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Deng Xiaoping: The Statesman

Michael Yahuda

Alone of the world's Communist leaders, Deng Xiaoping has charted a course that has combined for his country rapid economic development, successful economic reform and openness to the capitalistic international economy with continued dictatorship by the Communist Party. Under his leadership Communist rule in China has survived the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union – the motherland of Communism. In the process the regime has weathered the ending of the Cold War and has become more engaged with the Asia-Pacific region. But Deng's reputation at home and abroad has been badly tarnished by his ruthlessness in masterminding the Tiananmen massacre of 4 June 1989. But that ruthlessness is absolutely central to Deng's political philosophy and strategy. For him it is the basis of order at home which alone ensures that the economic policies of reform and openness can be carried out without undermining Communist Party rule through the spread of liberal influences. In so far as statesmanship requires moral dimensions it will be necessary in assessing the quality of Deng's statesmanship to consider the meaning of statesmanship itself.

Before addressing that broad issue it is also necessary to identify the extent of Deng's responsibilities for China's foreign policy and clarify the character of his contribution to that policy. It is argued that in addition to placing economic development at the centre of Chinese foreign policy interests he also gave that policy a clearer and perhaps stronger nationalist character. The wise conduct of foreign policy does not depend only upon the successful mastery of the relevant domestic factors, but also requires an understanding of the forces at work in international society. Accordingly, Deng's record of adapting to the changes in international politics is also evaluated. Many of the economic reforms and China's deeper engagement with the outside world associated with Deng's leadership raise fundamental issues about the character of the Chinese state itself, issues which first arose as the result of its encounter with Western power and the forces of modernization in the 19th century. Some aspects of that are considered before concluding with an assessment of Deng's claims to statesmanship.

Deng's Leadership in Foreign Affairs

Deng Xiaoping may well be the last Chinese Communist leader to leave a personal imprint upon the making of Chinese foreign policy. Although he has not sought the despotic personal powers exercised by Mao and despite the broadening of the number of institutions involved in the conduct of foreign policy, Deng has nevertheless been able to determine matters that he has regarded as crucial. It was he who set the terms for the conduct of relations with the Soviet Union (and its successor states) and the United States, and who made the key decisions

to attack Vietnam in 1979. Above all it was he who set the general course of a foreign policy designed to serve the interests of economic reform and opening to the international economy. It is therefore fitting that he should be considered as the architect of China's foreign policy since 1978 and as such be judged as a statesman.

Deng's basic viewpoints may be said to have been formed long before he became paramount leader, but it was not until Mao's death that Deng became free to articulate his views and chart his preferred course without having to defer to Mao's final imprimatur. Unlike some of his other Politburo colleagues Deng Xiaoping did not pen his name in the 1950s and 1960s to essays on foreign affairs that took a different line from Mao's. In fact he was entrusted by Mao to carry out a number of foreign engagements notably in confronting the Soviet Union during the dispute in the early 1960s. As will be seen, there is some indication that Deng was never favourably disposed towards the Soviet Union, but it would be unwise to take his role in Sino-Soviet polemics as evidence for this. Other leaders such as Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi and Peng Zhen were also prominent in the conduct of the dispute and Mao would not have tolerated any significant departure from his views on an issue that was so important to him. This article, therefore, will focus primarily upon Deng's leadership from 1978 onwards.

Assessing Deng Xiaoping's statesmanship presents a difficulty as he is still very much active and the course of his career even at the age of 89 is unpredictable. Timing is of unusual significance in evaluating the quality of a statesman. Perspectives change and, since statesmen are often judged in the light of subsequent developments, any judgment made of one in his lifetime is likely to be partial and transient. For example, those generous evaluations of Deng Xiaoping made before the Tiananmen killings that saw him nominated on two separate occasions as the *Time* magazine "Man of the Year" now appear to reflect more upon the observers than the observed. The following aspires no more than to make a preliminary assessment in the hope that it will not immediately become out of date.

How should Deng's statesmanship be assessed? The brutal and deliberate massacre of unarmed civilians by armoured troops on the night of 3–4 June 1989 will inevitably weigh against him in historical judgments. That is an issue which will be considered once the broader questions of his conduct of China's foreign affairs have been addressed. The existing literature on how to measure successful statesmanship is not very helpful. As a prominent international relations theorist has noted, the question of statesmanship and its allied subject statecraft has been neglected in social scientific writings.¹ But there is more extended treatment by Western writers in the realist tradition that focuses on statesmanship and the promotion of the national interest. Statesmanship is usually considered even within that tradition to require more than concern for one's own

1. On the latter point see David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) pp. 9–12.

national interest narrowly defined. As Martin Wight has argued in discussing the views of George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau, “the great aim of statecraft, of foreign policy, is to pursue and safeguard the national interest within the setting of a respect for the interests of others, or of international society as a whole.”² Perhaps the most notable contemporary realist scholar with his own claims to statesmanship, Henry Kissinger, has consistently argued that successful foreign policy requires paying attention to both the maintenance of equilibrium (or balance of power) and to acting with restraint.³ In other words he too recognizes the importance of moral considerations.

But Deng is heir to two rather different traditions. He is the last in line to a Chinese tradition of statehood that unlike any other contemporary state traces itself back continuously for nearly 3,000 years. Indeed there is evidence that both Mao and Deng consulted regularly the 11th-century massive compilation, *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* (*The General Mirror for the Aid of Government*), that detailed for the emperor in 294 chapters how his predecessors in the previous 1,300 years had handled difficult questions.⁴ However useful that may have been for the conduct of domestic politics, the international circumstances of China’s distant past that involved managing threats from nomadic barbarian peoples to the north and conducting tributary relations with notionally deferential neighbours could hardly be compared with the modern condition. Nevertheless the impact of the weight of the past is a factor in assessing Deng’s statecraft.

The other tradition to which Deng is an heir is that of Marxism–Leninism and particularly the Chinese variant of it. Despite the massive corpus of Marxist writings on most other subjects there is very little on statesmanship or statecraft. In this respect it is perhaps best to regard Deng as the heir to Mao. It is worth recalling that despite finding “mistakes” in Mao’s record in domestic matters the lengthy 1981 Party *Resolution* devoted just one sentence to foreign affairs to express support for his policies.

Writing 15 years ago about a similar assessment of the recently deceased Mao Zedong, John Gittings suggested that there were three different sets of criteria for assessing his statesmanship:

- (i) by measuring Mao’s contribution to “world peace,” or to the maintenance of some sort of international stability preserving the present order.
- (ii) by measuring the contribution to the building up and strengthening of the socialist

2. Martin Wight, “The theory of the national interest” in Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (eds.), *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (Leicester & London: Leicester University Press, 1991), p. 126.

3. See his many statements to that effect in his memoirs *The White House Years* and *Years of Upheaval* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, respectively 1979 and 1982). To take one example from the former: “If history teaches anything it is that there can be no peace without equilibrium and no justice without restraint” (p. 55).

4. Harrison E. Salisbury, *The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), especially pp. 9 and 325–26. But see also the book as a whole, based largely upon interviews, for a graphic, if not entirely accurate, portrayal of the extent of the influence of the Chinese imperial past upon the conduct of especially Mao, but also Deng.

state in China, with well-defined interests and a social and political system secure from outside interference; or

(iii) by measuring Mao's contribution to the building of socialism not only in China but abroad, and to the advancement of the proletarian revolution.⁵

It was the last, involving contradiction between the pursuit of socialism within China and proletarian internationalism, that Gittings suggested was of most interest and raised the important questions.

With Deng's accession this ceased to be of current significance – at least not in that form. Instead the contradiction was transformed into one between the upholding of socialism within China and the engaging in ever deepening ties with the international capitalist economy. The central thrust of Deng's policies has been to call for the development of the productive forces through economic reform and openness while maintaining Communist Party rule. Indeed he reaffirmed them in his address to his military commanders immediately after the Tiananmen killings. In other words even at the point of China's deepest domestic and international crisis when Deng was under pressure from his less reformist colleagues to draw up the socialist barricades against the capitalist world he insisted upon adherence to his central strategy. While he argued that "we should not have an iota of forgiveness for our enemies" he also declared that "our reforms and opening up have not proceeded adequately enough."⁶

By switching the focus of Chinese politics from concern with class struggle to the development of the productive forces, Deng initiated a significant transformation in China's engagement with the outside world. In the words of a Chinese commentary, since December 1978 "Deng Xiaoping and the Party Centre already began to abandon the constraint of the 'leftist' confrontationist approach."⁷ In Mao's lifetime, after the break with the Soviet Union the engagement with the rest of the world was limited to strategic matters deemed necessary to sustain the security of the state from external enemies and to trade designed to fill gaps in the domestic economy. Beyond these questions lay the issue of the nature of the Chinese obligation to support revolutionary movements and other Third World countries. Under Deng's leadership that engagement has widened to include a broad range of economic linkages with social and political consequences that have made the country interdependent with the international capitalist economy and many of the institutions that underpin it.

Within China it may be argued in Marxist terms that Deng's strategy of developing the productive forces will necessarily have consequences for the superstructure, including of course how China is ruled. Indeed it may be argued that the tension between the two is at the heart of many

5. See John Gittings, "The statesman," in Dick Wilson (ed.), *Mao Tse-tung in the Scales of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 247

6. See Deng Xiaoping's speech of 9 June 1989 in *Beijing Review* (henceforth *BR*), Vol. 32, No. 28 (10–16 July 1989), pp. 14–17.

7. Jin Yu and Chen Xiankui, *Dangdai Zhongguo da silu – Deng Xiaoping de lilun yu shijian* (*The Big Themes of Contemporary China – Deng Xiaoping's Theory and Practice*) (Beijing: The Chinese People's University Press, 1989), p. 186.

of China's domestic problems. But in its external relations too there has developed great tension between holding on to the political and organizational structures of Communist rule and the deepening interdependencies with the outside world. It is therefore important to consider how Deng has sought to redefine Chinese state interests in this new context.

The Re-drawing of China's National Interest

Deng's strategy has had a two-fold effect upon China's position in the international community. On the one hand, it has brought the country into a multi-faceted engagement with the different forces at work in international society. But on the other, it has also caused Chinese policy to focus more narrowly on Chinese national or state interests. The impact of this narrower focus has been felt in many spheres including relations with Third World countries and revolutionary movements, ideology, the character of international obligations, and the cultivation of a diplomatic style of entitlement.

Upon his assumption of the reins of power in December 1978, Deng virtually brought to an end China's remaining practical support for revolutionary movements abroad and significantly reduced China's aid to Third World countries. Almost immediately China changed course from being a net aid giver to becoming a net aid receiver.⁸ During his tour of South-east Asia in November and December of that year he indicated to his hosts that, while he could not entirely disavow the Communist insurgent parties of the region lest the Vietnamese and Soviets take over the patronage, he could nevertheless assure them that China's support for these parties was confined to propaganda and that material support was negligible or non-existent.⁹ While several South-east Asian governments remained sceptical, there is no available evidence that in the 1980s the Chinese authorities gave material aid to Communist insurgent forces in the region other than Burma and those engaged in resisting Vietnam in Cambodia.

The theme of "building socialism with Chinese characteristics" implies that it is a form of what used to be called "national Communism." As articulated by Deng, Chinese Communists alone can work out what is socialism and the forms it can take in accordance with their own experience and understanding of Chinese conditions. In explaining his adherence to Marxism Deng declared that "by Marxism we mean Marxism that is integrated with Chinese conditions, and by socialism we mean socialism that is tailored to Chinese conditions and has Chinese characteristics."¹⁰ It follows that China cannot look to others for a model and nor

8. Samuel S. Kim, *China In and Out of the Changing World Order* (Princeton: World Order Studies Program Occasional Paper No. 21, Princeton University, 1991), p. 37.

9. Robert S. Ross, *The Indo-China Tangle, China's Vietnam Policy 1975-79* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 221-22.

10. Deng Xiaoping, *Fundamental Issues in Present-Day China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1987), p. 54. For his first mention of the concept see his talk of 12 January 1983, *ibid.* pp. 10-13.

can it be one for others. But, more importantly, it meant that no outsider could legitimately query the ideological integrity of that socialism.

This “national Communism” was also reflected in an approach to relations between Communist parties that form the core of what used to be called “proletarian internationalism.” A visit by a West European Communist leader on 7 June 1982 provided the occasion for putting forward four principles that have since been advanced as the only acceptable basis for inter-party relations, and effectively precluded the possibility of arriving at a collective understanding of what principles of Marxism–Leninism might have universal validity. The four principles were “independence, complete equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other’s affairs in developing party-to-party relations.” They were reiterated with considerable publicity four years later on the eve of the re-establishment of relations with the East European parties with the Soviet Union very much in mind.¹¹ The “national Communist” character of the formula is plain. Had it applied in the Maoist era it would not have been legitimate for Mao to have accused the CPSU of ideological deviation.

This nationalistic approach was soon to be applied to inter-state relations with the revival by Deng Xiaoping in 1988 of Zhou Enlai’s Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (or FPPC).¹² This was originally conceived as a means to facilitate relations with the non-Communist states of Asia and it became the formal basis for the general conduct of inter-state relations. It was generally associated in Mao’s lifetime with the more moderate phases of foreign policy. But as used by Deng in 1988, and especially after the Tiananmen events, FPPC has been used to promote a concept of absolute state sovereignty that in the past had applied to the more revolutionary periods. It seemed anachronistic in the late 1980s to apply it in a more interconnected and interdependent world that faced global environmental problems that transcended state borders in their application and means for resolution. The formulation was designed to deflect international and particularly Western criticism of the Chinese government’s human rights record. It was a defensive, perhaps even truculent, reaction of a regime that felt increasingly beleaguered.

The FPPC was offered alongside the rather tired rhetoric of Third World oratory from the 1970s as a formula for a new international political and economic order. Characteristically, it was self-serving and it conveniently overlooked the fact that China was at the same time making demands upon the international community and the Western countries in particular for economic transactions on favourable terms that could only

11. *BR*, Vol. 29, No. 41 (13 October 1986), p. 7

12. Wu Xiuquan, *Eight Years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (January 1950–October 1958): Memoirs of a Diplomat* (Beijing: New World Press, 1985), pp. 42–43 describes how Zhou initiated the proposal in 1953 as “guiding principles for development of the ministry’s work in Asia.” The principles were first made public in the Sino-Indian agreement negotiated by Nehru and Zhou in 1954 and provided the official guide for all China’s state relations ever since. They are: (1) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful co-existence.

be granted if those concerned followed international norms and principles of obligation that the Chinese government was not prepared to have applied to itself.

This may be considered as the diplomacy of entitlement or what Samuel Kim has described as the “*maxi/mini principle* in the conduct of multilateral diplomacy – maximizing China’s rights and interests and minimizing China’s responsibility and normative costs.” The particular instance he had in mind was China’s abstention on UN Security Council Resolution 678 which authorized the use of “all necessary means” to compel Iraq to implement the previous resolutions. Kim described it as “an unprincipled quest to make the best of all worlds.” The effect was to countenance the American use of force while pretending otherwise.¹³ No wonder President Bush used the occasion to break his own sanction against meeting Chinese leaders by receiving Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in Washington personally. Other examples of a Chinese sense of entitlement may be seen from its expectation of favourable treatment from Japan by invoking war-time guilt or from the United States by demanding generosity as of right.¹⁴

Broadly speaking China’s conduct of international economic relations has been rightly described as neo-mercantilist.¹⁵ Despite the promptings of the World Bank China has not opened its domestic markets to foreign competition. There has been no question of adopting the liberal arguments of Adam Smith and the other classical economists. As Deng has argued repeatedly, and as he pointed out again to his doubting comrades in the course of his famous 1992 Spring Festival visit to southern China, there is nothing to be feared from extending the operations of foreign funded enterprises:

As long as we keep ourselves sober-minded, there is nothing to be feared. We still hold superiority, because we have large and medium state-owned enterprises and township and town enterprises. More importantly, we hold the state power in our hands.¹⁶

At the same time it is important to recognize that Deng’s economic nationalism has not led him, like many of his elderly colleagues, to advocate a new kind of isolationism. Deng has consistently opposed that. In a speech in 1984 he went so far as to put the blame for China’s poverty and ignorance upon the isolationism followed by the country for 300 years from the middle of the Ming Dynasty until its defeat in the Opium

13. Kim, *The Changing World Order*, pp. 25–27.

14. On Japan see Allen S. Whiting, *China Eyes Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) and Laura Newby, *Sino-Japanese Relations* (London: Routledge, 1988). On the United States, see Michel Oksenberg, “The China problem,” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1991, p. 12.

15. See Robert Kleinberg, *China’s “Opening” to the Outside World: The Experiment with Foreign Capitalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), especially pp. 254–268.

16. See Central Document No. 2 (1992) as carried in *Zhengming* (Hong Kong, 1 April 1992) in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3* (henceforth *SWB*), FE/1346/B2/2.

War of 1840.¹⁷ The standard Chinese Nationalist and Communist explanation for China's weakness was to blame it upon imperialism. While Deng has acknowledged that openness to the capitalist world will bring in "undesirable things," he has consistently argued that these are manageable and that they should not be used as an excuse to close China's open door. Thus in his 1992 spring offensive he criticized those on the left who used the threat of the alleged American policy of "peaceful evolution" to try to limit the open door policy as constituting a greater danger than those on the right. His advocacy of openness has been central to his overall strategy and it has played a large part in China being the only Communist or former Communist country to have succeeded in raising significantly the standard of living of the general population in the process of economic reform. Indeed Deng has argued that part of the reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union was the economic failure of the Gorbachev regime. It follows that in Deng's view socialism will survive in China only if it continues to provide growing economic prosperity.

The corollary of Deng's stress on reform and openness has been his emphasis upon the need to uphold the "Four Fundamental Principles." His two successors in the 1980s, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, both fell for their alleged failure to take a sufficiently strong line against "bourgeois liberalization." Deng envisages a future in which China will continue with Communist political dictatorship at home while engaging in both economic reform and ever-widening economic engagement with the West. Whether that is compatible with China's international environment remains to be seen, but it is a future that offers no respite to continuing domestic tension between, on the one hand, those seeking to uphold Communist Party rule and the ideology that sustains it and, on the other, those directly engaged in carrying out economic reform and conducting foreign economic relations. It is a future that will challenge the Party to adapt continually to the social and political consequences of reform and openness. It is difficult to envisage how Communist Party members would not seek to resist the continual diminishment of their role in Chinese society that is entailed in such a future. In fact it would seem highly likely that the more traditionally minded among them and those with deeply embedded vested interests in the status quo would seek to resist these trends by evoking nationalistic themes with which to castigate the foreign connections so as to undermine or at least slow down the pace of economic reform.

Deng's Adaptation to the Changes in International Politics

Deng's reorientation of China's foreign policy in support of the fundamental drive for economic development must be seen within the context of the enormous changes in the country's international security environment. It was the pursuit of economic goals that gave credibility to

17. Deng Xiaoping, *Fundamental Issues*, p. 79.

Deng's claims that China needed a period of "international tranquillity,"¹⁸ but as China's leaders discovered in the 1950s, the search for a peaceful environment was no guarantee that superior adversaries would respond accordingly.¹⁹ In other words, China's foreign policy was to a large extent dependent upon a strategic international environment that it could not hope to control. Since that environment has been totally transformed since 1978 it is important to examine how Deng has perceived these changes and how he has adapted to them.

From Deng's perspective China's international situation may be said to have changed from the late 1970s when the country was endangered by strategic military encirclement to the early 1990s when the survival of the regime was at risk because of political pressures. The transition from military to political threats has been accompanied by the decline of the country's global strategic significance as a major player in the so-called "great strategic triangle" and by its marginalization to being a country of primarily regional significance. If the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union has ushered in a period of relative peace and freedom from military threat after 40 years of pressure, it has also ushered in a period of great political uncertainty about the durability of its Communist political system.

The new international situation has also profoundly changed China's own region so that it promises to be an even more propitious environment within which to realize Chinese hopes for economic development: the major regional conflicts in Indo-China and Korea are being diffused, with China playing a significant role in helping to resolve them. The reduction of tensions has facilitated the continued expansion of Chinese economic relations in the region. Moreover since the mid-1980s this has been reflected in closer ties with South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the countries of South-east Asia. Moreover (with the half-hearted exception of Japan) the countries of the region did not as a whole join the West in imposing sanctions in the wake of the Tiananmen events. But the easier relations within the region have so far not materially helped the Beijing regime to manage its deep crisis of political survival in which domestic and international factors are closely linked. Deng's 1992 strategy to accelerate economic development through deepening the ties with Hong Kong and the rest of East and South-east Asia is designed to overcome that political crisis through economic means.

In reviewing more broadly Deng's perceptions and responses to China's changing international environment it is useful to distinguish between three broad phases of the change: first, the search for an alignment to resist alleged Soviet expansionism, 1978–81; secondly, the management of independence between the two superpowers, 1982–89;

18. See Deng's speech of 16 January 1980, "The present situation and the tasks before us," *Selected Works* (henceforth *SW*), p. 226: "we really need a peaceful environment, and thus, for the interest of our own country the goal of our foreign policy is a peaceful environment for achieving the four modernizations."

19. See the brief account in Michael B. Yahuda, *China's Role in World Affairs* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 66 and 80–81.

and thirdly, the challenge of the end of the Cold War, 1989–92 (and beyond).²⁰

Deng's initial perceptions of China's international strategic situation in 1978 were similar to those of Mao before his death two years earlier.²¹ For both men the crucial questions centred on the two superpowers and in particular on how to counter the perceived Soviet threat of encirclement. It is fruitless to speculate on whether Mao, like Deng, would have attacked Vietnam in the spring of 1979 to "teach it a lesson" after it had invaded Cambodia to replace the Pol Pot regime with one of its choosing. But in important respects Deng's management of the episode was similar to those occasions when Mao had resorted to the use of force. Like Mao, Deng proved himself to be capable of swift, ruthless and decisive action in which decision-making was concentrated in his hands as he strove to keep the initiative in the military and diplomatic aspects of the conflict. Perhaps too the way he apparently calculated the risks of possible military intervention by the principal superpower adversary and took steps to minimize them owed something to the legacy of Mao. A limited evacuation of people from key points near the Soviet border and the suggestion that the United States and Japan were aligned with China coupled with the careful and deliberate signalling to the Soviet Union that China's punitive attack was limited in both scope and duration all combined to suggest that the Soviet threat had been carefully considered and that Deng did not seek to provoke the Soviet leadership to the point that it would feel compelled to respond.²² Deng's Vietnam war exposed Chinese military weaknesses to the extent that many observers regarded it as a defeat.²³ But seen as part of a much longer-term strategy to dislodge Vietnam from Cambodia, Deng's approach must be judged to have been a success. The war was accompanied and followed by a successful diplomatic campaign to keep Vietnam isolated internationally in economics and politics. Vietnam's support by the Soviet Union enabled it to invade and occupy Cambodia, but it was its dependence upon the Soviet Union that proved its undoing in the long run. As the Soviet Union weakened and changed course under Gorbachev Deng was able to sustain sufficient pressure upon Vietnam until it withdrew its armed forces from Cambodia in 1989 and eventually made its peace with China on substantively Chinese terms in 1991.

It was the consequences of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late

20. Interestingly, Chinese accounts of China's foreign policy have subdivided the period in similar ways.

21. For accounts of Mao's views of international politics at this time see Gittings, "The statesman," and Michael Yahuda, *Chinese Foreign Policy After Mao, Towards the End of Isolationism* (London: Macmillan, 1983) ch. 3.

22. For analysis of Mao's approach see Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975).

23. See for example, King C. Chen, *China's War Against Vietnam, 1979: A Military Analysis* (Baltimore: University of Maryland, Occasional Papers/Reprint Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, No. 5, 1983); and Harlan W. Jenks, "China's 'punitive' war on Vietnam: a military assessment," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIX, No. 8 (August 1979); and Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) ch. 12.

1979 which had initially seemed so threatening that paradoxically turned the tide and made the prospects of war seem more distant. That in turn enabled Deng to preside over a shift towards a foreign policy more balanced between the two superpowers that was called “an independent foreign policy” at the 12th Party Congress in September 1982. It soon became apparent that the Soviet Union would face a newly determined American response that began in the last year of the Carter presidency and was carried still further by the Reagan administration. That, combined with the pressure from the Afghani resistance forces, the diplomatic isolation of the Soviet Union in the Third World and its growing domestic economic problems, persuaded Deng and his advisers that the Soviet Union was overstretched. In other words the immediate danger had receded.²⁴ It was now possible to take a more measured approach to understanding the international environment and China’s place within it. At the time of greatest danger in 1978–79 Deng Xiaoping went so far as to suggest publicly alliances with both Japan and the United States. In December 1979 Deng told a foreign journalist “if Japan and China co-operate, they can support half of Heaven.” A year earlier, in an interview with *Time* magazine, he specifically called for an alliance with the United States.²⁵ Within a year such talk had faded away. Although the shift to the stance of independence had been facilitated by Chinese dissatisfaction with Reagan’s handling of the Taiwan issue, the relaxation of the Soviet threat was the critical factor that reduced the Chinese need to stress the strategic link with the United States.²⁶ The essence of the policy of independence was that China would not ally itself with any major power and that undoubtedly suited the broader Chinese psychological outlook on international affairs.

It was perhaps in the period from 1982 to 1989 as the Soviet threat waned that Deng displayed his creativity as a statesman.²⁷ It was during this period that he put forward his well known concept of “one country two systems,” described by Mrs Thatcher at the time of the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Joint Declaration on Hong Kong in 1984 as an “idea of genius” (of which more will be discussed later). This was also the period in which Deng concluded that not only was a new world war no longer inevitable, but that it could be postponed indefinitely. By 1984 he was

24. See Carol Lee Hamrin, “China re-assesses the superpowers,” *Pacific Affairs* (Summer 1983), pp. 209–231.

25. Yahuda, *Foreign Policy After Mao*, pp. 205 and 216.

26. For interpretations that give greater weight to problems in Sino-American relations see Jonathan D. Pollack, “The opening to America” in Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 15, Part 2, *Revolutions Within the Chinese Revolution 1966–82* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 457–469; and Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China Since 1972* (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992) pp. 119–125.

27. For a Chinese account that emphasizes the themes of peace and development as exemplified by the positive linkage between East–West and North–South issues, the prospects for a comparatively long period of peace, the “core” significance of North–South relations and the continuing need to resist hegemonism, see Tao Chuanwang, Zhang Changyun and Luo Zhangfu (eds.), *Deng Xiaoping zhuzuo zhuanqi yanjiu* (*Researching the Main Themes of the Writings of Deng Xiaoping*) (Beijing: People’s Press, 1990), pp. 318–339.

arguing that “world peace” could be safeguarded, though he claimed that this could only be done if “we oppose hegemony.”²⁸ Such a view had never been advanced by Mao, for whom conflict and struggle were fundamental. Deng went further to argue that a link existed between peace and development. He argued that the East–West military conflict was linked to the North–South economic relations. Problems in one could spill over into the other. But for a self-styled Marxist it was remarkable that he argued that the interests of the North and South were compatible. Perhaps echoing China’s basic approach to Western countries, Deng claimed that the North required markets and the South needed advanced technology. He further developed a view of China’s special role in this regard: “I can state positively ... that China seeks to preserve world peace and stability, not to destroy them. The stronger China grows, the better the chances are for preserving world peace.”²⁹ This argument was put forward to domestic as well as foreign audiences.³⁰ Such arguments about the compatibility of North and South, the desirability and possibility of international stability and Deng’s assertions about the ideologically neutral quality of technology and management facilitated the opening of Special Economic Zones, special cities and regions and, more broadly, to an ever deepening engagement with the international (capitalist) economy.

But at the same time Deng kept a wary eye on relations with the two superpowers in terms of manoeuvring within the strategic triangle. Like most of the other leaders involved in the subtleties of its operations, he tended to play down its significance in public: “Some people are talking about the international situation in terms of a big triangle. Frankly, the China angle is not strong enough.”³¹ But in practice he sought to utilize it as a means of putting pressure on and gaining concessions from the other two. In 1982 the Reagan administration came under great pressure from Beijing on several bilateral issues including aspects of the Taiwan problem. The prospect of the “regression of Sino-American relations” was continually put forward as a possibility if Beijing were not to get its way (which tended to be put in the form of an unbreakable principle). The implied “threat” involved a corresponding improvement in Sino-Soviet relations or at least a deterioration in American standing vis-à-vis the Soviet Union because of problems with China. The fact that Deng Xiaoping involved himself personally in apparently trivial matters such as the fate of a Chinese tennis star suggested that important issues were at stake from a Chinese perspective. In the end, however, the Chinese side backed down when it became clear that the American side would not make further concessions. It was apparently recognized in Beijing that a shift in the larger balance of power had taken place that reduced China’s significance for Washington in the “great triangle.” The Reagan adminis-

28. Deng Xiaoping, *Fundamental Issues*, p. 46.

29. *Ibid.* p. 95.

30. For example see his speech to an enlarged meeting of the Military Commission, *ibid.* p. 116.

31. *Ibid.* p. 98.

tration no longer needed the "China card" and this was reflected in the change from Haig to Shultz as Secretary of State.³²

Yet Deng was slow to recognize that accommodation between Reagan and Gorbachev on nuclear strategic issues meant that the significance of the "great triangle" was coming to an end and that this would involve a corresponding marginalization of China in global affairs. Thus China was not involved in the process leading to the signing of the 1987 INF agreement, nor in many of the negotiations that led to Soviet disengagement from many of the regional conflicts in the Third World. China was not even involved in the making of the 1988 Geneva agreements that led to the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan even though Deng had long called for that as one of the conditions for normalizing Sino-Soviet relations.³³ Prior to normalization, as marked by the Gorbachev visit to Beijing in May 1989, Deng went to considerable lengths to assure the United States and President Bush in particular that this would not affect Chinese relations with America and would not entail a return to the alliance with the Soviet Union of the 1950s.³⁴ He seemed oblivious to the fact that Bush and his administration had long anticipated and indeed welcomed the Sino-Soviet rapprochement.

The truculent and defiant tone of the response of Deng and his elderly colleagues to the criticisms of the Western world, particularly the United States, to the Tiananmen massacre and its aftermath was perhaps to be expected. Deng's brusque rejection of these as interference in China's internal affairs had already been foreshadowed by his resurrection of the FPPC as the basis for a new world order the year before. Not surprisingly, at a time when the survival of Communist rule in China was seen to be at stake, Deng regarded the clamour about human rights abuses in his country as less a sign of the existence of international norms of behaviour than as evidence of a dark plot by Western forces to undermine socialism in China and elsewhere by a sinister subversive policy of "peaceful evolution." This was confirmed for him first by the collapse of Communism in the East European countries in 1989 and finally by the collapse of the Soviet Union itself in 1991 after the failure of the August coup.

In April 1990 the CCP circulated among its members Deng's "very

32. For analyses of these events see, Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, "Negotiation of the 17 August 1982 U.S.-PRC arms communiqué: Beijing's negotiating tactics," *The China Quarterly*, No. 125 (March 1991) pp. 33-54; Robert S. Ross, "China learns to compromise: Change in U.S.-China relations, 1982-1984," *The China Quarterly*, No. 128 (December 1991) pp. 742-773; and Michael B. Yahuda, "The significance of tripolarity in China's policy toward the United States since 1972," in Robert S. Ross (ed.), *The Superpowers and China: The Cold War Triangle* (forthcoming). For a somewhat different analysis that stresses Beijing's concern about American arrogance in taking China for granted see Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, pp. 131-37.

33. For a brief account of China's marginalization even before the collapse of the Soviet Union see Michael Yahuda, "The People's Republic of China at 40: foreign relations," *The China Quarterly*, No. 119 (September 1989), pp. 519-539.

34. See for example, *BR*, Vol. 32, No. 9, 27 February-5 March 1989. See also Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, pp. 178-79. It should be noted that the last piece of evidence cited of American concern at a possible Sino-Soviet accommodation is dated 24 March 1986 (*ibid.* p. 178).

important comments” about the consequences for China of the collapse of East European Communism and the “betrayal” by Gorbachev: “Everyone should be very clear that under the present international situation all enemy attention will be concentrated on China. They will use every pretext to cause trouble, to create difficulties and pressures for us.” That combined with the aftermath of the Tiananmen events meant that what China needed was “stability, stability and more stability.” He went on, “the next three to five years will be extremely difficult for our Party and our country, extremely important. If we stand fast and make it through, our enterprise will develop quickly. If we collapse, China’s history will regress for several tens of years, even a hundred years.”³⁵ But unlike some of his colleagues who reportedly sought to open polemics with Gorbachev, Deng argued in favour of avoiding ideological issues and urged that state relations be developed on a steady cordial basis: “Observe the development soberly, maintain our position, meet the challenge calmly, hide our capacities, bide our time, remain free of ambitions, and never claim leadership.”³⁶

There was no doubt that China’s leaders favoured the more conservative, orthodox elements in the CPSU and, because of the threat of Yeltsin, they modified their critical stance against Gorbachev in the spring and summer of 1991. A stream of the more hardline Soviet leaders visited China during this period and Jiang Zemin visited Moscow. The unprecedented Chinese offer to the Soviet Union of a loan of 1 billion Swiss francs was meant to signal Chinese support. At that time China’s leaders seemed to share the Soviet hardliners’ view that close Sino-Soviet relations at this point made it more difficult for the United States to use its enhanced global position to exercise pressure on either.³⁷ The Chinese leaders including Deng welcomed the attempted Soviet coup in August and were dismayed by its failure, but under Deng’s influence China maintained in public a formally correct position. Even before its failure Deng said that China should not enter into alignments, or unite with the Soviet Union to resist the United States.³⁸ After the failure the Politburo expected that the United States would intensify its efforts to undermine socialism in China by peaceful means. As a result it concluded that China should criticize Gorbachev’s revisionism and his betrayal of socialism in its internal propaganda while refraining from making adverse comments in public.³⁹

35. “Deng Xiaoping de Zhonggong suanming” (“Deng Xiaoping sees the future for the CCP”), *Zhengming*, Hong Kong, No. 151 (1 May 1990).

36. Shih Chun-yu, “China, Soviet Union establish new relations of good-neighbourliness, co-operation,” *Da Gong Bao*, Hong Kong, 16 May 1991, in *FBIS-CHI*, 16 May 1991, pp. 13–14.

37. *Xinhua* reported without comment the substance of a 28 February 1991 editorial commentary in *Pravda* to that effect.

38. *Qing Bao (Intelligence)*, Hong Kong, 5 September 1991, in *FBIS-CHI*, 9 September 1991, p. 10.

39. He Po-shih, “CCP issues successive emergency circulars ordering entire Party to guard against changes,” *Dangdai*, Hong Kong, 15 September 1991, in *FBIS-CHI*, 24 September 1991.

Deng's longer-term reaction, as shown above, even at the at the time of the Tiananmen events included a renewed commitment to the policies of reform. He consistently rejected the proposals of his more "leftist" colleagues to draw in the horns and cultivate an anti-American coalition. Since the imposition of Western sanctions in 1989 Chinese diplomacy has overlooked the "loss of face" involved in the declared refusal of Western leaders to meet their Chinese counterparts. Instead China's foreign relations have focused on continuing and deepening the broad range of feasible economic relations so that within three years few of the sanctions remained in place, and on cultivating relations with neighbours in the Asia-Pacific.

The policy of what China's Foreign Minister has called "good neighbourliness" may be said to embody China's first attempt at a coherent regional policy that was not subordinated to the relationship with the Soviet Union and the United States. It reflected the fact that for the first time in 40 years China's leaders no longer feared attack from either. But it also arose from the recognition of the significance of the countries of the region to China's policies of economic development reform and openness. China's leaders have actively courted membership of regional institutions, so that China in 1991 became a dialogue partner of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a member of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) – alongside Hong Kong and Taiwan – and expressed support for the controversial Malaysian proposal for a kind of East Asian trade grouping excluding the United States. Henceforth China would no longer excite suspicions by being willing to deal with its neighbours on a bilateral basis only. China has also played a new role in contributing to the diffusion of the two long-standing conflicts in the region in Korea and Cambodia. Deng retreated from his earlier proposal to settle the Korean issue on his model of "one country two systems" when China indicated to the North that it would not veto the South's application to join the United Nations. The North was in effect compelled to set aside its declared principle and apply for simultaneous membership. Such flexibility was less evident in China's handling of the Cambodian issue where the Vietnamese were given no alternative but to accept Chinese terms. The Vietnamese "pilgrimage" to Beijing having shed the two senior leaders most disliked by the Chinese, and their having to accept Chinese observer status at the Cambodian Supreme National Conference held in Beijing may be seen as the last chapters in Deng Xiaoping's long attempt to "teach Vietnam a lesson."⁴⁰

Underlying Deng's approach, however, is still an assertive rather than a confident nationalism as may be seen from his reported reaction to his Foreign Minister's casting of a vote of abstention on the UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq. According to a Hong Kong journal, he told his bridge partners Yang Shangkun, Wan Li, Song Renqiong and Chen Pixian:

40. For accounts see, Nayan Chauda, *Brother Enemy: A History of Indo-China, the Fall of Saigon* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1988).

When I saw on the television news that Qian Qichen unhurriedly raised his hand in “abstention” I nodded to him and saluted him. By holding up his hand he again showed the whole world that China has a decisive say in solving major disputes in the world. Our foreign policy is firm and principled. We will not follow any other country or act according to another people’s baton; we will not threaten other countries with force, nor are we afraid of other countries’ threat of force; we will not give up our principled stand by accepting exchanges or compromises. If we violate this principled stand, it will mean an out-and-out betrayal of Marxism–Leninism and a betrayal of the behests of millions of martyrs, and our posterity will not forgive us.⁴¹

As noted earlier, the abstention was an attempt to have it both ways. By abstaining the Chinese knew that they were leaving the door open for an American orchestrated use of force against Iraq sanctioned by the United Nations. That was why President Bush was willing to receive Qian Qichen in Washington personally (thereby ending his own sanction against meeting Chinese leaders). They also knew that it would mean acknowledging that the economic sanctions against Iraq for which the Chinese had voted would not be given the chance to work any longer. The abstention was at best an empty gesture designed to get the Chinese off the hook of neither condoning Iraq’s attempt to annex its weaker neighbour by force nor supporting American military action against another Third World country. Deng’s rhetoric, if truly reported, smacks of wishful thinking or even desperation. The last comments about betrayal are reminiscent of his comments on the eve of ordering the tanks to shoot the demonstrators and illustrate his deep fears about the political succession in China and the survival of the regime.

But it was not long before a more decisive and less morbid and perhaps more typically active Deng Xiaoping emerged as he developed his 1992 spring offensive. Deng envisages that it will be possible to modernize along the lines of Hong Kong and Singapore while retaining Communist rule through the coercive powers of the military and security organs.

Deng and China’s Modern Problems of Statehood

It may be regarded as paradoxical, but Deng’s very success in presiding over the most successful programme of economic modernization in the Communist world and perhaps in China’s history has brought to the fore the problems of modern statehood that his programme was designed to solve. The questions that were supposedly solved by the establishment of the PRC in 1949 have been re-opened. The policies of reform and the growing regionalization of the economy have weakened the capacities of the central government, thus raising again questions about the underlying unity of the country.

At the heart of the issue is the revival of the old 19th-century problem that troubled the Confucian reformers who sought to modernize along Western lines while retaining Chinese traditional Confucian values. Deng’s economic reform programme of embracing foreign capitalist

41. Kim, *The Changing World Order*, pp. 25–27.

practices so as to develop socialism with Chinese characteristics is reminiscent of their goals as epitomized in the slogan, “Chinese learning for the essentials and Western learning for the practicalities” (*Zhong xue wei ti, Xi xue wei yong*). This encapsulated the reasons for their failure, as Western technology and managerial know-how were antithetical to Confucian values. The same would appear to be true of the current attempt as applied to Chinese Communist values. Certainly there are parallels between the resistance of the more old fashioned upholders of traditional Confucianism in the 19th century to what they regarded as disruptive Western intrusions and the resistance of old fashioned upholders of traditional Communism in the current period to alleged Western subversion.⁴² But it is also true that there are important differences between the two situations. China is no longer as closed as it once was and there are many social forces and groups who have been permeated by modern and Western influences. As the Tiananmen events showed, China is part of the “global village.”⁴³ Moreover the position of members of the Communist Party is highly complex as many at all levels are actively engaged in what might be called entrepreneurial activities, and others at middle levels of the bureaucracy and especially in the state owned enterprises fear and resist many aspects of the reforms. The internal position is also very different. The centrifugal forces within are not really matched by interventionist forces of superior military strength.

Nevertheless Deng’s China is confronted with a legitimacy crisis of gigantic proportions as the very things which sustained it in 1949 had been degraded 40 years later. The inner confidence of a Party imbued with a sense of mission and belief in itself as a unifying revolutionary force backed by the support of the bulk of the people, proven in a long series of revolutionary and civil wars, was no more. Similarly, the stimulus of belonging to a world-wide movement that constituted the future for mankind had gone. Internally, the “crisis of faith” at the end of the Cultural Revolution has been superseded by cynicism, corruption and nepotism. Party rule was maintained in the end by the tank and the armed police. The success in the economy has been derived from the non-socialist sector as even in the industrial realm the value of the industrial production of the favoured state-owned medium and large enterprises has been by-passed by the collective and private firms. In 1978 the state-owned sector accounted for 90 per cent of the value of industrial output, but by 1991 it had been surpassed by the combined value of the industrial production of the collective, private and foreign related enterprises. The sources for economic reform no longer come from the Communist Party or the Marxist canons of political economy, but are derived from the private sector and more particularly from capitalist external influences. Even Deng’s initiative of seeking to base continued Party rule on the

42. For the classic account of the former see, Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T’ung Chih Restoration, 1862–1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957)

43. See David S. G. Goodman, “Reforming China: foreign contacts, foreign values?” *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1992).

provision of economic prosperity carries within it its own seeds of destruction. The new economic sprouts and the new social forces to which they give rise will inevitably regard the Party and the order it claims to provide as an obstacle to rather than the facilitator of entrepreneurialship and economic development. Sooner or later the question of the Party's capacity to undertake political reform of itself seems bound to arise again.

It is against that backcloth that Deng's "brilliant" idea of "one country two systems" must ultimately be assessed. Initially it was put forward as a means for unifying the socialist motherland with capitalistic Taiwan and Hong Kong by peaceful means. It had been thought that Deng developed the idea as an inspired response to an unexpected British request to review the treaties affecting Hong Kong (these were not formally recognized by the PRC as they were the most infamous of the "unequal treaties" that bore testimony to China's previous "century of humiliation" – but nor were they effectively challenged by Beijing). But more recently Chinese sources have claimed that the concept was first introduced by Deng at the end of 1978.⁴⁴ If so it would explain Deng's extreme annoyance at Mrs Thatcher's initial insistence on her 1982 visit to China that treaties were binding whether one liked them or not, and if the Chinese refused to honour those treaties what credence could be placed upon their honouring any new ones. Deng reportedly cursed her and declared that he would not be "another Li Hongzhang."⁴⁵ In any event he articulated his concept in public for the first time and that became the organizing framework for the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong that was signed in 1984.

Both the concept and the Joint Declaration to which it gave rise were unprecedented in international diplomacy. Not only did it envisage the operation of two mutually opposed socio-economic systems within the bounds of one state sovereignty, but it also called for a transition period of 13 years in which the British were entrusted with preparing the basis for the exercise of "a high degree of autonomy" by Hong Kong under Chinese sovereignty thereafter. This involved great risks for the Chinese side as well as for the people of Hong Kong in mortgaging the future to the co-operative capacities of Chinese and British leaders whose political cultures and outlook could hardly differ more, especially as these were to be tested by the uncertainties of international and their respective domestic politics. At the time of writing with less than five years to go before the reversion of sovereignty it is still too early to discuss with confidence the future of Hong Kong itself. But it is already apparent that the issues involved are highly divisive within China. From the outset it was clear that the evolution of Hong Kong would affect China's international

44. See Tao Chuanwang *et al.*, *Deng Xiaoping Zhuzuo*, p. 290.

45. The famous 19th-century high official who suffers, perhaps unfairly, from the reputation of having sold out his country's sovereignty to buy peace and better relations with foreign imperialists.

reputation for good or ill within the Asia-Pacific region and in the international economic community. It was also understood that the territory would become even more important in the country's economic development at provincial, national and international levels. But the Tiananmen events and the impact of the collapse of European Communism has underscored the view that Hong Kong could be politically subversive to the socialist mainland. Moreover since Deng Xiaoping himself in the early spring of 1992 put Hong Kong forward as a model for Guangdong province and indeed for other parts of China he has ensured that the Hong Kong issue will be central to the debates within China about the country's fundamental orientation. It may well become part of the factional rivalries that are bound to attend the struggle for the political succession that cannot be long delayed.

Meanwhile Deng must be credited with having come up with an imaginative concept to resolve the dilemmas inherent in the problems of reuniting both Hong Kong and Taiwan. The concept is consistent with older traditions that allowed alien enclaves to exist within Chinese administered territories and it may also be said to have built on the Communist approach to national minorities who on paper at least enjoyed a degree of local autonomy. But at the same time Deng has deepened his country's entanglement with the more cosmopolitan world of international capitalism that so menaces his conservative (or leftist) colleagues as it menaced their Confucian forebears more than a hundred years before.

Conclusions

Perhaps the more pertinent questions to be asked of Deng's statesmanship are the conventional ones traditionally applied to Western leaders.⁴⁶ How has the statesman defined his country's national interest? What values have underpinned that definition? How conscious has he been of the interests and values of others and to what extent has he sought to accommodate them? How has he sought to give effect to these concerns?

Timing is of unusual importance in evaluating the quality of a statesman. That is because any such evaluation must involve a historical judgment. For "what distinguishes statesmen from mere politicians is that they succeeded in leaving a mark on the history of their respective states, as well as on world history, commensurate with the importance of their states."⁴⁷ There is therefore a moral and philosophical dimension to be added to the criteria for assessing statesmanship. In the words of Martin Wight, "in this [historians'] endless debate different people and generations strike different balances between the criterion of technical success, mere expertise, and the moral criterion. This latter itself is twofold,

46. See for example the erudite discussion in Wight, "The theory of the national interest," pp. 111-136.

47. Ghita Ionescu, *Leadership in an Interdependent World: The Statesmanship of Adenauer, De Gaulle, Thatcher and Gorbachev* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1991) p. 1

involving the judgement of loftiness of motive, and the judgement of the ultimate contributions to human good.”⁴⁸

Few would question Deng Xiaoping’s entitlement to be considered a statesman. Even though the precise meaning of the term may be elusive, he certainly possesses the qualities most usually associated with it. For example, Ionescu might almost have had Deng in mind when he added the following to his historical requirements, “courage and decisiveness [and] consistency of political aims.”⁴⁹ Similarly, in a memorable phrase about the need of a statesman to be active, Henry Kissinger argued that the statesman “owes it to his people to strive, to create, and to resist the decay that besets all human institutions.”⁵⁰

Questions do arise however, about the quality or art of Deng’s statesmanship. For example, Kissinger, paraphrasing Bismark, held that “the art of statesmanship is to listen carefully until one can perhaps discern the footsteps of history and follow for a brief period in their train.”⁵¹ In other words, a statesman should be one who leads the way to the future rather than someone who makes a last ditch stand for the past.

With these considerations in mind, it is fair to say that contrary to Chinese claims on his behalf, Deng Xiaoping, like Mao Zedong before him, could not be regarded as a creator of international order who was alert to the interests of other countries and was sensitive to the operations of their domestic systems. His curt dismissal of Western liberal democracy is remarkable for its mixture of condescension and ignorance:

In developing our democracy, we cannot simply copy bourgeois democracy, or introduce the system of a balance of three powers. I have often criticized people in power in the United States, saying that actually they have three governments. Of course, the American bourgeoisie uses this system in dealing with other countries, but when it comes to internal affairs, the three branches often pull in different directions, and that makes trouble.⁵²

There is no evidence here of familiarity with West European systems where the executive commands a majority in the legislature. Yet Deng had spent five years in France during the impressionable age of 16 to 21. But, like many Chinese both before and since, Deng spent his sojourn abroad largely among his own countrymen and did not gain a close familiarity with the local culture. It will be recalled that Deng was very poor during this period and he spent most of his time either at work in menial jobs or as a writer and stenographer for the local Communist journal. However, like many of the other Chinese Communists from France who later attained prominence, Deng did not put himself forward as a Marxist theorist. Those who had been trained in the Soviet Union and those who remained within China, perhaps being less troubled by

48. Wight, “The theory of the national interest,” p. 121.

49. Wight and Porter, *International Theory*, p. 1

50. Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), p. 55.

51. Henry Kissinger, *For the Record, Selected Statements 1977–1980* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), p. 261.

52. Deng Xiaoping, *Fundamental Issues*, p. 163.

reflections upon the variety and the comparatively advanced and complex character of Western economies, felt freer to engage in abstract discourse. But the explanation could hardly lie in their supposed ignorance of Chinese conditions as insinuated by Deng Liqun in early 1992 as a response to Deng Xiaoping's "Spring Offensive." Among Deng's associates from those years in France are some of the most hallowed names in Chinese Communism, notably Zhou Enlai, Nie Rongzhen and Li Fuchun. Interestingly, they have all distinguished themselves by their practical accomplishments. None, of course, is more famous in this regard than Deng himself.

It may also be that Deng's brief stay in the Soviet Union in 1926 may have soured him towards that country, as unlike many of his colleagues it is difficult to find favourable mentions of it in his writings. Indeed in his three visits there in the course of the developing Sino-Soviet dispute Deng appeared to distinguish himself by the virulence of his criticisms.⁵³ As late as March 1988 a distinguished Soviet scholar at the Institute of Oriental Studies in the Soviet Academy of Sciences privately reflected that the normalization of relations with China had been held up because of Deng's personal antipathy. Certainly, Deng's personal style has not been noted for its diplomatic smoothness. Having been charmed by Zhou Enlai, Henry Kissinger is said to have recoiled from a particularly bruising encounter with Deng by dubbing him "a nasty little man."

Deng's claims to statesmanship can hardly be made on the basis of his diplomatic charm. But more to the point they cannot rest either on moral grounds. He cannot be regarded as the epitome of the revolutionist who seeks to recast the world in the name of a doctrine for whose ends no sacrifice is too great. The cold-blooded killings of peaceful demonstrators that he ordered in June 1989 had more to do with survival and retribution than the upholding of a moral order.

Deng's claims therefore must rest on his reinterpretation of China's national interest and on engaging his country once again with the rest of the world. His countrymen owe him a heavy debt for steering them from the xenophobic fruitless destructiveness of perpetual class struggle towards the path of economic development and growing prosperity. His advocacy of reform and openness may be enough to satisfy the Bismarkian demand that as a statesman he should follow however briefly in the footsteps of history. But by his simultaneous insistence upon Communist Party rule Deng may be remembered in the end as one who in Mao's terminology "walked on two legs" with one directed towards the future and the other towards the past.

The legacy Deng has bequeathed his successors in foreign affairs is mixed. On the positive side he has pointed the way for China to emerge in due course as a newly industrializing economy closely linked with the

53. The best accounts of Deng's younger years are to be found in Uli Franz (trans. by Tom Artin), *Deng Xiaoping* (Boston: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) especially pp. 21–75; and in Ching Hua Lee, *Deng Xiaoping: The Marxist Road to the Forbidden City* (Princeton: The Kingston Press, 1985) pp. 25–35.

international economy and increasingly integrated within the Asia-Pacific region. The country is on the brink of becoming a major force in the region with a capacity to project naval and air power throughout East Asia. But Deng's successors will have to learn to exercise that power with restraint lest they agitate their neighbouring states to find security through seeking countervailing power. On the negative side, Deng will have left his successors with extraordinarily difficult problems in sustaining the Chinese state as a unitary actor. His own legitimacy which rests on belonging to the generation of the founding fathers of the revolution is personal rather than institutional and it cannot be passed on. His successors are likely to be men of narrower outlook and bound by their bureaucratic and personal allegiances. They are likely to experience greater difficulties in holding on to Communist Party rule and to restraining the centrifugal tendencies of growing regionalism.

In bringing China more into the world Deng has solved certain problems only to open the door to many more. Perhaps his most important act of statesmanship has been to lead China towards modernity beyond the point of possible return to the period of isolation and dark totalitarian rule. But in doing so he has perhaps reached the limits of his vision.