



# DENG XIAOPING AND CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Ronald C. Keith

# Deng Xiaoping and China's Foreign Policy

Deng Xiaoping is widely acknowledged as the principal architect of China's economic reforms, but how far was he also responsible for shaping China's foreign policy that emphasized peace and development? This book explores Deng's foreign policy and shows how he established basic principles for China to have a foreign policy that supported economic development, stressed "harmony" in the world rather than "hegemony," and which avoided conflict and nurtured a peaceful approach. The book outlines how Deng worked to normalize relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, how he was disappointed by the lack of reciprocation by the United States, where relations are still portrayed in terms of "the China threat," and how the principles established by Deng continue to be adhered to.

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**In Memoriam: Professor Stuart R. Schram**



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# Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPCC	Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPSUCC	Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
MAC	Military Affairs Committee (CCPCC)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SWZEL	<i>Selected Works of Zhou Enlai</i> , 2 vols.
SWDXP	<i>Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping</i> , 3 vols.
SWHJT	<i>Selected Works of Hu Jintao</i> , 3 vols.
SWJZM	<i>Selected Works of Jiang Zemin</i> , 1 vol.
SWMTT	<i>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong)</i> , 5 vols.
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization
XJPTZG	<i>Xi Jinping Talks on Ruling and Governance</i> , 1 vol.

# Preface and acknowledgements

I have been thinking about writing this book since the early 1990s publications of my Macmillan/St. Martin's *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai* and its three separate, 1990, 1991 and 2013 Chinese translations in Beijing. Now is perhaps the right time to publish a sequel, *Deng Xiaoping and China's Foreign Policy*. Since then the debate surrounding China and whether it constitutes a "threat" still seems one-sided, and the unreserved extension of Cold War "realism" in the explanation of contemporary China has become more baffling in its persistence in the post-Cold War world. Moreover, since the early 1990s, a new generation of Chinese international relations scholarship has emerged, and with the elapse of time it is easier to assess the extent of the contemporary relevance of Deng's foreign policy.

I would make several preliminary comments. First, in the West, while Deng Xiaoping's contribution to China's economic reform has been widely recognized, his foreign policy has been underappreciated, when in fact it was one of the most successful foreign policies of the twentieth century. Deng's relevance to China's contemporary foreign policy, after almost forty years of changing international relations, is still quite salient. Succeeding Chinese leadership generations and their policies have deliberately reflected a continuity of perspective and method of analysis in their approach to new levels of multipolarity, economic globalization, international financial crisis, bilateral and regional free trade agreements, rising religious and ethnic clashes and spreading non-traditional security threats.

Second, Western perspective on the "China threat" is a serious distortion that has stood in the way of positive foreign policy adaptations to China's constructive engagement in international affairs, and this book seeks a correction to the related assumptions underlying the criticisms of Western realism. As the "world's largest developing state" with an ancient civilization, Chinese foreign policy cannot be captured in the conventional understanding of the "rise and fall" of great powers. Deng's emphasis on "development" has guided foreign policy formation since at least 1978.

Third, Chinese emphasis on "peace" has often been described as a strategic deception that obscures China's underlying aggressive motivation. The recent Chinese use of Chinese imperial history in the explanation of Chinese foreign policy has become the subject of Western cynicism stemming from assumptions melding China's "totalitarianism" to Chinese civilization. Such criticism underestimates the importance of the inner content of Chinese foreign policy thinking

in a world where realism has increasingly squeezed out the remaining vestiges of idealism from the conduct of international relations.

Furthermore, I completed this book in retirement and am grateful for related university funding for travel and provision of services and resources at the Department of International Business and Asian Studies and the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University, Australia. I would also thank Hou Kuikui for double-checking the Chinese characters.

Finally, I have dedicated this book to the memory of my mentor and former School of Oriental and African Studies supervisor, Professor Stuart R. Schram. Professor Schram's contribution to the study of Mao Zedong and modern China was inspiring, and behind his no-holds-barred intellectual force, there was a kind person. I would not like to burden him further with any of my interpretations, but he once told me that, like Luther, I should nail my thesis to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. This I have tried to do with the publication of the present book.

# 1 Judging Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy "pragmatism"

When Former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt got together with Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to reminisce about their heyday in international relations, Schmidt asked Lee who was the greatest leader of the twentieth century. Lee immediately replied: "Deng is undoubtedly the most impressive international leader I have ever met."<sup>1</sup> Schmidt had wanted to put Churchill in first place, but he agreed that Deng was "by far the number one communist who has been successful." Lee interjected, "No, he is really not a communist. He is a pragmatist."<sup>2</sup>

Schmidt and Lee did not consider whether it is possible to be a "communist" and a "pragmatist" at one and the same time. And this issue is one of the most important keys to understanding the nature and content of Deng's foreign policy. Deng, himself, although he often spoke in the relevant terms of praxis and the need "to seek the truth from the facts" 实事求是, did not identify himself as a "pragmatist" as such. The closest he got was to suggest that he might be considered the leader of the "seeking the truth from the facts" faction.

Deng sought to achieve his primary foreign policy goal of "peace and development" 和平与发展 on the basis of the "unity of theory and practice." In these terms, his foreign policy was a striking success. So successful, in fact, that much of the structural edifice and fundamental qualitative assumptions of Deng's "independent foreign policy" 独立自主外交政策 still lie at the core of contemporary Chinese foreign policy. In fact, in terms of its consistency, internal coherence and flexible achievement of its objectives, Deng's "independent foreign policy" may be one of the most successful foreign policies of the twentieth century.

Deng had impressive success in his overall objective to achieve a timely peaceful regional and international environment during which he laid the foundations for quadrupling of China's GDP between 1980 and 2000. His "independent foreign policy" established an enduring policy framework by which China would modestly engage a changing world while focusing on the enormous challenge of domestic economic development.

Deng assigned himself several major tasks. He surprised his Western critics when, despite major differences in social system, he brought to fruition Hong Kong's transition to the mainland. This recovery of sovereignty was in and of

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itself an amazing feat given the stark structural differences between the PRC's socialist and Hong Kong's capitalist systems.

Deng similarly put to work the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in order to end containment and to establish diplomatic relations with the US. His greatest regret was not having solved the Taiwan Question. Responsibility for the lack of real progress on the Taiwan Question may not be exclusive to Deng personally, as the Taiwan Relations Act threatened to transform America's Taiwan policy into America's China policy. Deng, however, managed despite weakened Sino-US normalization not only to avoid conflict, but also to accelerate national economic development with the help of US investment and technological transfer.

When relations with the US were severely tested in the attempt to sanction China for the suppression of demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Deng was matter-of-fact, saying: "If there is nothing else we're good at, we're good at withstanding sanctions."<sup>3</sup> In the face of the worldwide media storm after Tiananmen Square, and by applying "dual tactics" and playing the "economy card," he staved off another round of benighted containment.

Deng's sponsorship of a widening pattern of state-to-state normalizations based on the Five Principles also pre-empted Soviet encirclement of China and helped undercut Soviet expansionism in Asia. Deng initiated normalization with the US, Japan and Europe, and this pattern ultimately developed to include the Soviet Union, Russia, India and even Vietnam. While Deng arrested the development of Vietnamese control over Cambodia and Laos, he lived to see the signing of a joint communique of friendship with Vietnam.

His calm leadership weathered the apocalyptic implosion of the Soviet Union and the creation of fifteen new states in its wake. His foreign policy effectively dealt with a wide range of related old and new border issues. The Soviet collapse could easily have generated perennial conflict, but China positively cooperated with the Russian Federation to ensure border stability in the near abroad. Indeed, success in Central Asia prepared the way for the later development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, again based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. With such regional developments, the "great game" increasingly passed into history as new concepts of security took hold.

### **Understanding Deng's "pragmatic" foreign policy**

Deng Xiaoping has a reputation in the West for "pragmatism" in all areas of policy pertaining to modernization and economic development, but what are the specific origins of his supposedly "pragmatic" foreign policy, and how is the latter to be judged and analysed? The discussion throughout this book explains the roots and implications of Deng's foreign policy with inclusive reference to his values, ideology, and personality as well as to Chinese history, society and culture.

At the outset, it is important to note that Deng, while he revised ideology, he never repudiated ideology itself. He was particularly interested in an ideological synthesis of "idealism" and "realism" stressing the "unity of theory and practice" 理论和实际统一. His idealism centred on ensuring China's economic

development to the benefit of the Chinese people. His "realism" focused on how to flexibly achieve his ideals through the dialectical calculation of advantage and disadvantage that informs the contradictions that shape reality. For Deng, dialectical observation was so inductively disciplined as to constitute a form of "scientific" inquiry.

Foreign observers often think of Deng as interested in practice in the sense of solving real problems as opposed to theorists who indulge in flights of ideological fancy. However, Chinese analysis has a different understanding of Deng's practice and influence. Party General Secretary Hu Jintao, for example, in a 2007 speech at the Great Hall of the People at the end of a month-long celebration of the birth centenary of Deng Xiaoping, stressed the potentiality of Deng's "scientific theories": "Comrade Deng Xiaoping is a great man of the world whose remarkable achievements and scientific theories will, as they already did, continue to change and influence China and the world at large."<sup>4</sup>

Popular Western definition often takes "pragmatism" as antithetical to ideology. One of the world's most widely acclaimed "pragmatists," former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, on looking back on the trials and tribulations of the Sino-American relationship, asked: "Is pragmatism enough" 实用主义就够了?<sup>5</sup> The question is, itself, problematic. It presumes that beyond expediency there is some kind of ultimate end, and it presumes across states and societies there is a consistent definition of "pragmatism" that can serve as a common yardstick to measure how different foreign policies have managed changing international relations.

Kissinger argued that in the conduct of international relations simple expedient response to power is not enough to sustain peace. One of his Western-trained Chinese biographers, Zhou Yijun, has suggested that Kissinger's own "realism" was moderated by his concern that states recognize each other's respective interests.<sup>6</sup> Values, especially order, must be articulated and applied in foreign policy. Peking University professors Gong Honglie and Gao Jinhu's study of Kissinger's foreign policy confirmed this a priori interest in order and cited Kissinger: "If history teaches us anything, it is that there can be no peace without the balance [of power] and no justice without limits."<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, in the West, "pragmatism" and "realism" are often synonymous particularly in deference to the expediency of power in dealing with the shortcomings of the human condition and the anarchy of the state system. Deng Xiaoping, like many Chinese leaders of his generation, saw in the balance of power a negative trend spawning disorder and war. Alliances fostered challenges to the sovereign equality of states. Great power responsibility often became a form of "bullying," and "hegemony" usually came at the manifest expense of smaller states' national self-determination and development.

Deng could readily agree that "pragmatism" is not enough; however, he was more focused on achieving social justice rather than order. He could not imagine politics without ideals. The very idea of expediently dealing with reality without reference to the achievement of ideals was foreign to his thinking and experience. Deng built his foreign policy on the basis of a specifically Chinese synthesis of "idealism" and "realism," and this synthesis is best explained with comprehensive

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reference to Deng's personality, revolutionary experience, and to his values and ideological and political commitments.

Interpretation of Deng's synthesis of idealism and realism fundamentally challenges the assumption of a "China threat." Deng's "independent foreign policy," which focused on "peace and development," disagreed with Western "realism," which according to the *Dictionary of World Politics* ". . . in one form or another has dominated both academic considerations of world politics and the thinking of foreign policy-makers themselves."<sup>8</sup>

This book contends that the Cold War fear of Chinese domination was predicated in a flawed identification and interpretation of the substantive internal priorities of China's foreign policy. This resulted in one of modern history's greatest lost diplomatic opportunities for the full and cooperative inclusion of China in a more progressive world order. The relatively benign, if not refreshingly positive, nature of Chinese foreign policy under Deng Xiaoping has explicitly and comprehensively conflicted with the notion of "China threat" 中国威胁. Indeed, even after Chinese foreign policy rejected alliances and "card-playing" and flexibly overcame US-led containment to establish a healthy open-ended range of diplomatic relations, this manufactured "China threat" has seemingly inexplicably compounded the lost opportunity of the Cold War years down to the present.

#### **Deng Xiaoping as a personality and as a leader**

The study of Deng's foreign policy needs some biographical context. Chinese biographers Deng Rong and Gao Yi lauded Deng, who regarded himself as a "son of the Chinese people" 中国人民的儿子.<sup>9</sup> Deng and Gao claimed that in thought and action Deng always put the needs of the Chinese people first.

The question is how did he do this? Deng Xiaoping's personality comprised a series of dualisms that, whilst striking different chords, often resolved into a resonant harmony. Mao praised Deng, noting his "God-given talent" and "firm character behind a gentle appearance."<sup>10</sup> Deng was modest, honest and patient, yet ambitious, self-confident and depending on the circumstances, either cautious or decisive in his foreign policy.

He was both a Party man devoted to public service and a very effective Party leader who could bring complex policy to a successful conclusion. He was unassuming yet known for his sharp observations in Party debate. During his seventy-year career in the Party leadership, he had been through the distress and anomie associated with three falls from power or "three falls and three rises" 三落三起.<sup>11</sup> Deng was a seasoned survivor who late in his career implicitly, at least, drew the contrast between Mao's arbitrary arrogance and his own personal modesty.

He studied the big picture but would not suffer fools with big ideas and no experience. He was direct in speech and economical in his use of words. He strongly believed in ideals and discipline, yet he was extraordinarily flexible in achieving his goals. At times, he exhibited flashes of anger; however, in the

context of existential crisis, he was calm and steadfast while everyone around him was losing their heads. He was usually cautious in his use of force, but he would not back down in defending China against great power "bullying" and those who would "play the tyrant."

How did he place himself and China in the wider world? Deng was born in 1904 before the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911. He was a young nationalist before he became a socialist. As an impressionable young nationalist, he witnessed the angst of China's youth who genuinely feared China's very destruction. He travelled a long way from the countryside of Sichuan. From the outset, Deng strongly believed in learning particularly as he wished to make himself useful to China. As former Party General Secretary Hu Jintao put it in 2016, Deng was completely focused on "saving the country, and saving the people" 救国救民.<sup>12</sup>

During World War I, at the age of sixteen, Deng went to France. Although he did not learn French, he was keen to expand his horizons and engaged with the European world, joining the Communist youth movement under the mentorship of Zhou Enlai. He then studied at the Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow for one year.

Mao Zedong, himself, confirmed in his own autobiography that he had also considered going to France, but decided to stay behind. Mao conceded that he was not good at foreign languages and needed to know more about his own country.<sup>13</sup> Possibly, there was more than one way to serve the Chinese people.

There is a more important comparison between Mao and Deng. Mao is often associated with the notion "study, study and study some more" 学习, 学习, 再学习. They both believed that it was important to study "the strong points of all countries" so as to learn something that could benefit China. Both deliberately thought about China and the world. Their study called for open-minded but critical independent thinking that investigated reality on the formal basis of dialectics. Both believed that it was very important to learn from the outside world, but they were equally impatient with the dogmatic copying of foreign experience without regard for China's specific conditions. The importation of ideas, organization and technology required conscious adaptation to the latter.

How did Deng conceptualize learning particularly in light of China's tremendous literary tradition and respect for erudition? Deng professed at the end of his selected works: "I haven't read many books, but there is one thing I believe in: Chairman Mao's principle of seeking the truth from the facts."<sup>14</sup> Deng and Mao agreed on the key relation between knowledge and praxis. Without practice, knowledge was little more than bookishness. Praxis helps define alternative strategies and gives rise to creative thinking; thus, it is the key to success in flexibly dealing with changing realities.

Deng is credited with statements supporting the thinking that comes with practice: "If a party, a state or a nation proceeds in everything on the basis of books, is rigid in its way of thinking and practices blind worship, it will not be able to advance and its life will cease."<sup>15</sup> Mao felt the same way. In a rather interesting insight on how those with "little learning" can overthrow those "with more learning," he took the following cue from Ming dynastic history:

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Only two of the emperors of the Ming Dynasty did well, T'ai-tsu and Ch'eng-tsu. One was illiterate and the other only knew a few characters. Afterwards . . . in the Chia-ch'ing reign when the intellectuals had power, things were in a bad state. . . To read too many books is harmful.<sup>16</sup>

As for reading Marxist books, Mao thought reading "a few dozen" would be sufficient. He believed that time and space are infinite and that philosophy could not handle an infinity of contradictions. Its weakness was that "it hadn't produced practical philosophy, but only bookish philosophy."<sup>17</sup> Deng was not against books *per se*. He enjoyed reading. However, he shared Mao's impatience with "book worship," which he contrasted with the importance of praxis based on "seeking the truth from the facts" 实事求是.

According to the recollections of his children, Deng liked to read Lenin's *Collected Works*, the *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and the *History of the Twenty-Four Dynasties*, *The Annals of the Three Kingdoms*, as well as the biographies of famous foreigners such as Marshal Zhukov and foreign classical novels such as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.<sup>18</sup>

Deng continuously espoused modesty as essential to learning, but to use the Western idiom, he was a "straight shooter." When he wanted to make a point with foreign leaders, Deng did not dally with diplomatic niceties. On the one hand, Deng liked modesty, especially when learning. On the other, he disliked opportune or obsequious self-deprecating modesty. Like Zhou Enlai, he was naturally genuine in dealing with differences of opinion and conflict that characterized the changing political and economic realities of international relations.

Mao no doubt agreed with Deng that Marxism is a "plain thing, a very plain truth."<sup>19</sup> Conceptually, however, Marxism was both an ideology and a science. Deng believed in Mao's ideology, but he hated "empty talk" 空话, especially that of Mao's ultra-leftist supporters. A key point of modern temporal reference was the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76. It was full of "empty talk." It deliberately sought to destroy China's tradition. It broke the relation between words and deeds; it led to lying and the failure to solve problems, and the widespread malicious destruction of the reputations of comrades.

Deng believed in ideals, and he believed in praxis.<sup>20</sup> His leadership style reiterated the importance of honesty and modesty explicitly as part of the inductive science of the Party's mass line and implicitly as part of the historical preferences of the Chinese people. The ancient philosopher, Han Fei-tzu (280–233 B.C.) had once claimed that "honest advice hurts the ears" 忠言逆耳, but "it induces good conduct" 利于行.

Deng's solution to "empty talk" and political dishonesty was to apply the "scientific" basis of Mao Zedong Thought particularly where it recommended "seeking the truth from the facts." Deng's insistence on honestly dealing with reality explains his foreign policy objections to the exaggeration of China's national power. His related low-posture foreign policy was not self-effacing, but it was almost always on the mark in accepting the limits of China's national power.

Deng was a leading party organizer for most of his career. He had absorbed the Leninist notion of leadership in Moscow in 1926. In post-1949 China, he often took the lead in Party-building and especially important was his Party-building after the Cultural Revolution. Deng became a steady helmsman. He was a better Leninist than Mao, who at times would purposefully, and more often than not opportunistically, descend into "chaos." Deng did not share Mao's fascination with the somersaulting Monkey King, Sun Wukong, who had mastered seventy-two metamorphoses.

As a Party man, Deng did not like personality cults. He, however, was useful to Mao in that he helped Mao overcome the spreading implications of Stalin's personality cult in China. Deng's mandate was the same as the Party, namely, "seeking the truth from the facts" 实事求是. As paramount leader, unlike Mao, Deng's picture was not prominently displayed over the entrance to the imperial palace in Beijing.<sup>21</sup> He tutored the whole Party in its "three great work styles" 三大作风 that included integrating theory with practice, forging links with the masses and practicing self-criticism. In what must have been a painful personal eulogy on the death of Zhou Enlai, Deng stressed that what he admired most about his "elder brother" was his prudence and modesty.

In solving problems, he deployed the latter Party "workstyle" that had successfully solved the real problems of China's revolution and transition to socialism through empirical investigation and rigorous dialectical understanding. Bureaucratic formalism and organizational apathy were political sins. Deng loathed "discussions without decisions, decisions without implementation, and endless procrastination and delays in solving problems."<sup>22</sup>

### **"Pragmatism" and Deng's Chinese socialist ideology**

Deng was pragmatic as both a nationalist and a socialist. He had a strong commitment to his ideals, but in attaining his ideals he was an "old soldier" who would not be so silly as "to throw an egg against a rock" 以卵投石. He would not throw himself against a wall of enemy steel in a futile gesture of defiance. He was, however, incredibly flexible in his achievement of his ideals. How far he was prepared to go in sacrificing socialism's truth to his intuitive "pragmatism"? There is a significant division of opinion on this, both in China and the West.

On his 81st birthday, the Chinese press honoured Deng with a new song singing his praises: "Xiaoping, hello. Lands frozen in the past today are becoming fertile/ Ships grounded in the past today weigh anchor and sail/ Things lost in the past today are returning twofold."<sup>23</sup> His much vaunted "pragmatism" has often been captured in his favourite metaphor, "groping the rocks on the river bed to cross to the other side of the river" 摸着石头过河. Cheeky 1980s' Chinese rock and roll lyrics had suggested, however, that he was so busy staring at the riverbed and feeling his way from rock to rock on the riverbed that he forgot to look up to see socialism on the far bank of the river.

If Deng's "groping for rocks on the riverbed" was often seen as a metaphor for his "pragmatism" in Western commentary, the underlying assumption appears to be that if Deng was a "pragmatist," he could not be a Marxist. Capitalism was

expected to spawn pragmatism. Deng knew full well that Western observers were interested in whether or not he had turned to capitalism and away from Marx.

Several times, Mao had favourably commented on Deng's dialectics and his ideological talents, but in 1976 he faulted Deng one last time for having failed genuinely to support class struggle. Mao's last pronouncement on Deng was mealy-mouthed: "He has never been a Marxist."<sup>24</sup>

When the US TV correspondent Mike Wallace interviewed him in 2 September 1986, Wallace cleverly enquired what would Marx and Mao have to say to him when he goes to see God. Deng simply said: "I am a Marxist. . . . We made the revolution, seized power and founded the People's Republic of China because we had this faith and this ideal."<sup>25</sup> Any assumption that Deng was a closet capitalist whose pragmatism superceded his ideology might well have been put to rest in light of Deng's strident defence of Chinese socialism during the Tiananmen Square events of the spring of 1989.

A critical Party biographer and former associate of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, Ruan Ming, has alternatively suggested that Deng was all about Deng. Deng's much vaunted "pragmatism" was not so much about the liberation of thought, as suggested in the Chinese press, nor about economic efficiency, as suggested in Western praise of his economic reform. It was nothing more than an opportunist's ambition to stay in power. In summing up Ruan's *Deng Xiaoping: Chronicle of Empire*, Professor Andrew Nathan succinctly summed up this point of view when he said Deng's "pragmatism" was "not about guiding China across the river to a specified place on the other bank, but about crossing the river without slipping on the rocks."<sup>26</sup>

Deng has both admirers and detractors in the West. He occasionally did "slip on the rocks," but he had extraordinary resilience. He could be brutally honest. He never claimed the personal grace of Zhou Enlai. He once confessed: "I have three vices. I drink, I spit, and I smoke."<sup>27</sup> His accuracy with the spittoon was legendary.

Henry Kissinger, who had been charmed by the gracious Mandarin-like sophistication of Zhou Enlai, reportedly described Deng as a "nasty little man."<sup>28</sup> Kissinger did not have the same natural rapport with Deng. In *On China*, Kissinger acknowledges that he needed time to "adjust to Deng's acerbic, no-nonsense style, his occasional sarcastic interjections, and his disdain of the philosophical in favor of the eminently practical." Kissinger then wrote that over time he came to have "enormous regard for this doughty little man with the melancholy eyes."<sup>29</sup>

The late MIT expert on Asian political culture and former president of the American Political Science Association, Professor Lucien Pye, amplified the "nasty little man" characterization. He held Deng down on his psychiatrist's couch. He described him as "a short man sitting in an overstuffed chair" whose "ritualized, cackled laugh" shows "no real feelings."<sup>30</sup> Pye's extraordinary list of Deng's personal shortcomings included a "limp" handshake, a "provincial Chinese haircut," a "garbled" Sichuan accent and a neck so short that it was "almost missing."

Despite his short stature and missing neck, Deng was very popular with foreign leaders and delegations. Professor Ezra Vogel's 2011 magisterial biography

offers a convincing and extraordinarily documented interpretation of Deng's style and his positive impact on foreigners:

But even when they did not like what he had to say, foreign visitors, from different social positions and different parties, from large countries and small, ended up feeling comfortable with him. They felt he was someone with whom they could do business.<sup>31</sup>

Mao cultivated his personal mystique and liked to speak in grand philosophical metaphors. He left his guests with a sense of wonder and awe even if they were not sure what he meant. Deng respected foreign leaders by saying exactly what he meant. There was no shilly-shallying. Vogel cites Zbigniew Brzezinski's shrewd characterization of Deng after a two-hour meeting and dinner:

Deng immediately appealed to me. Bright, alert and shrewd, he was quick on the uptake, with a good sense of humour, tough and very direct. . . . I was impressed by his sense of purpose and drive; . . . The Chinese side speaks straightforwardly about their views and ideas."<sup>32</sup>

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew painted a picture altogether different than Pye in his May 2012 tour d'horizon with former West German Chancellor Schmidt: "A physically small man, but a giant of a leader – Deng is undoubtedly the most impressive international leader I have ever met."

### **Differing views on Deng's "pragmatism"**

When President Reagan's secretary of state, Alexander Haig, contended with others in the US administration over China policy, he argued that Chinese pragmatism could serve as a "bridge" between the First and the Third Worlds. Haig summed up:

[China's] present leaders, practical men weary of impractical theory and revolutionary religiosity, are trying within the limits of prudence to bring about [the meeting of the First and Third Worlds]. And within the limits of prudence, the United States must join them. . . . In this I was stubbornly opposed by other men in the administration who could not bring themselves to believe that not all Communists are the same, that national interests are at least as reliable guide to national behaviour as ideology, and American interests can sometimes be served by arrangements with such people as the leaders of China.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, not all Communists are the same! Nixon had personally noted this very same point in his dialogues with China's leaders in Beijing. However was Nixon aware that Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping all shared the same negative perspective on American "pragmatism"? There is plenty of room for disagreement.

Kissinger was enamoured of Zhou's pragmatism. He was less qualified than Nixon. Nixon claimed that his "most vivid memory" of his February 1972 "journey for peace" was "the unique personality of Chou En-lai." Nixon thought of Zhou as both rigidly ideological and extremely knowledgeable "in broad terms about men and history."<sup>33</sup> Nixon may have come closer to the mark than Kissinger in that he sensed the Chinese leadership was somehow, at one and the same time, ideological and pragmatic.

Peking University Professor Ye Zicheng's study of Chinese foreign policy thought has suggested that the "realism" 现实主义 that underlie Deng's foreign policy was rooted in his adherence to "seeking the truth from the facts," which is premised in the unity of theory and praxis, and in his personal "optimism" 东观主义.<sup>34</sup>

On reviewing both Western and Chinese eulogy and criticism, this book concludes that Deng was a strong leader with ideals. Over the years, he did not abandon his commitment to ideals, but he did seek to realize these ideals through the deliberate unity of theory and praxis. "Pragmatism" brought together theory about ideals and values with practical experience in applying theory. Deng believed in theory, but he was not above changing it in light of practice, and in his pursuit of China's modernization, his praxis included bold experiments.

Deng was determined to realize his goals of national economic development. He had not only actively led an unprecedented national process of economic development, he was also the architect of a closely related foreign policy that greatly facilitated this development. His economic reform needed a companion foreign policy that maximized China's technological imports, trading and investment opportunities while ensuring China's "independence and self-reliance" and avoiding extraneous and costly alliance commitments.

Arguably, ideology has been devalued in Western analysis of Chinese foreign policy. Professor Samuel Kim once wrote that while Chinese theoretical concepts had a "major impact on the shaping and legitimation of a PRC political identity," there was no reason to conclude that such theory had provided a "pervasive and long-lasting operational guide for seeking China's proper role in a state-centric world."<sup>35</sup> This is to underestimate the role that ideology has had in helping shape as well as legitimate Chinese foreign policy.

Some observers have faulted China experts for gorging on the forbidden fruits of official Chinese ideology in their explanation of the understanding of the nature of the Chinese regime and its policies. Professor Lucien Pye's obituary of Deng claimed to detect a "bias" that is "all too common among China scholars" and that is the tendency to regard unduly "Beijing's official positions" as "the focus of analysis."<sup>36</sup> Rather than dismissed out of hand, such positions ought, however, to be included in the comprehensive analysis of Chinese policy. A careful, social scientific reading of such positions can yield critically important insights into Chinese thinking and decision-making.

Contemporary realists have claimed, however, that foreign policy and diplomacy, predicated in "official positions," are largely irrelevant to the Chinese consideration of power. Regardless of such recriminations, Deng's foreign policy

needs explanation with appropriately qualified reference not only with respect to Deng's explanation of the realities of power but also with respect to his own hard-fought values and the ideological emphasis on Chinese nationalism. Deng never said that he wanted to become an American pragmatist. His revolutionary experience produced a modern Chinese ideology that he was not about to disavow because of foreign sensitivities.

Deng was deeply impressed with Western technology and knowledge, but he was also forthright in his criticism of Western society: "The people in capitalist countries do not, and cannot possibly, share any common ideal; many of them simply don't have any ideals at all."<sup>37</sup> Perhaps it is a point worth debating. Certainly, Deng's own motivation was clear. He was a strong advocate of the "open door" policy, but he warned that "undesirable foreign things" could smash through China's door like a "battering ram." He acknowledged that he was sometimes frustrated with prying foreign "bourgeois scholars" who "oppose the very things we believe in."<sup>38</sup> In response to the related dangers of "bourgeois liberalism," Deng emphasized the importance of Party "ideals" and "discipline" in the critically independent sifting of foreign ideas. In this, he and Mao were surprisingly on the same wave length, and this goes a long way to explaining his rather complicated relationship with Mao Zedong, who was so instrumental in shaping Deng's later career.

Also, as a self-proclaimed "son of the Chinese people," Deng practiced "seeking the truth from the facts." Rather than dismissing ends in politics, he sought the best practical way to achieve his Chinese socialist ends. He was open to Western ideas and experience that could serve China. He was also a Chinese socialist critic of, and, not an admiring student of, Western realism. Deng, however, was no xenophobe. His nationalism was strong, but neither "narrow," nor "raw." As outlined in this chapter and the next, in inner Party debates, he repeatedly rejected Chinese exceptionalism. He was very interested in learning from the West but on his own Chinese terms. Helmut Schmidt and Lee Kuan Yew were agreed that Deng was "prepared to learn" and that this was the key to his impressive leadership.<sup>39</sup>

### **"Pragmatism," party politics and Mao and Deng**

It is well known that Deng was mentored and supported by Premier Zhou Enlai over his entire career. However, Deng also had a long-standing and critically important political relationship with Mao. Ideologically, Deng's position on praxis was formally the same as that of Mao Zedong. Deng often enjoyed Mao's respect because of this. Politically, at key points in Party crisis such as in January 1935, he was there for Mao when others opportunistically distanced themselves from him in inner Party struggles. Classical Chinese wisdom remarks on how important such loyalty can be: "integrity shows itself clearly in adverse circumstances. Certainly Deng was more than a fair-weather friend 酒肉朋友.

In 1953, in a major plot to unseat Mao, influential Party leader Gao Gang solicited Deng's support. Much to Gao's discomfort Deng openly sided with Mao.<sup>40</sup> When Deng, in 1956, was responsible for reporting on Party matters and

the serious question of personality cult, Deng took some of the heat off Mao by identifying him as the author of the March 1949 Party regulations prohibiting the "glorification" of individuals and interdicting Party leader birthday celebrations and the naming of public places after the leaders.<sup>41</sup> "Chinese comrades" were not to be placed "on par with Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin."<sup>42</sup>

While lauding collective leadership and democratic centralism, Deng generalized the issue of personality cult. Rather than focusing specifically on the leadership of Stalin and Mao, he drew attention to "another kind" of "people" whom he criticized for "revers[ing] the relations between the Party and people." Such people, who were "swollen with conceit and self-complacency," were responsible for "exaggerating the role of the individual."<sup>43</sup> Claiming that a lesson had been learned at the 20th National Congress of the CPSU, Deng also insisted: "Love for the leader is essentially an expression of love for the interests of the Party, the class and the people, and not the deification of the individual."<sup>44</sup>

Deng subsequently supported Mao on decisions concerning the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward. One of his biographers, Professor David Goodman, has suggested that Mao found Deng to be so politically reliable such that Deng acted as Mao's "eyes and ears."<sup>45</sup>

In his last years, Mao descended into a vortex of heady contradictions. The great dialectician was unable to practice dialectics. Although he had been on the receiving end of Mao's denunciations, Deng refused to support de-Maoification. As a "son of the Chinese people," he himself had suffered the humiliating arbitrariness of Mao's leadership but he still regarded Mao as the very "symbol of our country."

Deng had personally witnessed and was not impressed with de-Stalinization. He told the Italian Journalist, Oriana Fallaci: "We will not do to Chairman Mao what Khrushchev did to Stalin."<sup>46</sup> Deng did make changes to, or re-interpreted some of Mao's key policies, but he kept Mao's ideology to legitimate the "four modernizations" and "socialism with Chinese characteristics." In a major speech of 30 March 1979, Deng clarified: "The cause and the thought of Mao Zedong are not his alone: they are likewise those of his comrades-in-arms, the Party and the people. His thought is the crystallization of the experience of the Chinese people's revolutionary struggle over half a century."<sup>47</sup> In sum, to overturn Mao's thought would not only involve overturning the Party, but also Chinese history, itself.

Deng revised Mao's foreign policy in important ways, but he anchored his foreign policy in the generational wisdom of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Most importantly, this Thought had a lot to do with solving problems through the application of dialectics that sought to identify and resolve contradictions in changing domestic and international social and political reality. Such analysis also encouraged thinking about how domestic and international affairs are linked.

Deng claimed that both Mao and Zhou had originated the notion of "four modernizations." The latter had to be achieved on the basis of Mao Zedong's credo of "seeking the truth from the facts." Western observations were not especially sensitized to the relevance of Deng's ideology to his foreign policy. Deng rejected

the extreme ideology of the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, he canonized Mao Zedong Thought so as to legitimate modernization policies. And while modernization required new levels of trade and investment, Deng still insisted in the post-containment context on opposing "hegemonism" in world affairs. He rejected "superpower" status for China even as he sought to open China's door wider to allow China to participate in the "world technological revolution."

Late in the Cultural Revolution, Mao turned against ultra-leftist revolutionary diplomacy that had focused on ever-widening class struggle at the international level and the export of Mao's thought throughout Asia. Over the vociferous objections of his wife, Jiang Qing, Mao ordered Vice-Premier Deng to make the first speech by a senior Chinese leader to the UN General Assembly on 10 April 1974. Deng's New York debut was the first opportunity for a Chinese leader to appear before the UN to set out for the world the conceptual base for China's foreign policy. It was one of the most extraordinary moments in modern Chinese diplomatic history.

### **Deng's UN debut: "China will never become a superpower!"**

Deng's UN debut was personally poignant and immensely gratifying, as he had been pilloried by extreme leftists in the Cultural Revolution for "national betrayal" and for having undermined Chairman Mao's principle of "self-reliance." In choosing Deng to go to New York, Mao rejected leftist "revolutionary diplomacy" and returned to the pre-Cultural Revolutionary policy of "independence and self-reliance" that he and Zhou Enlai had sponsored in the mid-1950s.

It had been a long and arduous political struggle to acquire the China seats at the UN. The UN victory was sweet, but there was little Chinese triumphalism. China's new UN diplomacy professed a curious modesty. Deng took the lead, but participated with Zhou Enlai and Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua in preparing the speech that Mao ultimately approved. Rather than claiming new power status for China, Deng insisted that China would never become a "superpower":

China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. What is a superpower? A superpower is an imperialist country which everywhere subjects other countries to its aggression, interference, control, subversion or plunder and strives for world hegemony. . . . should [China] change her colour and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.<sup>48</sup>

What an interesting moral disclaimer! This was not how great powers were supposed to rise. China was not going to "play the tyrant" in the world and would not "bully" the developing countries. China's vice-premier made a sweeping gesture. He issued an open invitation to overthrow Beijing should China ever become a "superpower." Deng later claimed that if China with its huge population was to take

the "capitalist road" and seek "hegemony," this would be a sorry "retrogression of history" and "a disaster for the world".<sup>49</sup>

American observers were not impressed. Kissinger did not think that Deng was very forthcoming and wondered if he was on some sort of training mission. American diplomatic opinion also suggested that Deng's emphasis on national independence and self-reliance represented a retrogressive economic nationalism that conflicted with rising interdependence in the modern world economy.<sup>50</sup>

Deng had claimed that no matter what happens in the future, China would "never play the tyrant" and for all time would reject the hypocrisy of playing the great power game. Such protestation challenges Western realist assumptions that Deng was intuitively a card-playing realist who once unleashed would project China's power on to the world stage. Deng had no such "theatrical pretensions"! Deng was a self-conscious revisionist. He politically challenged the realities of classical great power politics, but he also adopted a low posture in his foreign policy commitments that was rational and logical.

The 1974 statement was later followed by a revision to the state constitution in 4 December 1982 that facilitated Deng's new policy emphases on modernization. The constitution's preface linked peaceful coexistence with development and acclaimed high moral principle that challenged great power politics:

The future of China is closely linked with that of the whole world. China adheres to an independent foreign policy as well as to the five principles [of peaceful coexistence] of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence in developing diplomatic relations and economic and cultural exchanges with other countries; China consistently opposes imperialism, hegemonism and colonialism, supports the oppressed nations and the developing countries in their just struggle to win and preserve national independence and develop their national economies. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Declining great power status for China and extolling China's "independence and self-reliance" was not necessarily a matter of strategic deception or feigned modesty. It was formally predicated in the Party's political experience and thinking about China's place in the world. This thinking and experience resulted in a pragmatic understanding of China's actual position in the international system; and this reading of comparative national power logically required a low-posture foreign policy.

Despite or maybe because of all of the "turmoil under heaven," Deng's dialectical reading of national and international realities acknowledged China's comparatively limited national power and negligible international outreach. No matter where its sympathies lie, China had its own poor developing economy to deal with and was hardly in a material position to contribute significantly to the leadership of the Third World. For Deng, the diversion of China's scarce and precious resources to achieve

superpower status would have been both immoral and self-defeating. After so many years of relative isolation during which China had made little, or no contribution to the world, it would take some time for China's development to catch up and support an effective contribution to the world.

Former Foreign Minister Huang Hua spoke highly of Deng's ability "to apply the principles and methods of Marxism and Leninism in accordance with the reality of China."<sup>52</sup> In particular, he elaborated on Deng's relevant instructions to China's diplomatic corps concerning the need "to take a low profile while playing our due role":

. . . Deng Xiaoping instructed us not to be very active in diplomatic affairs compared with other countries. [and] that China should make sure it didn't become the leader of other countries, since our national strength was not great enough, and we could not do everything required, otherwise we might lose many initiatives. We should quietly immerse ourselves in hard work and handle our domestic affairs well. This itself would be a contribution to the world.<sup>53</sup>

A low posture in foreign policy came with Deng's policy self-realization that China could only make a very modest contribution to world affairs. Chinese policy clearly sought to avoid the kind of commitments required in realist understanding of the rise and fall of great powers.

### **How can realism be squared with idealism?**

Deng did not feel obliged to choose between ideals and realities. Moreover, he regarded Mao Zedong Thought and its focus on dialectics as the antidote to "empty talk." His specific blend of idealism and realism needs to be examined in sharp relief with reference to Western assumptions concerning Chinese "pragmatism" or "realism."

The famous Cambridge historian, Edward H. Carr, in his well-known analysis of the twenty years crisis between the First and Second World Wars, wrote of the League of Nations' failures in facing *realpolitik*. Carr warned future practitioners of statecraft not to focus too exclusively on either idealism or realism. Carr's "complete realist" was so fixed on "the causal sequence of events" that s/he lost the opportunity to change reality, whereas the "complete idealist" ignored the "causal sequence of events" and, as a result, was unable to change reality.

At least some Western theorists and practitioners – Henry Kissinger is a case in point – believed that "realism" cannot be so easily separated out from idealism. "Realism" is, for example, seen to focus on power in relation to values and norms. In Kissinger's case, order is an especially important value that has to be considered in the mix along with power considerations. This reservation is discussed, for example, in Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi's *International Relations Theory* as follows:

## 16 *Judging Deng's foreign policy "pragmatism"*

As an image of politics, . . . realism is concerned with power and power politics among states but . . . many realists (including Morgenthau) have also been concerned with values and norms and the role they play in ordering international politics. In our view, realism is not the opposite of an idealism preoccupied with values and norms to the exclusion of power considerations, although the degree of emphasis placed on power and values among realists varies widely.<sup>54</sup>

In his early career as a Harvard professor, Henry Kissinger seemed to move in the opposite direction. He had claimed without qualification that diplomacy with any state that focuses on a single ideological version of the truth is not possible. As national security adviser and later as secretary of state, Dr. Kissinger acquired an international reputation for consummate pragmatism, and in his visits to Beijing he often viewed Chinese opposition to Soviet hegemonism as part of a balance of power based on a "quasi alliance" with the Chinese.

As the reflective author of *Years of Renewal* and *On China*, however, he again expressed his unease with "foreign policies largely shaped by ideologues who drive societies and the international system beyond their capacities," but he sided with Carr in rejecting the "dichotomy of pragmatism and morality":

The alleged dichotomy of pragmatism and morality seems to be a misleading choice. Pragmatism without a moral element leads to random activism, brutality, or stagnation; moral conviction not tempered by a sense of reality leads to self-righteousness, fanaticism, and the erosion of all restraint.<sup>55</sup>

In China's socialist setting, foreign policy formally encompassed "socialist idealism" 社会主义理想主义, as distinguished from liberal idealism. The latter sees the state as a social contract originating in reason, while the former idealism is oriented towards the practical achievement of means and ends in a new and just society. Liberal idealism apparently fostered a false consciousness as to the realities of American imperialism, whereas "socialist realism" 社会主义现实主义, drawing on "seeking the truth from the facts," fully understood China's comparative weakness as the world's largest developing country. This was a fact that had to be recognized, and ultimately such weakness would then be more appropriately addressed and overcome.

### **Deng's unconventional view of power in the state system**

Western realism's fascination with the balance of power has generated a great deal of confusion in relation to the study of modern Chinese foreign policy. With the exception of North Korea, China has, by choice, no treaties of alliance. This should not be interpreted as a weakness in China's foreign policy. Synthesized Chinese socialist idealism and realism self-consciously rejected the classical European balance of power politics purposefully to focus on China's independence and development. The balance of power was regarded as an inconvenient

hierarchy that sacrificed the equality of the developing states and also sacrificed their opportunity to participate freely in a wide range of state-to-state relationships with non-allies.

A senior Chinese authority on international relations, Han Nianlong, outlined Chinese objection to balance of power politics as a threat to China's sovereign independence and as a source of "bullying":

History has also brought home that a non-aligned policy with the big powers helps China to keep the initiative in its own hands in independently combating hegemonism. This is because an alliance with big powers would hinder our effort to reject and oppose hegemonist transgressions and even reduce us to being a pawn in the big powers' designs against other nations.<sup>56</sup>

Professor Gerald Segal, whom former foreign Minister Qian Qichen (1988–98) believed "became notorious for concocting the 'China Threat'," examined Chinese participation in "triangular diplomacy" with the Soviet Union and the US and argued that, regardless of their protestations, the Chinese have all along been "realists."<sup>57</sup> This view is hard to credit in light of Deng's clear rejection of the opportunities for alliance, and this rejection stands in stark contrast to US practice in the Asia region. Deng's position was incompatible with Western "realism." His position reflected a self-conscious approach to power and morality. His own Chinese realism accepted the comparative weakness of China in the international community even while his socialist idealism expresses confidence in China's ability to go it alone without the help of any of the great powers.

Deng was both pragmatic and optimistic. His own character and thinking reflected the greatest lesson of the Party's revolutionary experience, and it was this same lesson in dialectical learning that Deng used to explain and legitimate all policy including foreign policy. Deng's optimism was sorely tested in the often-brutal realities of Chinese politics. Three times he had risen from the politically dead like a Chinese Lazarus. Deng was candid in his remarks to Japan's Prime Minister Nakasone. The "saddest period" in his life was the Cultural Revolution," (1966–76), but even then he survived "... because I was optimistic."<sup>58</sup>

As a Chinese and as a Marxist, Deng might well have been interested in John Dewey's ideas on education and science, but he disagreed with American "pragmatism." The key to understanding his worldview is to see how he used his own Chinese thinking to define and to operationalize his end goals. Ideology provided both ideals and a method for achieving them. Even if China was not a superpower, it still had to focus on its independence and self-reliance vis-a-vis the great powers and their tendency to maximize the balance of power to their own benefit.

Deng's value system especially drew from an extraordinary, if not transcendental, political experience in responding to China's national conditions. The latter were understood on the basis of an ideology that stressed praxis at home and abroad. The relevance of ideology to Chinese foreign policy has, for example, been argued by Professor Mark Mancall, who has called into question foreign observation that sees in Deng's rise the triumph of Chinese self-interest:

... even China's interpretation of its self-interest took place well within its ideological construction of the world. China was demonstrating that what the West, particularly the Americans, took to be rigid and increasingly ideological structure was, in fact, a versatile analytical tool that could account for the remarkable pragmatism that China was exhibiting. . . ."<sup>59</sup>

Deng saw Western "pragmatism" 实用主义 as an expedient and illegitimate manipulation of power. He alternatively built on praxis 实际 as part of the "unity of theory and praxis 理论和实际统一. What could American "pragmatism" offer Deng apart from rejection of the Chinese revolution as a horrid example of ideological extremism? Western liberal opinion often warmed to the appearance of capitalism in China, but Western "realism" in its focus on power somewhat inconsistently judged Chinese ideology as frustratingly irrational and cunningly deceptive at one and the same time. Stephen Mosher, for example, has claimed that the "role of hegemon is deeply embedded in China's national dream work."

### **"Hiding capabilities and biding time": defensive logic or a strategy for world domination?**

Western realist critics have suggested that the Chinese ideology of peace is clever artifice. Apparently, the low posture of China's foreign policy is a ruse summed up in "hide China's capabilities and bide our time" 韬光养晦. The Chinese need time in order to build up their power so as to launch a future grand offensive strategy. Lee Kuan Yew suggested that there are two ways of looking at the Chinese propensity for "hiding capabilities": "One, that the Chinese will quietly become strong and quietly increase their influence without acting like a bully. The other, that they'll flex their muscles and try to browbeat everyone." Lee anticipated that the Chinese would opt for the first option while at the same time "growing their muscles."<sup>60</sup>

Was such "hiding" a defensive, or an offensive reflex to get potential enemies to drop their guard and not seek a margin of force? Was the entire edifice of Chinese policy thinking merely designed for purposes of deceiving foreigners so as to prepare for future war? On the other hand, it could be argued that Deng's new focus on development within a peaceful environment was an entirely legitimate policy concern.

In 1989 through 1990, the Chinese Communist Party was internationally stigmatized as the result of the Tiananmen Square event. In an incredibly short space of time, the world had changed unalterably. The regime was rocked by the near-death experience of Tiananmen Square anarchy, the overthrow and execution of the Romanian leader, Nicolai Ceausescu, the bringing down of the Berlin Wall and the "end of days" collapse of the USSR.

The potential for run-away bourgeois liberalism within China seemed very real. Deng seriously believed: "The Western countries are staging a third world war without gunsmoke 没有硝烟的第三次世界大战. By that I mean they want to accelerate the 'peaceful evolution' 和平演变 of socialist countries into capitalist countries."<sup>61</sup> This notion of "peaceful evolution" had been bandied about for some time, but now it

became deeply entrenched in Deng's mind, and it still inhabits the minds of China's leaders up to the present.

Deng calmly faced what was such a sudden and bewildering change in epoch that threatened the legitimacy and survival of Chinese socialism and the Chinese Communist Party. He projected self-confidence while still continuing to maintain a "low-posture" foreign policy that avoided costly international commitments and allowed an even greater focus on accelerating domestic economic development.

Deng had to worry about members of his own Party losing hope. Deng advanced his much cited twenty-four characters, namely, "observe with a cool head, hide one's capabilities and bide one's time, stand firm, calmly reply, make friends and know what is what" 冷静观察, 韬光养晦, 站稳脚跟, 沉着应付, 朋友要交, 心中有数. This strategy, or "policy spirit," underscored the dictum, "never claim leadership." This is what some Chinese authors have described as "realist foreign policy" 现实主义外交.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, the notion was consistent with a low-posture foreign policy.

In this advice, Deng likely drew on Zhou Enlai's experienced counsel; for example, Zhou had advised the first Chinese diplomatic delegation to the UN that China will refrain from the abuse of its new veto power and will "never assume the air of a big power and interfere in the affairs of other countries." China's new UN diplomats were told to be cautious and modest and sometimes bold when the circumstances called for it. They were to be disciplined and not panic in times of difficulty. They were to live up to the expectations of the Chinese people and the peoples of the Third World. They were to "... boost the morale of the world's peoples and deflate the arrogance of the superpowers."<sup>63</sup> Critics might suggest that the Chinese were shirking their international duties, but the logic of their foreign policy discourse is compellingly realistic.

Deng also devised a corollary strategy responding to the failed August 19 coup in the Soviet Union with a new 12-character principle, "Enemy troops are outside the city wall. They are stronger than we. We should mainly be on the defensive" 兵临城下敌强我弱以守为攻. The notion "mainly be on the defensive" once again was based on an astute dialectical reading of the underlying realities of domestic and international affairs.

Informed CCP sources glossed "mainly on the defensive" as it related to the thematic bias of the bigger 24-character principle. Its "policy spirit" was summed up as "... we do not bother ourselves with others outside, nor do we argue with the Soviet Union over views it currently holds, but we must state our position clearly inside the Party because there is a difference between the inside and outside. . . ."<sup>64</sup>

The influential Chinese Deng Xiaoping scholar, Gong Li, has used "hide one's capabilities and bide one's time" 韬光养晦 to describe the fourth and last stage of Deng's foreign policy development.<sup>65</sup> The particular reference to "hiding capabilities and biding our time" has attracted a lot of hostile Western commentary on the original meaning of the Chinese classics and their contemporary strategic pertinence for China's international relations.