issue. Finally, on October 10, 1942, China's Independence Day, President Roosevelt sent a "special gift" to China in the form of his statement to Chiang Kai-shek that the United States had decided to rescind the unequal treaties.³¹ Chiang, greatly moved by this unexpected action, sent a telegram to Roosevelt to

respond that “unquestionably, it will boost morale of our Chinese to fight against aggression continuously,” and further that “any other actions can not compare with the abolition of the unequal treaties.”³²

Nevertheless, China’s equality with the United States in international affairs, as indicated by the relinquishment of the unequal treaties, did not suggest any fundamental sense of racial equality and silence the Japanese propagandists. A few days after the ratification of the new treaty between China and the United States on January 11, 1943, which abolished extraterritoriality, the Axis propagandists initiated another offensive on the ideological battlefield. In January 1943, Cheng Gong-bo, Minister of Justice in the Wang puppet regime, issued a statement in *Chuo Koron* denouncing the evils of racial discrimination against Chinese. He declared that the Chinese were ready to “share hardship” with Japan in this war.³³

In addition, Japanese propagandists distributed leaflets widely in Asia attacking the double standards of the Allied democracies. A typical one read:

America is China’s ally. Americans say they love and admire the Chinese. But can you go to America, can you become citizens? No. Americans do not want you. They just want you to do their fighting. Their Exclusion Act names you and says you are unfit for American citizenship. . . . There will be no such discrimination against you in the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.³⁴

Japanese propaganda such as this, directed at America’s anti-Chinese discriminatory laws, attempted to appeal to Asians by emphasizing American racial discrimination. In support of Japan’s strategy, on June 24, 1943, an editorial entitled “The Hypocritical and Ugly Face of the United States” was published in the *Zhonghua Ribao* [China Daily], a newspaper controlled by the Wang puppet regime. Its author condemned the evils of American democracy and insisted that “if the American government does not abolish the discriminatory laws against the Chinese, Asian people have no real equality.” Finally, it appealed to “all Asians to unite together to drive away American and British imperialists from Asia in order to establish a prosperous Asia for the Asiatics.”³⁵

Meanwhile, while touring Japan in June, 1943, U. B. Lwin, Burma’s Minister of Education, made a significant radio broadcast from Tokyo. Supporting the concept of “Asia for the Asiatics,” he insisted that

Burma saw itself as “an integral part of Asia.” “We are Orientals,” he added, “and [the] Japanese are also of the Orient. As Orientals, we are proud to see the Japanese achieving victories unprecedented in history. Therefore, we in Burma should do our best for the ultimate victory of Japan in this war.”³⁶

America’s racially discriminatory immigration laws were thus a vital resource for Japan in its campaign of “Asia for the Asiatics.” It should be borne in mind, however, just how little the Japanese new ideal order of “the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity” was itself based on equality. In January 1941, the Japanese government unequivocally declared that the foundation of establishing the new order was based on the “Yamato people.”³⁷ On January 21, 1942, Prime Minister Tojo Hideki reiterated in the Diet the principle that within the new order only the Japanese could be the “meisyu” (master) in “the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”³⁸

III THE INTERACTION OF AMERICA’S EAST ASIAN POLICY AND ITS IMMIGRATION POLICY

Japan’s use of the Chinese Exclusion Acts to fight a propaganda war against the Allies embarrassed the United States, since China was its most populous ally in Asia. Furthermore, the assumption of “white superiority” impeded America’s influence on and domination of the ideological battlefield of the Pacific War. Having been battered by a vehement offensive from Japan’s propaganda guns, the United States decided to eliminate the “unfortunate barrier” on the ideological battlefield.

(1) The War in American Eyes—“Justice to Our Allies”

After the United States entered the war, Chinese exclusion was brought to the forefront of American public awareness. In February 1942, Charles N. Spinks, a specialist on East Asian relations, published his article “Repeal Chinese Exclusion” in *Asia and the Americas*. He pointed out that the United States was now fighting side by side with China, one of its most important allies, to build a new world order based on the fundamental principles of freedom, justice and equality for mankind, which had been destroyed by the Axis. Nevertheless, he argued, the United States was not treating “the

Chinese people, our allies, with the justice and equality they deserve.”³⁹

In addition, other articles referred to the serious effect of Japanese propaganda, which was using Chinese exclusion to “spread rumors” in Asia. They pointed out that the danger was the more acute since Japan controlled not only “the radio but all forms of communication and social organization” throughout Asia. The main points of the advocates were that Japanese racial propaganda would not only menace America’s interests in East Asia but also would contribute to the quick defeat of the Allied forces in the war, because it focused on the undeniable fact that Chinese were excluded by American immigration laws. In sum, they urged the government to quickly “end the affront to China” in order to destroy Japan completely and win the war for justice.⁴⁰

One of the most important reasons for the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 had been American racism, or the sense of white superiority, which was firmly rooted in the ideology of social Darwinism and late nineteenth-century American nativism. This dominant ideology became the critical factor in the exclusion not only of the Chinese, but of all Asian races. Although in explaining the universality of the Atlantic Charter in his address on Memorial Day, 1942, Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles insisted that “the discrimination between peoples because of their race, creed or color must be abolished,” in fact, the racially discriminatory laws against Asians, particularly Chinese, did exist at that time in American legislation.⁴¹

The outbreak of the Pacific War altered America’s traditional attitudes towards China. Two days after the attack, an editorial appearing in the *New York Times* argued that if the United States united with China, “a loyal ally with . . . inexhaustible manpower,” it would have “the key to the strategy of the Pacific.”⁴² In April, another editorial, “China’s Splendid Fight,” appeared in the *New Republic*, in which the author insisted that China, “by virtue of her dogged struggle for independence” could help the United States “immeasurably in winning the war quickly.”⁴³ The heroic and continuous Chinese struggle against Japanese aggression won high praise from the American public, and convinced Americans that China shared the principles of democracy with the United States. In the meantime, equality for all, which was the oldest principle of American ideals, now became a new symbol of American democracy and freedom, brought forth again in the process

of fighting against fascist aggression and winning the war. Pearl S. Buck, a Nobel-Prize winning writer, regarded as the most influential Westerner to write about China since Marco Polo, quickly emerged as one of the most tenacious wartime opponents of racial discrimination. She used every occasion to press her demands for racial equality.

In February 1942, for example, speaking at a literary luncheon, Pearl S. Buck surprised the 1,700 people gathered at the Astor Hotel of New York. "The Japanese weapon of racial propaganda in Asia is beginning to show signs of effectiveness," she told her audience, "prejudice is the most vulnerable point in our American democracy."⁴⁴ She indicated in the most unequivocal terms in her address that victory in the war demanded the cooperation and solidarity of peoples regardless of race, color or nation. If Americans did not abandon "white supremacy," the United States would lose the war. "We cannot win this war," she asserted, "without convincing our colored allies—who are most of our allies—that we are not fighting for ourselves as continuing superior over colored peoples."⁴⁵ A month later, in a radio broadcast, Pearl S. Buck emphasized that the aim of the war was to "give real freedom and human equality to all people."⁴⁶ In sum, in a variety of ways, in books, in magazines, in speeches and on the radio, she concluded bluntly that discrimination against the Chinese in the United States had to come to an end, because while it existed, "we are fighting on the wrong side on this war. We belong with Hitler."⁴⁷ She continued her crusade for total freedom and equality for all people throughout the war. Buck and her second husband, Richard J. Walsh, who was her publisher and editor of *Asia and the Americas*, became leading figures in the movement to abolish Chinese exclusion. Under their leadership, a national campaign to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts was begun.

On November 10, 1942, Richard J. Walsh made a speech at the Town Hall Round Table of New York City, urging that America repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts, place immigration on a quota basis, and make Chinese people eligible for American citizenship.⁴⁸ His speech evoked a tremendous reaction. In the spring of 1943, "The Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion and Place Immigration on A Quota Basis" was formed in New York City by a group of notable intellectuals, including Pearl S. Buck and Henry R. Luce, founder of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*.⁴⁹ These pro-China intellectuals such as Pearl S. Buck and Henry R. Luce served as the chief spokes-

persons in the repeal campaign. Walsh, chairman of the Citizens Committee, appealed to the members in May, "Last year we celebrated Double Ten [October 10] by announcing the end of extraterritoriality. . . . This year let Double Ten resound with the news that we have repealed the exclusion laws."⁵⁰ In the meantime, the Citizens Committee published a pamphlet —*Our Chinese Wall*— to arouse public interest. Over 30,000 copies were distributed to libraries, universities, and religious, social and labor organizations.⁵¹ The Citizens Committee began to influence public opinion in favor of repealing the Chinese Exclusion Acts. The strategy of the Citizens Committee was to stress the military necessity of counteracting the Japanese propaganda that was disturbing good U.S. relations with China.⁵²

(2) Strategy of the State Department

When, with the outbreak of the Pacific War on February 17, 1942, the Japanese propaganda guns also opened fire, an American missionary informed the State Department that the United States should be seriously concerned about Chinese exclusion, because it had both "propagandic and political value" in the struggle against Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."⁵³ Although the State Department recognized the problem, it had no intention to solve it, since from its point of view the matter was "regulated strictly by statutes, the enactment or repeal of which falls within the province of the Congress." The State Department therefore avoided the "intricate and controversial" issue, which would involve "extensive revision of our immigration laws."⁵⁴

On April 6, Warren A. Seavey, a well-known professor of law at Harvard University, strongly advised the State Department to terminate the injustice towards China, and abandon the anti-Chinese discriminatory laws immediately, on the grounds that China had succeeded in "holding [back] the Japanese and in aiding India."⁵⁵ The State Department, however, held to the opinion that the government could not proceed with this issue at that time, since the United States was at war.⁵⁶ The implication was that the Chinese issue should be taken up only after the war.

Nevertheless, Japanese propaganda, which used Chinese exclusion to promote its campaign of "Asia for the Asiatics," continued to bolster Japanese morale in Asia. Especially, as some intellectuals warned the State Department, if the United States lost China's goodwill

through continuing discrimination against the Chinese, it would risk another war in which white supremacy might be ferociously challenged by Asians in general. Therefore, they requested the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in order to "prevent a third war of white versus colored races."⁵⁷

In the spring of 1942, with Japanese propagandists repeatedly calling on Asians to "drive out all Americans, Britons, and Dutchmen from Asia," and to "let Asia be for the Asiatics," the State Department began to be concerned about this psychological strategy, which was impeding America's domination of Asia. On June 17, 1942, Maxwell M. Hamilton, Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, pointed out that the Japanese in their psychological campaigns of "Asia for the Asiatics" and "the colored races of the world united under Japanese leadership against the white races," could win a great victory in Asia. Having analyzed China's war potential, he indicated that if China collapsed, it would contribute immeasurably to the Axis's psychological offensive, and would "greatly bolster morale in Japan and increase the effectiveness and appeal of Japan's psychological warfare." Consequently, he asserted, first, that China, the largest Oriental power, could prevent through its war against Japan the "success of Japan's psychological warfare." Secondly, he asserted that China would supply the "decisive factor in the psychological warfare against Japan" and could deny to Japan the possibility of uniting Asia, and thirdly, he argued that China could "dampen moral in Japan itself by her stubborn refusal to accept Japan's program of 'Asia for the Asiatics.'" As for the role of China's resistance in the war, he concluded that the "psychological factor" was also important.⁵⁸

For the United States, the importance of China at this time was a matter of political propaganda, as well as of political and military necessity. The propaganda had two main goals: first, to strengthen Chinese morale and defeat the Japanese campaign of "Asia for the Asiatics"; second, to meet America's desire to establish a new system in Asia, which was oriented toward Western democracy instead of the Japanese "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." On February 27, 1943, Hamilton directly stated that China's continued involvement in the war on the side of the United States was "the best insurance that the present war not become a race war." In particular, he emphasized that China's role in the war effort was not only "extremely important for the present but for the long future as well."⁵⁹ Therefore, it became

necessary as part of the propaganda war for the United States to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts. To the State Department, the repeal of Chinese exclusion involved both immediate questions of war strategy and long-term considerations of postwar policy. The United States decided to eliminate the “possible obstacle” between the two nations, when Chinese Foreign Minister T. V. Soong requested the repeal of the discriminatory laws against the Chinese in March 1943, as the Chinese were “eager for recognition” and “equality.”⁶⁰ On May 13, the Assistant Secretary of State, Breckinridge Long, discussed the Chinese issue with House Speaker Sam Rayburn and House Majority Leader John W. McCormack and explicitly declared that the State Department would support “a movement to permit the immigration and naturalization of persons resident in China and born in China to be admitted under the quota.”⁶¹ On May 19, the first hearing of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization was held to debate the issue of repealing the Chinese Exclusion Acts.

(3) The Chinese Issue in America’s New World Order

In May-June of 1943, the House Committee summoned fifty-one witnesses in six hearings. The repeal campaign led to a demonstration of vigorous American nativism. The traditional opposition forces, primarily from labor, veterans’ organizations, West Coast interests, and “patriotic” societies, took a vigorous stand against Chinese immigration. For example, representatives of the American Coalition, an association representing approximately one hundred patriotic societies and West Coast interests, expressed a strong, racially motivated, dislike of the Chinese, calling them, for example, “morally the most debased people on the face of the earth.”⁶² In addition, representatives of the American Federation of Labor and the Veterans of Foreign Wars strongly opposed a “radical change of immigration laws” from “an economic standpoint.”⁶³ However, the pro-repeal force was promoted by influential groups such as the Citizens Committee and missionary organizations. Eventually forty-two witnesses before the House Committee favored repealing the Chinese Exclusion Acts. The advocates favored the following three-point program: the abolition of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, the establishment of a quota for Chinese immigrants, and the eligibility of Chinese immigrants for American citizenship. The argument with the widest appeal and greatest weight was that the repeal would help the United States to win the war.

Furthermore, the repeal would be the best manifestation that the present war was not a "racial war," but a war for "justice."⁶⁴ As Congressman Walter H. Judd, a key person in "China Lobby," testified in the House Committee: "there never will be a war between the white and colored races, if only we keep the largest and strongest of them, the Chinese, with us."⁶⁵ Thereby, the abolition of the Chinese Exclusion Acts became a new means for the United States to adjust its East Asian policy, especially its China policy.

America's China policy showed this consideration in two ways. First, it reflected wartime necessities. Second, it acknowledged the need to address postwar possibilities. When Congressman Warren G. Magnuson presented the bill to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts in Congress in October 1943, he stressed that the repeal of the anti-Chinese discriminatory laws went far beyond American wartime demands:

This bill goes far above and beyond its present war necessity. If any one position of our foreign policy should be clear in the post-war world it should be this, that we need in the Orient, democracy needs in the Orient, a strong Allied nation, practicing the same principles of democracy that we intend to keep. Without such a strong nation it does not take much intelligence to visualize what might come out of the great cauldron mass of millions of Asiatic peoples. Without the clear leadership of such a democratic Asiatic nation as China, with our help, alliances could form and other Japanese types of destructive empires could arise that would make the present island empire look like a dwarf.⁶⁶

The Under Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius held the same opinion, and emphatically pointed out that the renouncement of the Chinese Exclusion Acts should be carried out "in recognition of China's place among the United Nations fighting for democracy and her great future in a democratic world."⁶⁷

What was China's "great future in a democratic world"? For the United States, the most important question had to do with postwar politics. The stabilization of East Asia would require a strong counterweight to the Soviet Union. President Roosevelt outlined this position in discussions with Britain's Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, who visited the White House in the fall of 1942. Talking about the role China would take internationally after the war, Roosevelt told Eden that he believed that "in any serious conflict of policy with Russia, [China]

would undoubtedly line up on our side.”⁶⁸ Therefore, in order for China to be able to take up this position, she must not only emerge from the war as a strong nation with “Great Power” status, but must also be oriented toward the Western powers and encouraged to practice “the same principles of democracy” as the United States.

On the other hand, China’s cooperation was indispensable for the United States in helping to weaken British forces in postwar Asia. This strategy was expressed clearly in a conversation between Joseph Stilwell, the Allied Military Commander in China, and Chiang Kai-shek in the winter of 1943. General Stilwell told Chiang that “the United States was against any form of imperialism, including British,” and believed in “a free, strong, democratic China predominant in Asia” after the war.⁶⁹ Thus, to the United States, if Japan was to be demilitarized, the emergence of a new China with “Great Power” status would be a prerequisite for the stable and peaceful Asia needed in America’s global strategy.

What was China’s response to the American vision of this new world order in East Asia? During his visit to Chongqing in October 1942, Wendell L. Willkie, Roosevelt’s Special Envoy, told Chiang that postwar cooperation between the two nations was “increasingly necessary” in order to weaken the influence of British imperialism. Chiang explicitly declared China’s commitment to cooperation with the United States in the postwar world.⁷⁰ Furthermore, in her visit to the United States in early 1943, Madame Chiang indicated unequivocally in conversations with Harry L. Hopkins, Special Advisor to President Roosevelt, that China would give strong backing to the United States in international affairs.⁷¹ This commitment to “accept American proposals once a divergence of views among the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union occurs,” became one of the most important principles for the Chinese role in postwar international politics.⁷² Therefore, “practicing the same principles of democracy” and maintaining “pro-Americanism” in the China that emerged after the war was certainly an indispensable American diplomatic and political objective.

At the same time, as a market, China was also extremely attractive to American businessmen. The traditional “Open Door Policy” and wartime diplomacy based on America’s interests demonstrated that the United States needed China not only as a “friend” in wartime, but also needed her, the greatest potential market for many varieties of

American goods, as a “customer” after the war. On October 20, 1943, Congressman Ed Gossett, a member of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, testified in the Committee that potential trade with China after the war would not only benefit American business, but would also furnish jobs to hundreds of thousands of American soldiers when they returned from the war.⁷³ Not surprisingly, this pragmatic consideration, based on commercial interests, further reinforced the position held by advocates of the repeal campaign.

Finally, the support of President Roosevelt was a decisive force in the success of the repeal movement. On October 10, 1943, the House began a general debate on the Chinese problem. Immediately President Roosevelt sent a special message to Congress. He appealed to Congress to “take the offensive in this propaganda war and repeal the laws that insult our only ally on the mainland of Asia.”⁷⁴ Ten days later the House passed the bill, which allowed one hundred and five Chinese (based on the quota of the Immigration Law of 1924) to enter the United States annually and also admitted the granting of American citizenship to Chinese immigrants. On November 26, the Senate approved the abolition of the Chinese Exclusion Acts which had constituted an integral part of American immigration policy for over sixty years.

CONCLUSION

The outbreak of the Pacific War highlighted the Chinese Exclusion Acts and established a new direction in Asian American history. To some extent, the repeal of the anti-Chinese discriminatory laws did give the Chinese technical equality, in granting them a symbolic quota per annum and allowing Chinese immigrants to acquire American citizenship. From this point of view, the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1943 marked a historic turning point in American immigration history, since it accepted the idea that Chinese immigrants were “assimilable” within the United States, despite the fact that the quota granted to them at first was only symbolic.

Superficially, the repeal reflected a general trend towards the removal of racial discrimination in American domestic legislation. Nevertheless, the repeal itself did not place the Chinese on a full quota parity with other, European countries eligible for immigration and citizenship. In fact, traditional nativism was still vigorous and played a significant

role in the debate connected to the repeal campaign. According to the Gallup Poll carried out in November after Congress passed the bill repealing the Chinese Exclusion Acts, the approval/ disapproval rate was quite close, forty-two to forty.⁷⁵ Undoubtedly, the strong nativism of wartime American society had impeded the development of the repeal campaign.

On the other hand, even the advocates themselves favored the limitation of the repeal movement. As Congressman Walter H. Judd, a major supporter of the repeal movement, testified before the House Committee, had the opening of immigration to the Chinese not been limited to a symbolic quota of only one hundred and five, it would have been opposed.⁷⁶ In particular, Pearl S. Buck, another active initiator of the campaign, explicitly acknowledged that the repeal was only “a war measure,” and that social equality really had nothing to do with the Chinese issue.⁷⁷ These qualifications held by the initiators and advocates themselves hampered the further development of the repeal campaign.

The strategic significance of repealing the Chinese Exclusion Acts, nevertheless, went far beyond the repeal itself. In 1943, China’s precarious military and political position was reinforced, while the political and military necessities made psychological gestures appear more significant than ever before. Moreover, China’s postwar cooperation with the United States in America’s global strategy became increasingly indispensable.

Therefore the repeal was a prerequisite for the United States to reduce the East-West barrier on the ideological battlefield, and to psychologically batter Japan in particular. It became an important means for America to eliminate the potential “racial crisis” between the United States and China, so that the American vision of a new, strong, and democratic pro-American China in postwar Asia could be realized. Thus, the repeal became an essential step for the United States in its policy of establishing China as a “Great Power.” This meant that the abolition of the Chinese Exclusion Acts was not only the result of America’s wartime strategy, but also the reflection of its long-term considerations in East Asian policy in the postwar era.

Furthermore, it was based on these political and military strategies that other anti-Asian discriminatory acts, such as those laws targeting Indians and Filipinos, were renounced subsequently.⁷⁸ However, as was the case in the repeal of Chinese exclusion, these enactments

could not alter the racially discriminatory treatment of Asian peoples. It would take a long time for them to be treated with full equality in American legislation. After World War II, especially as a result of the upsurge of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, another campaign to repeal the Immigration Law of 1924, based on "white superiority," was launched. This movement not only led to the enactment of a new immigration law in 1965, which placed Asian peoples on a full quota parity base with European countries eligible for immigration and citizenship, but also became a milestone in American immigration history. It marked the beginning of a new era of racial tolerance.

NOTES

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² For U.S.-East Asian relations in World War II, see Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle: The American Effort from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953); and Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). Racial issues in international relations are mentioned in Christopher Thorne, *Allies of A Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War against Japan, 1941-1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1978); and *Racial Aspects of the Far Eastern War of 1941-1945* (London, 1982). The best treatment of racial issues between the United States and Japan in the Pacific War is John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

³ For the formation of anti-Asian legislation, see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from A Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown, 1989) and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Wash. Press, 1988).

⁴ In Japan, the best treatments on the wartime experience of Asian Americans are Yui Daizaburo, "From Exclusion to Integration: Asian Americans' Experiences in World War II" and "From Exclusion to Integration: Search for Postwar Hegemony and Repeal of the Oriental Exclusion Acts," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, 24, no. 2 (December 1992): 55-67.; 25, no. 2 (December 1993): 95-101, and Yui, "World War II and Repealing Process of the Discriminatory Laws against Asians," *Ethnicity in the History of the U.S.-Japan Relations* (Tokyo: NIRA Research Report, 1994), 53-63.

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⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 December 1941.

⁹ For Sino-U.S. Relations in wartime, see Arthur N. Young, *China and the Helping Hand, 1937–1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963) and Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938–1945*.

¹⁰ Zhang Yu-fa, ed., *Zhongguo xiandaishi lunji* [Selected Works on Modern Chinese History] (Taipei: Lianjing Publishing Inc., 1982), vol. 9, 383.

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942 (Britain), 1. (Hereafter cited as *FRUS*)

¹² U.S. Department of State, *Bulletin*, vol. 6, 3 January 1942.

¹³ *FRUS*, 1942 (China), 443.

¹⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts*, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., May and June, 1943, 249. (Hereafter cited as *House Hearings*).

¹⁵ Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture*, 142.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Bulletin*, 2 May 1942, 381.

¹⁷ Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture*, 53–54.

¹⁸ *FRUS*, 1942 (China), 186.

¹⁹ *Asahi Shimbun*, 13 December 1941.

²⁰ *Toa Kaihou* [Emancipation of Eastern Asia], February 1942, 62.

²¹ *FRONT*, vol. 5–6, 1943.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ U.S. Department of State, *Bulletin*, 2 May 1942, 381.

²⁴ Shigemitsu Mamoru to Foreign Ministry, 17 August 1942, Daitoa senso kankei ikken: kakkoku no taido—chuka minkoku (kokumin seifu) [Files Relating to the Great East Asia War: The Attitudes of the Governments—The Chinese National Government], Foreign Ministry of Japan, Tokyo.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, and *Chuo Koron*, January 1943, 123.

²⁷ *Asahi Shimbun*, 21 August 1942.

²⁸ “Exclusion and Extraterritoriality,” *Contemporary China*, 18 May 1942, 1–4.

²⁹ “This Is No Racial War,” *ibid.*, 10 August 1942, 1–4.

³⁰ Roger S. Greene to Stanley Hornbeck on 13 August 1942, Roger S. Greene Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

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³² *ZZSC*, 713.; and Chiang Kai-shek, *China’s Destiny* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 151.

³³ *Chuo Koron*, January 1943, 123–125.

³⁴ This leaflet is recorded in U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. 89, part 11, 3127.

³⁵ *Zhonghua Ribao* [China Daily], 24 June 1943.

³⁶ *The Public Opinion*, Summer 1943, 200–201.

³⁷ *Asahi Shimbun*, 28 January 1941.

³⁸ Foreign Ministry of Japan, ed., *Nippon gaiko bunsho narabini shuyou bunsho* [Main Documents of the Foreign Affairs of Japan] (Tokyo: Harashobo, 1969), 576–577.

³⁹ Charles N. Spinks, "Repeal Chinese Exclusion," *Asia and the Americas*, February 1942, 92-94.

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⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Pearl S. Buck, "What Are We Fighting for in the Orient?" delivered in Town Meeting of the Air in Town Hall, New York, 26 March 1942, reprinted in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 April 1942.

⁴⁷ Pearl S. Buck, "Freedom for All," *Asia*, May 1942, 324-326. For detail of Pearl Buck's crusade in wartime for freedom and equality, see Pearl S. Buck, *American Unity and Asia* (New York: The John Day Company, 1942) and *What America Means to Me* (New York: The John Day Company, 1943).

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⁵¹ Fred W. Riggs, *Pressures on Congress* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), 58.

⁵² Richard J. Walsh to All Members of the Committee, Records of the Citizens Committee.

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⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Maxwell M. Hamilton), "China's War Potential: Estimate," 17 June 1942, *FRUS*, 1942 (China), 71-79.

⁵⁹ Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hamilton), 27 February 1943, *ibid.*, 1943 (China), 14.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation by the Adviser on Political Relations (Stanley Hornbeck), 10 March 1943, *ibid.*, 769-770, 771-773.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Conversation by the Assistant Secretary of State (Breckinridge

Long), 13 May 1943, *ibid.*, 770–771.

⁶² House *Hearings*, 109.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 177, 178.

⁶⁴ For detail, see Xiaohua Ma, “Taiheyo sensoki ni okeru beikoku no taichu ‘seishin enjo’” [America’s “Spiritual Help” to China during World War II: A Pro-China Lobbyist and Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts], *Ochanomizu Shigaku* [Ochanomizu Historical Review] 41, 1997: 1–42.

⁶⁵ House *Hearings*, 151. For detail, see Xiaohua Ma, “America’s ‘Spiritual Help’ to China during World War II,” *ibid.*

⁶⁶ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. 89, part 9, 4427.

⁶⁷ The Under Secretary (Edward R. Stettinius) to the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Sam Rayburn), 27 October 1943, *FRUS*, 1943 (China), 783–784.

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⁷⁴ Message of Franklin D. Roosevelt to Congress, 11 October 1943, National Archives, Washington D.C.

⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, 21 November 1943.

⁷⁶ House *Hearings*, 162.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷⁸ For detail, see Yui Daizaburo, “From Exclusion to Integration: Search for Postwar Hegemony and Repeal of the Oriental Exclusion Acts,” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, 25, no. 2 (December 1993): 95–101.