Changes of the Chinese Communist Party’s Ideology and Reform Since 1978

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The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s ideology has undergone remarkable changes in the past three decades which have facilitated China’s reform and opening up as well as its modernization. The thesis has expounded upon the argumentation by enumerating five dimensions of CCP’s ideological changes and development since 1978.

First, the Party had restructured its ideological orthodoxy, advocating of ‘seeking truth from facts.’ Some of central Marxist tenets, such as ‘class struggle’, have been revised, and in effect demoted, and the ‘productive forces’ have been emphasized as the motive forces of history, so that the Party shifted its prime attention to economic development and socialist construction. The Party theorists proposed treating Marxism as a ‘developing science’ and a branch of the social sciences, but not an all-encompassing ‘science of sciences.’ These efforts have been so transformative that they have brought revolutionary changes in Chinese thinking of, and approach to Marxism. The Party has also changed the role that ideology plays in the Chinese policy process while remolding its doctrine.

Second, the CCP has redefined Mao Zedong Thought, which is now regarded not only as a sinification of Marxism, but also a collective wisdom of the Party. While the CCP’s 1981 Resolution reaffirms that Mao’s thought remains ‘the valuable spiritual asset of our party’, it stresses that the Party must acknowledge that Mao made serious mistakes, especially in his later years, and that some of his ideas were simply wrong. Mao was thus ‘de-deified’, and the new official line is that Mao Zedong Thought refers to accumulated wisdom through the whole process of the Chinese revolution. This approach was in fact redefining and revising the Party’s doctrine, thus it allowed two further important steps in framing a new orthodoxy. One was the selective use of Mao; the other was the flexibility allowed to developing of the official ideology.

Third, the CCP has been promoting Deng Xiaoping Theory as the Party’s new doctrine, which has been enshrined into the CCP’s constitution, along with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, as the Party’s guiding ideology. Deng picked up not where Mao had left off when he died in 1976, but where he had gone wrong, beginning in the mid-1950s. It provided the CCP with the theory to re-defining the notion of socialism and how to build socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus, Deng’s Theory has been said to be the ‘developmental theory of Marxism.’

Fourth, the successive Party leaders, such as Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, continue ideological innovations to adapt Marxism to changing situations. Jiang’s Three Represents (whereby the Party represents the advanced productive forces, advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the vast majority of the people) indicated a significant shift in party philosophy, party
organization and party orientation. Jiang argued that Communism, in its industrial age formulation, was not viable as a contemporary economic system, but the Communist Party, by ‘representing’ these three powerful principles, would be modernizing Marxism, advancing with the times, and securing its place at the vanguard of society.

Fifth, Hu’s notion of Harmonious Society, rooted both in traditional Confucian concepts like Datong (Great harmony) and in more contemporary socialist precepts, presents a programmatic solution to China’s ‘performance dilemma’ and an innovative model of political legitimization, emphasizing ‘Scientific Development Concept’, a new model of modernization. It also includes how to build a harmonious world, and take advantage of globalization to promote peace, development and common prosperity.

Thus, instead of declining, the CCP’s ideology has been revitalized and reoriented, guiding the Party to undergo a profound transformation in its adaptation to rapid changes of socioeconomic situations, both internally and externally. Also, the Party has revitalized itself, involving from a ‘revolutionary party’ into a more modern ‘governing party’, capable of uniting China, maintaining stability and generating significant degrees of regime legitimacy.

But the mainstream scholars in the West still assume that Marxism in China is dead, ‘the Party is over’, China’s one-party political system will inevitably collapse; and that political legitimacy in contemporary China is precarious and the current regime suffers from a legitimacy crisis only superficially covered by economic development and nationalist politics.

While a strong case can be made, and, indeed, studies have been done, that Marxist ideology and its Chinese permutations have little analytical or policy relevance in today’s China, this thesis focuses on a newly emerging approach that studies the CCP’s ideological adaptation and innovation, rather than exclusively looking into atrophy and decay. Its primary objective is to undertake a systematic and comprehensive analysis of what and how the CCP has changed its official ideology, and it converges with a new approach to China studies as proposed by scholars such as Kjeld Erik Brodsgaad, Zheng Yongnian, Bruce Gilley, Heike Holbig and Gunter Schubert.
Statement

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signature:
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<td>Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>CAC</td>
<td>Central Advisory Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Social Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Committee</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<td>CMC</td>
<td>Central Military Committee</td>
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<td>CDIC</td>
<td>Central Discipline Inspection Commission</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Central Propaganda Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Central Party School</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPSU</td>
<td>Communist Party of Soviet Union</td>
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<td>CPPCC</td>
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<td>CYL</td>
<td>Communist Youth League</td>
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<td>DPP</td>
<td>Democratic Progressive Party</td>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs</td>
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<td>GLF</td>
<td>Great Leap Forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>Kuomintang</td>
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<td>NPC</td>
<td>National People’s Congress</td>
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<td>PBSC</td>
<td>Politburo Standing Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>People’s First Party</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army</td>
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<td>PPOs</td>
<td>Primary Party Organisations</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>PSS</td>
<td>Primary stage of socialism</td>
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<td>SARS</td>
<td>Severe acute respiratory syndrome</td>
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<td>SCO</td>
<td>Shanghai Cooperation Organization</td>
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<td>SEM</td>
<td>Socialist Education Movement</td>
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<td>SEZs</td>
<td>Special Economic Zones</td>
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<td>SOE</td>
<td>State-owned enterprises</td>
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<td>TVEs</td>
<td>Township and village enterprises’</td>
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<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>VC</td>
<td>Villager’s committees</td>
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<td>Xinhua</td>
<td>New China News Agency</td>
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<td>aiguo zhuyi</td>
<td>爱国主义</td>
<td>patriotism</td>
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<td>baihua</td>
<td>白话</td>
<td>vernacular</td>
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<td><em>Baijiqaxing</em></td>
<td>《百家姓》</td>
<td>a book of common Chinese surnames</td>
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<td>bianzheng weiwuzhuyi</td>
<td>辩证唯物主义</td>
<td>dialectical materialism</td>
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<tr>
<td>budu buwu</td>
<td>不独不武</td>
<td>no independence, no war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangde jianshe</td>
<td>党的建设</td>
<td>Party building</td>
</tr>
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<td>dangde zhizheng nengli</td>
<td>党的执政能力</td>
<td>Party's governing capacity</td>
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<td>dangde xianjinxing</td>
<td>党的先进性</td>
<td>Party’s advanced nature</td>
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<td>dangnei minzhu</td>
<td>党内民主</td>
<td>intra-party democracy’</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Datong</em></td>
<td>大同</td>
<td>Great harmony</td>
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<tr>
<td>de zhi</td>
<td>德治</td>
<td>rule by virtue</td>
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<td>Deng Xiaoping lilun</td>
<td>邓小平理论</td>
<td>Deng Xiaoping Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>duoji shijie</td>
<td>多极世界</td>
<td>multi-polar world</td>
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<tr>
<td>fazhi</td>
<td>法治</td>
<td>rule of law</td>
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<td>gebie yuanli</td>
<td>个别原理</td>
<td>specific principles</td>
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<td>gongchan feng</td>
<td>共产风</td>
<td>communist wind</td>
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<td>guoxue re</td>
<td>国学热</td>
<td>Chinese/Confucius learning fever</td>
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<tr>
<td>hefaxing weiji</td>
<td>合法性危机</td>
<td>legitimacy crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Heshang</em></td>
<td>《河殇》</td>
<td>River Elegy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He er butong</td>
<td>和而不统</td>
<td>harmony with differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heping fazhan</td>
<td>和平发展</td>
<td>peaceful development</td>
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<th>Chinese</th>
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<td>héping gōngchù wǔxiàng yuánz</td>
<td>five principles of peaceful existence</td>
</tr>
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<td>héping jueqí</td>
<td>peaceful rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hé wéi guì</td>
<td>priority to peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiāomín zhèngcè</td>
<td>spoiling-citizens polity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jīběn yuánlǐ</td>
<td>fundamental principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jícèng dānweì</td>
<td>grassroots units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jìjié dōuzhèng wéigǎng</td>
<td>class struggle as the key link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jīxù gēngmíng</td>
<td>continuing the revolution</td>
</tr>
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<td>kěxué fāzhàn guān</td>
<td>Scientific Outlook on Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lǎo bāixìng</td>
<td>the common people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liànggè fānshì</td>
<td>two whatevers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liànggè fēiyǎo</td>
<td>two flying forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liǎngshòu yìqí zhùa</td>
<td>to grasp with two hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lìlún chéngguò</td>
<td>theoretical achievements</td>
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<td><em>Lìlún dòngtài</em></td>
<td>Theory Trends</td>
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<tr>
<td>lìshǐ wéiwuzhùyì</td>
<td>historical materialism</td>
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<td>Mǎkèsī zhùyì de fāzhàn lìlún</td>
<td>developmental theory of Marxism</td>
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<td>Mǎkèsī zhùyì, Lèiínìng zhùyì</td>
<td>Marxism-Leninism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Máo ré</td>
<td>Mao fever</td>
</tr>
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<td>Máo Zédòng sīxiāng</td>
<td>Mao Zedong Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mínzú jīngshén</td>
<td>national spirit</td>
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<td>Mózhùo shítou guóhé</td>
<td>crossing the river by feeling xi</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nan xun</td>
<td>Southern tour</td>
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<td>Qingong Jianxue</td>
<td>Diligent work, Thrifty study</td>
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<td>qunzhong luxian</td>
<td>the mass line</td>
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<td>Sange daibiao</td>
<td>Three Represents</td>
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<td>shangceng jiaznzhu</td>
<td>superstructure</td>
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<td>Socialist Harmonious Society</td>
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<td>shengchan guanxi</td>
<td>The relation of production</td>
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<td>shengchanli</td>
<td>productive forces</td>
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<td>shijian shi jiannian zhenli de</td>
<td>practice is the sole criterion</td>
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<tr>
<td>weiyi biaozhun</td>
<td>for testing truth</td>
</tr>
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<td>shijian weiwuzhui</td>
<td>practical materialism</td>
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<td>shishi qiu shi</td>
<td>seeking the truth from facts</td>
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<td>Sixiang jiben yuanze</td>
<td>Four Cardinal Principles</td>
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<td>taizidang</td>
<td>princelings</td>
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<td>wan-yan-shu</td>
<td>ten-thousand-character letters</td>
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<tr>
<td>wei shengchanli lun</td>
<td>theory of productive forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>xiaokang shehui</td>
<td>comprehensively well-off society</td>
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<td>xin baoshou zhuyi</td>
<td>neo-conservatism</td>
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<td>xin weiquan zhuyi</td>
<td>neo-authoritarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xingershangxue de weixinzhuyi</td>
<td>metaphysical idealism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiu cai</td>
<td>scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xixue re</td>
<td>Western learning fever</td>
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xiuzheng zhuyi 修正主义  revisionism
xueshu bentuhua 学术本土化  academic nativism
yanzheng 严政  strict polity
yige zhongxin, liangge jibedian 一个中心，两个基本点 one centre, two basic points
yiren weiben 以人为本 taking people as the basis
yongbu fanan 永不翻案 never ever reverse the verdict
zhengzhi guashuai 政治挂帅 politics in command
zhengzhi tizhi gaige 政治体制改革 political system reform
Zhongguohua de makesizhuyi 中国化的马克思主义 Sinification of Marxism
Zhongguo keyi shuo bu 《中国可以说不》 China Can Say No
Zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi 中国特色的社会主义 Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
Zhongguo weixie lun 中国威胁论 theory of the China Threat
zonghe fazhan 综合发展 comprehensive development
Zouzipai 走资派 Capitalist roaders
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Introduction

This thesis is a qualitative study of the changing Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology particularly, but not exclusively since 1978 when the Party started its reform and opening up policies. The central question I am asking in the thesis is: Why and how the CCP has changed its ideology in relation to its reform and opening up policy over the last three decades? And what are the related lines of theoretical debates and political consequences in light of ideological change? The focus of the research is CCP’s ideology; this is because ‘ideology has played a crucially important role in the politics of state socialism or communist regimes.’ And the key to get a better understanding of politics in China is the CCP’s ideology, as identified earlier on by the leading scholar Franz Schurmann. Rather than just assuming that ideology is mere ex post facto rationalization and political self-justification, this thesis undertakes a systematic analysis of the CCP’s ideological adaption and innovation to the challenges to changing socioeconomic situations in China.

The origins of my research focus lie in what appears to be a lack of interest in the official ideology as part of the Western explanation of contemporary Chinese reform. In the post-Mao era, some scholars declared that Marxism was dead in China even before the reform, dating back to the Cultural Revolution. Others stated that if it is not yet totally defunct and impotent, ‘Marxism was losing ground in a crisis of faith among the general population as well as intellectuals and even high Party leaders’ as early as 1980. Still others concluded that the orthodox ‘ideology had lost its claim to be the sole basis of authority in society, the ultimate political arbiter, the source of political and developmental truth.’ And Marxism-Leninism has been repudiated ‘as a lost cause amounting now to no more than a rationalization for political privilege’ by power holders in the Party. And the CCP is ‘less and less appealing to ordinary Chinese’; as such, it is no longer ‘full of educated, idealistic people, when in fact it is more like a mafia or underworld organization, bounded by narrow personal interests and loyalties maintained by money and force.’

Thus many scholars in the West, particularly in the US, seem to assume that Communist one-

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party rule in present-day China is historically anachronistic, its political system is irremediable, and the regime suffers from a governance and legitimacy crisis that is deepening, inevitably leading to its downfall.⁸ For example, in the early 1990s, a study commissioned by the US Defence Department showed that half of the panel of China experts argued that China would experience a ‘Soviet-style break up’ within seven years of the death of Deng Xiaoping. Jack Goldstone, a US prominent scholar on revolution and rebellion, even predicted in his alarming article, ‘The Coming Chinese Collapse’, that ‘we can expect a terminal crisis in China within the next 10 to 15 years’, and ‘the most likely future scenario is for a replay of 1911’ after Deng’s death.⁹

In 1998, one year after the death of Deng, the *Journal of Democracy* invited a number of leading Western experts on China to contribute to a symposium on the prospects of China’s reforms and democratization. The prevailing view was that China could not be democratized unless the regime changed, which almost all of the contributors predicted would happen in the near future. Roderick MacFarquhar, a leading China scholar of Harvard University, repeatedly asserted: the PRC’s political system is fragile, and it is likely to result in a breakdown ‘in years rather than decades’.¹⁰ Even Dr Brzezinski, US National Security Advisor during the Carter administration, believed that China ‘will no longer be governed solely by the Chinese Communist Party’ in a decade; and that there will be ‘significant change, even disruptive change.’¹¹ When this did not happen, they still argued that the signs of the CCP’s ‘disintegration’ were everywhere and that it was just a matter of time before the Party was overthrown.¹²

These assumptions and predictions, like so many in the China field, proved incorrect. The CCP is still alive and well; its membership has doubled in the last three decades, reached 73.3 million at the Party’s 17th Congress in 2007 and it has now become the largest ruling Party in the world.¹³ While it may be true that, at the mass level, in the immediate post-Mao period cynicism and apathy rendered most discussions of ideology more or less irrelevant, the CCP leadership always swears allegiance to Marxism-Leninism and reaffirms its commitment to the building of socialism with the ultimate goal of reaching the truly egalitarian communist stage of human society.

Since the 1978 ‘Practice is the sole criterion of testing truth’ campaign, the Party has changed the role that ideology plays in the political system. The official doctrine is no longer a dogma; as

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such it has been more flexible, effective and institutionalized. After surviving the political turmoil of the Tiananmen Incident of 1989, the CCP continued its reform program of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The Chinese economy not only to grow but to stir fears that it had become an unstoppable economic juggernaut as China became the manufacturing centre of the world.

Even its diplomatic pariah status has vanished as China emerged as an influential presence in world councils, especially in Asia. China entered the WTO in 2001. The change in China’s status was strikingly highlighted by the back-to-back appearances of President Bush, who spoke to the Australian parliament 2003, and Chinese President Hu Jintao, who was greeted much more enthusiastically, when spoke the following day. The conservative Australian paper the Financial Review summed up the public mood in its headline: ‘Bush came, Hu conquered.’

And now people have been talking about China’s emerging ‘soft power’, as, in a comparative context, political support in China is among the highest in the world, which is illustrated in the data collected by the World Values Surveys (WVS) in 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2008 respectively.

Ideaology

Ideaology has figured very visibly in Chinese politics throughout the history of the CCP, both before and after it came to power in 1949. It motivated the formation and shaped the victory of the revolutionary movement, fuelled power struggle, and guided leaders in making policies and taking initiatives that have brought both successes and failures to the country. China’s political system remains an ‘ideological’ one that requires a theoretical basis for all major policies to sustain the system’s legitimacy. Indeed, it is the ideological adaptability and its political manifestations that help explain the remarkable longevity of the PRC as one of the world’s few remaining communist party-states. Commenting on the reason why ideology is still very important in China, the neo-Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming points out that ‘even if we choose to believe that power struggle in China is more a political game than ideological debate it is worth noting that the widely accepted way to exercise power in this political game is through ideological debate.’

Etymologically, the term ‘ideology’ came to China via Japan in the late 1890s when some Chinese students introduced the influx of European political ideas, especially the writings of Marx. The Chinese word for ‘ideology’ is yi shi xing tai. Here yi shi translates as ‘consciousness,’ while xing tai means ‘shape’ or ‘form,’ which in a holistic rendering of the

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parts combined, ‘shape of consciousness’ can be social, cultural, or political, depending on its context of use. There are some other words that might, in particular contexts, serve as synonyms or simply reflect close relationships with the concept of *yi shi xing tai*, such as *si xiang* (thought), *xin yang* (doctrine), and *li lun* (theory). The CCP’s conceptualization of ideology has been ‘political thought’ and ‘theory’ guiding its ‘thought work’ (*si xiang gong zuo*) and policy. Each of these words addresses ideology at a different level or focuses on a different aspect of the whole; furthermore, when they do occur in political discourse, they do so in a conceptual manner that is subordinate to the basic concept of ideology itself.\(^{18}\)

The term of ideology, however, is one of the most hotly contested concepts in the social sciences. It is hardly adequate to find a single and all-inclusive definition of ideology. But it can succinctly be defined as a set of political values, feelings, and ideas that guides individuals to act or behave in a certain manner for the purpose of achieving a particular goal. At a cognitive level, ideology acts as a language which defines the key concepts of political thought; on a value based level, it provides party members with a set of moral beliefs about ‘what is good or bad, right or wrong’; and on an instrumental level, ideology sets out the principles which guide the action on political leaders and operation of political institutions. And ideology has been defined as ‘ideas which help to legitimize a dominant political power’; ‘the link between theory and action’; and ‘sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organized action.’ Schurmann, writing on China, defines ideology as ‘a manner of thinking characteristic of an organization . . . a systematic set of ideas with action consequences serving the purpose of creating and using organization.’\(^{19}\)

It is worth noting, however, that ideological systems may offer only indirect support to the actual power system, and the importance of belief in the maintenance of any ideological system is open to question. Also, ideologies may function politically through channels other than the ideas they contain. Thus, ‘as far as belief is concerned, ideological legitimacy is chiefly, though not exclusively, for internal consumption. Its function is really to act as a catalyst for the mind of the group whose interests it sublimates into a justificatory set of ideals.’\(^{20}\)

The theoretical foundation of the CCP’s ideology is Marxism-Leninism. It is the guiding principle for both the party and the state. The framework of communist ideology is frequently classified by political scientists into two components: Seliger’s ‘fundamental’ and ‘operative’ ideology; Moore’s ‘ideology of ends’ and ‘ideology of means’; Schurmann’s ‘pure’ and ‘practical’ ideology; and Lowenthal’s ‘utopia vs. development’. The former refers to universal

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\(^{19}\) Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, p. 18.

truth, philosophical absolutism and communist end-goal at the fundamental level, while the later refers to practical ideas, policy references, and action means at the operative level. It is not always easy, however, to draw a clear distinction between fundamental and operative ideology. There is frequently a degree of overlapping between the two; yet each is sufficiently distinguishable for analytic purpose and a separate treatment with focus on the latter – operative or instrumental levels, is therefore feasible.  

As we shall see that ideology still matters as the foundation of the political system of the CCP and its approach to governing, linked explicitly to political action, as justification or explanation. It should be noted that at the fundamental level, the CCP is still committed to Marxism and its ultimate goal, while at the operational level, the Party’s official ideology, policy and practice have been redefined and changed significantly. By change it means the transformation of key structures that has a major impact on the nature of China politics. Where there is significant and rapid change, there are discontinuities between past and present with features of the present not recognizable in the past. The other side of change is continuity which refers to the gradual evolution of structures or processes such that the present retains key features of the past. This is the definition applying in this study of CCP’s ideological change in relation to its political reform. 

It is useful to distinguish between political change and political reform. Political change refers to broader adaptation of political processes, often responds to socio-economic changes in China; political reform refers to measures devised by Party and state authorities, predominantly in building and modifying formal institutions. In a sense, reform connotes a deliberate and managed process of change guided by the Party’s doctrine.

Approaches

The methods and materials for studying politics in China have changed greatly over the last six decades, and so have the approaches, models, and topics the scholars employ and emphasize in their analysis. There have been some approaches especially popular among scholars at certain times, such as elite politics, factional politics, political culture, state-society relations, political institutions and processes; most of them are still ‘in the mix’ when it comes to studying China’s contemporary politics.

Three theoretical perspectives have stood out as ‘dominant’ approaches to the politics of China’s reform and opening up: the power struggle approach, the rational choice approach, and

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the bureaucratic approach.\textsuperscript{25} The power struggle approach has long been prevalent in the study of Chinese politics. This approach views policy outcomes in China’s political system as a result of elite power struggle. Political elites, it assumes, are sensitive to the implications of alternative policy choices for their power and institutions. The relative power of elites and their strategies for advancing their beliefs and political interests motivate policy processes and determine decision making outcomes, as happened, for example, in the power struggle between Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng. More broadly, this approach is often used in analysing post-Mao politics characterized by the tension between the reformers, who are increasingly determined to promote a market-oriented economy and greater political tolerance, and the more conservative leaders whose political views are confined to balancing the economy and improving the Leninist political system.\textsuperscript{26}

The rational choice approach focuses on the response of policy makers to changing policy environments. This approach proceeds from assumptions about human motives and behaviour, and draws logical institutional and policy implications from those assumptions. Thus, policy outcomes result from a selection of decision-making alternatives that maximize a policy outcome. From the perspective of the rational actor approach, China’s economic reform could be regarded as stemming from the alternative that leadership and policy makers had chosen to maximize their chances of staying in power. Improving economic performance was in the best interests of the CCP regime and thus became a top policy priority. The political logic of China’s institution determines that Chinese officials at every level of the system embrace particularistic economic reform policies that enable them to claim credit and enhance their careers. Therefore, the economic reform as a whole can be regarded as the result of this logic.\textsuperscript{27}

The bureaucratic politics approach explains policy process and its outcomes as the result of competing activities among bureaucratic entities and actors constrained by their organizational roles and capacities. Change in policy results from the potential for variable outcomes in bargaining, negotiation, and conflict among bureaucrats involved. Scholars applying this approach to Chinese politics believe that policy process in China can be understood by examining the competition among government bureaucrats over preferred solutions to particular policy problems. Bureaucrats’ views on which policy should prevail are shaped by their position within the Party and government. Along the line of this approach, China’s reforms can be seen as a process promoted by those bureaucratic actors who have attempted to strengthen their own

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., pp. 18-22; also see Feng Chen, \textit{Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy in Post-Mao China: Ideology and Reform}, p. 6.


interests and positions.28

Close to my study, some scholars took an ideological approach in their theoretical analysis of China’s reform and opening-up. In this regard, Franz Schurmann’s pioneer book is still valid, despite how much has changed about Chinese politics. In the post-Mao era, Womack, Meisner and Mackerras had identified earlier on some remarkable changes of the CCP’s ideology in relation with reform policies.29

In their studies, Dr. Feng Chen and Dr. Wei-wei Zhang pointed out that even though all other approaches have furnished significant insights into Chinese politics, but none of them takes ideas seriously, and the importance of ideology has been down played, only taken at face value on the assumption that at the heart of the issue is the fact that CCP leaders do not believe in the ideology they advocate and they rely more on their experience and non-ideological resources for solutions. They argued that China was and still is a Leninist one-party system which remains an ‘ideological’ one in which all policies required an ideological discourse as justification; or, as Dr. David Kelly put it, ideology of self-legitimation, rationalization, and ideology of mobilization of interests, placed on the more instrumental political imperative of identifying power groups and maintaining their functional hierarchies.30

Also, there is a well-established institutional commitment to ideology expressed most notably in the form of the Party, which has been an important vehicle for communicating regime values to the CCP rank and file and to the whole population.31

As for correlating ideological change and economic reform, Dr. Feng Chen took what he called a ‘fundamental-instrumental discrepancy’ approach – a process in which the linkage of the pursued policies with ideological tenets, though maintained in form, was gradually eroded as a result goal conflict. Thus, the policy outcomes and political consequences of China’s attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable would deepen the legitimacy crisis of the CCP.32 This view has been widely shared by mainstream scholars in the West.

By contrast, Dr. Zhang observed that Chinese reformers led by Deng have attempted to gradually transform the orthodox doctrine into a more pragmatic and pro-modernization ideology, and Deng’s theory of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ symbolizes such conscious efforts for ideological innovations through which initially partial, unsystematic ideas are gradually elaborated, and turned into a new official doctrine, which in turn, has facilitated


China’s reform programs.33

Methodologically, this thesis defers to the analytic framework of Dr. Chen and Dr. Zhang. But the argument does differ somewhat from Dr. Chen’s. Basically, while I adopted the notion of two-levels of Marxist ideology, I have also applied in the theoretical analysis of communist twin-goal culture. Some scholars identify two components of any revolutionary ideology as ‘goal culture’ and ‘transfer culture.’ An ideology’s goal culture is its image of the ultimate utopia, its idealized contrast to the present, while ideology’s transfer culture, on the other hand, provides the norms that guide policy formulation: it specifies what steps the leadership must take, or justifies the guidelines move toward the goal culture. Thus, the communist goal can be analytically divided into two major components: ‘ultimate goal’ at the highest stage of communism and ‘intermediate goal’ at the primary stage of socialism.34 Apparently, this theory of twin-goal culture is different from what is called ‘goal conflict’ theory and Dr. Chen’s ‘fundamental-instrumental discrepancy’ approach. And while it is, to some extent, similar to Dr. Zhang’s work, which showed how the formulation of Deng Xiaoping’s theory fits within the paradigm of twin-goal culture, but his study just covered in the 1980s, whereas my study has spanned the three decades since 1978.

More significantly, my focus has been more on CCP’s ideological adaptation and innovation, instead of its atrophy and decay. To some extent, I agree with Shambaugh’s argument in his recent study on the subject, as he remarked, ‘The CCP has exhibited many classic symptoms of an atrophying and decaying Leninist party – but, at the same time, it is also showing itself capable of significant adaptation and reform in a number of key areas.’35

The primary objective of my thesis is to challenge the conventional wisdom of mainstream China watchers on the changes in China’s official doctrines and political reform. The notion of a challenge to the ‘conventional wisdom’ - which refers to the assumption by many scholars in the West, particularly in the US, that Marxism in China is dead, ‘the Party is over,’ and China’s one-party political system will inevitably collapse – has recently been raised by several scholars in the China field. In their book, Kjeld Erik Brodsgaad and Zheng Yongnian have pointed out that ‘Western scholarship has overlooked the fact that the CCP has been engaged in a process of renewal and reform that dates at least back to the mid-1990s.’36 Dr. Shambaugh’s recent studies provide ample evidence to show that CCP’s ideology certainly did not die after the reforms began in 1978 – but its nature and functions fundamentally changed. Thus, the CCP has changed the role that ideology plays in the Chinese politics while remodelling MLM doctrines.37

In her study, Dr. Holbig challenges the conventional wisdom by using empirical data from the

political campaign of the ‘Three Represents’ to demonstrate the relevance of ideological discourse in present-day China.\(^{38}\) In his research paper, Dr. Schubert, a leading German scholar on China politics, points out that, as regards ideological legitimacy, i.e. the people’s moral consent to the regime and its values, the CCP has taken remarkable steps in recent years to broaden its support base in the Chinese society and to become a ‘governing party’ instead of a class-based ‘revolutionary party’.\(^{39}\) Most CCP theorists believe that ideology still lies at the very heart of Party legitimacy. It is the key factor for public identification with the political authority, which fulfils various functions crucial to political, social and economic life, such as interpreting political order, cementing national identity, and mobilizing support. Ideological adaptations and innovations, such as Deng’s Theory, Jiang’s Three Represents, and Hu’s Harmonious Society, are thus seen as the prerequisite of legitimating Party rule.\(^{40}\)

The other objective of the study is to undertake a systematic and comprehensive analysis of changes of CCP’s orthodoxy. It provides an account that attempts not only to identify and chart the contours of this significant transformation the Party has been undergoing since embracing reforms in 1978, but also to examine the dynamics that are driving socioeconomic changes in China, so as to better understand how China’s political system works as a whole.

The third objective of this thesis is not only to identify what are these significant changes and how they have strengthened the CCP’s legitimacy, but also to fill the gap in studies of China’s political reforms in general and CCP’s ideology in particular. In a sense, I will continue those scholars’ studies of the subject in the post-Mao period and explore further of the Party’s ideological changes and innovations ever since. This will help better appreciate China’s political development, contribute to debates on theories and practices of its political reforms, and highlight the necessity for new approaches in China field as some scholars have recently proposed.\(^{41}\)

**Argument**

My central argument is that the CCP’s ideology has undergone remarkable changes in the past three decades in relation to China’s dramatic reforms. Most significantly, in order to maintain its relevance and legitimacy, the Party has considerably restructured its official doctrines, and, as the result of further sinification of Marxism, new ideological theories have been generated and articulated, such as Deng Xiaoping’s Theory, Jiang Zemin’s Three Represents and Hu Jintao’s


\(^{39}\) Gunter Schubert, ‘One-Party and the Question of Legitimacy in Contemporary China: preliminary thoughts on setting up a new research agenda’, pp. 194-5.


Harmonious Society. Instead of declining, the CCP’s ideology has thus been revitalized and reoriented, guiding the Party to undergo a remarkable transformation in its adaptation to rapid changes of socioeconomic situations, both internally and externally.

It seems that the reason some Western scholars have misjudged the CCP is that they have overlooked the fact that the Party has engaged in a process of renewal and improvement. The lesson from the collapse of the Soviet Union has been learned in a rather timely way. The response of the CCP leaders has been deepening reforms, to introduce incremental reform at the grass-roots level while strengthening the capacity of Party and state institutions at higher levels. Thus China’s political system is now able to generate significant degrees of regime legitimacy by adapting rather successfully to a changing domestic and international environment.

The study draws from a wide range of English and Chinese literature. It focuses on two types of texts: one involves official views, mainly from CCP documents, policy statements, resolutions, official party publication, leaders’ speeches, memoirs, and newspaper articles; the other includes academic opinions in various publications. These two types of views are interrelated, the former serving to define and form the prevailing intellectual discourse, and the later influencing and helping to transform official conceptualization of official doctrines. It also consists of empirical researches based on an extensive survey by scholars in the field.

I also benefited enormously from my three month research undertaking at Peking University as an Award holder of Australia-China Futures Dialogues Visiting Fellowship 2010. For it gave me an opportunity to exchange views personally with Chinese scholars, including Professors Guo Jianning, Huang Nanping, Sun Xiguo and Sun Daiyao at Marxism College of Peking University. Their works, which are cited in this thesis, are rich in insight and provide a nuanced understanding of Chinese approaches to studies of the subject.

The thesis is organized in a chronological ordering of empirical processes for a given period, followed by a thematic ordering of theoretical developments in that period, so changes of the CCP’s ideology can be logically connected. Each chapter starts with an overview, covering the main points of its subject, which, from different perspectives, reflects and demonstrates the central argument on CCP’s ideological changes. As China remains a Leninist one-party system, in which the official guidelines for policy orientation and political reform are still highly centralized and even personalized, top leaders’ views are vital for Party’s interpretation and innovation of ideological orthodoxy.

The CCP describes the history of its leadership in terms of generations. Mao Zedong was the core of the first generation of PRC leaders, Deng Xiaoping the core of the second, and Jiang Zemin the core of the third. Current CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao is a prominent figure of the fourth generation. So, thematically, I will focus on the core figures of each generation of Party leadership, examining their educational experiences, political careers and ideological contributions in order to set the historical background as well as theoretical framework for studying of CCP’s ideological changes relating to China’s reforms and political development. At
the same time, as the CCP leadership reiterates, all these leaders’ thought, theory and ideological innovations are a collective wisdom of the Party, so their colleagues and Party theorists’ views closely related with the official lines will also be examined.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter examines what have changed in the Party’s approach to Marxism, and how structural changes and dramatic transformations of official doctrines have taken place. Chapter 2 discusses how the CCP has redefined Mao Zedong Thought, which is now regarded as a sinification of Marxism, more a collective wisdom of the Party. Chapter 3 explores the topic of Deng Xiaoping Theory, which has been elevated by the authority to be its guiding ideology in the era of reform and opening to the world. Chapter 4 shows how Jiang Zemin has gone to considerable lengths in developing his doctrine of the Three Represents, while continuing Party’s policy of socioeconomic reforms. Chapter 5 looks into the new generation of CCP’s leaders headed by Hu Jintao, how they have adapted Marxism to changing historical circumstances, and how the Party’s ideology has been institutionalized, thus remains the main source of its legitimacy.
Chapter 1

Restructuring Marxism in China

1.1 Overview

The CCP’s official ideology has been identified as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought (MLM) since the founding of the PRC. Briefly, ‘Marxism’ as a codified body of thought came into existence after Marx’s death in 1883. It was the product of the attempt, notably by Marx’s lifelong collaborator, Engles, and the German socialist leader Karl Kautsky and the Russian theoretician Georgi Plekhanov, to condense Marx’s ideas and theories into a systematic and comprehensive world view that suited the needs of the growing socialist movement, while emphasizing the need for adherence to an authoritative interpretation of Marx’s work.42

The ideas of Lenin, or Leninism, came to represent a bridge forged between European Marxism and a Marxist relevant to the peasant societies of Asia. When Marxism came to be adopted by Chinese revolutionaries, it was therefore frequently in its Leninist form.43

The term of Marxism-Leninism (Makazi zhuyi-Liening zhuyi) appears to have been devised by Stalin, who sought both a name for the USSR’s state ideology, and to legitimize this ideology by reference to the ‘founding father’ of communist theory and practice. Basically, Marxism provided the broad theoretical underpinnings of Marxism-Leninism, whereas Leninism provided many of the more concrete answers to questions of organization and revolution. These two components can now be considered individually with reference to the restructuring of Marxism in China.44

The primary catalyst in the growth of Marxism in China was the May Fourth Movement of 1919. It was the combination of the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the May Fourth Movement that opened the way for the CCP to adopt Marxism-Leninism when the Party was founded in 1921. The May Fourth Movement did more for China than set off a national awakening. Its political focus was an ardently nationalistic, anti-imperialist event. And its demands for national independence transformed Marxism-Leninism from an esoteric foreign doctrine to an immediately relevant explanation of a crucial fact of Chinese political life. The May Fourth Movement, in its broadest sense, also pointed toward another profound attraction in

Marxism-Leninism – its claim to science, modernity, and progressive change. It reflected a growing intellectual revolt against the Chinese tradition, a revolt that was divided in its objectives but was clearly set against China’s past. So the CCP who determined to promote a revolutionary transformation that would propel China into the modern era on a basis of full equality with the West turned to Marxism-Leninism for inspiration and guidance.45

Marx’s concept of historical materialism (lishi weiwuzhuyi) and dialectical materialism (bianzheng weiwuzhuyi) – that mankind progresses through a sequence of stages by virtue of ‘class struggle’ (jieji douzheng) between ruling and exploited classes for control of ‘means of production’ (shengchan ziliao) which would result in a communist society – appealed to the Chinese intellectuals in need of a system to explain ‘progress’ and to simplify the confusing events of history. The optimistic belief that class struggle and exploitation could be obviated by abolishing private ownership of the means of production was particularly attractive in an underdeveloped country like China. The millennial Marxist vision of classless society populated by a new socialist man and based on collective ownership and organization had a profound impact on Chinese politics. What Marxism foretold was a new society that would be both universal and modern, that is, it would ultimately emerge all over the world.46

Moreover, Marxism had been capped by Lenin’s concept of the revolutionary vanguard, the disciplined intellectual elite of the Communist Party, and by his contribution to Marxism - the most relevant in this respect was his incorporation of imperialism and anti-colonial liberation movements into the revolution against capitalism. On the political level, Leninism offered a new and tighter method of political party and technique for seizing power and using it to mobilize the populace and achieve the goal of proletariat revolution as the Russian experience demonstrated. This messianic vision was made more credible by the startling Soviet success in seizing power. It seemed to offer an all-embracing solution to Chinese problems.47

But, from Party beginnings to the present, CCP leaders have differed in their interpretations of the Marxist-Leninist principles and how they apply to China. Even in the initial contacts, at the time of the founding of the CCP, there were subtle differences in the ways that various elements of Marxism-Leninism originally penetrated Chinese politics. Some elements carried a distinctively positive attraction. The Chinese intellectuals who were to lead the CCP in its early years committed themselves to Marxism-Leninism largely on the basis of those aspects that fit their own understanding of China’s needs and unfolding conditions. They never really accepted Marxism at face value. At the most general level, one can distinguish between men such as Chen Duxiu and Liu Shaoqi who tended toward a more ‘orthodox’ or ‘scientific’ use of the

doctrine, and those such as Li Dazhao and Mao Zedong, who displayed more ‘voluntaristic’ and ‘nationalistic’ tendencies.48

But most Communists in China shared a revolutionary commitment that overshadowed their commitment to Marxism-Leninism. That is, they identified more with the Bolshevik Revolution’s general message of radical change than with the specifics of its ideology. Thus, in China, there has been an unusual tradition of selectively using Marxist doctrines and interpreting them liberally.49

Mao Zedong rose to a position of dominance in the CCP in the 1930s, and Mao’s place was established through the process of ‘Sinification of Marxism’ (Zhongguohua de Makesizhuyi) during the Yan’an period, and ever since 1940s, the ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ (Mao Zedong sixiang) has been defined by the CCP as the doctrine which had creatively applied the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism and integrated them with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. Thus the CCP created a formula by which a universal theory such as Marxism could be utilized in a particular Chinese context and culture without abandoning the universality of that theory.50

Also, this ‘thought’ marked a structural change in the CCP’s official ideology. As Schurmann noticed that the Party used to regard Marxism as the ‘world view,’ which is the ‘pure ideology,’ while Leninism, as the aggregate of the principles of revolution and organization, became ‘practical ideology.’ Since the Seventh Party Congress of 1945, however, the ideological role assigned ‘Leninism’ has been unreservedly assigned to ‘Mao Zedong Thought’. The total structure of the Party’s ideology thus consists of a pure ideology essentially derived from Marxism and Leninism, and a practical ideology illustrated by Mao Zedong Thought. Pure ideology is a set of ideas designed to give the individual a unified and conscious world view; practical ideology is a set of ideas designed to give individual rational instruments for action. Pure and practical ideology, though different, are closely linked. Without pure ideology, the ideas of practical ideology have no legitimacy. But without practical ideology, an organization cannot transform its world view into consistent action.51

Lenin created a practical ideology for revolutionary movements leading to the creation of the world’s Communist parties by propounding principles of organization derived from the application of Marxist theory to the problems of contemporary reality. The Chinese Communists have gone further by developing a practical ideology based on Leninism but enriched by their

long experiences in revolutionary struggle. In his works, Mao expounded the theories of Marxism-Leninism, but only those that he considered relevant for the CCP’s ideology, in particular the world view. However, Mao never says that the world view is his or that of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, while the Party claims credit for having created a practical ideology (Mao Zedong Thought), they regard the theories they have selected (Marxism-Leninism) as derivative from a universal doctrine which is binding on all Communist parties.52

It should be noted that the two-dimensional approach to ideology has often been applied to study of communist states. Major conceptual constructs reflecting this effort include Moore’s theory of official (or formal) ideology versus operative (informal) ideology, Seliger’s theory of fundamental ideology versus operative ideology, and Shlapentokh’s theory of mythological postulate versus pragmatic command. Though their terms vary, all these authors share the notion that communist ideology is not monolithic and can be distinguished between two dimensions, one referring to core values of ideology and other to its practical application. In this dichotomous formula, the practical dimension of ideology is supposed to translate the core values of ideology into action directives, and in the process ideology itself may gradually be modified to adapt to practical needs. The early studies of this type seemed to assume the adaptability of communist ideology to changing reality and to believe that this ideology could be modified to accommodate socioeconomic modernization.53

In his study, Dr. Feng Chen applies his two-dimensional approach to explain how the CCP’s ideology has changed in recent years, offering more than just a perspective from which to understand self-adjustments made by China’s leadership to balance ideology and reality; it provides explanations for the process of ideological changes in China socioeconomic policies. Chen observes that the fundamental ideology of the CCP has several interrelated functions: They (1) determine the party’s final goal, (2) legitimate the CCP’s leading role in society, (3) define the social and political order the CCP wants to maintain, and (4) provide an ontological framework to evaluate everything from policies to behaviour.54

Fundamental principles tend to resist any significant change, for such change inevitably alters the identity of the ideology per se and therefore the nature of the party. In this sense, the fundamental principles had become equivalent to the party itself. Instrumental principles are regarded as interpretations of fundamental ideology and as a set of ideas derived from these interpretations to justify immediate policy goals. Instrumental principles differ from specific policies, though they are intimately related. As a theoretical structure and rationale behind policy making, an instrumental principle could be used to justify a series of policies.55

With this overview of the origin and development of the CCP’s ideology and framework of

52 Ibid., p. 23.
54 Ibid., pp. 12-14.
55 Ibid.
studies of Party’s official doctrine, this chapter examines and discusses what has changed in the CCP leadership’s approach to Marxism, how Party leaders and theorists try to redefine and restructure their fundamental principles while dramatically changing at the practical level of official lines. It reflects how ideological changes in the immediate post-Mao era were comparable to and reminiscent of changes in the International Communist Movement in the wake of the historical 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU).56

But, changes of the CCP’s ideology had been related with power struggle, public debates and the popular campaign to ‘emancipate the mind’, which resulted in entrenchment of the reform agenda under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Therefore, the great debate on ‘practice is the sole criterion for testing truth’ in 1978 and the National Theory Conference of 1979 will be reviewed, which show how the Party started rejecting Hua’s ‘two whatevers’ doctrine, criticizing Maoist radical policies, denouncing the Cultural Revolution and initiating political reforms, and eventually restructuring its official ideology.

1.2 Hua: ‘Two Whatevers’ Doctrine

In the immediate aftermath of the death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976, Hua Guofeng emerged as the CCP’s new leader. Whatever his merits, Hua assumed the mantle of legitimacy and had the rights of occupancy. He had been the Chairman’s choice; he was in place, and he had led the beneficiaries into the anti-Gang camp. On 7 October 1976, his assumption of Mao’s posts of chairman of both the Party and its Central Military Affairs Committee (CMC) was announced.57 Because he retained the premiership, Hua was now formally the heir of both Mao and Zhou Enlai. By combining the roles of both men, he seemed to have been placed in an impregnable position. But Hua lacked the informal bases of power that, in the end, count for more than official titles in the relatively personalized and uninstitutionalized Chinese political process.58

Hua’s personal amulet was Mao’s oft-echoed sentence ‘With you in charge, I’m at ease.’ Based his legitimacy on the alleged designation by Mao, Hua attempted to rule by Maoism without Mao. He moved swiftly to ensure that only he had control of Mao’s legacy. On October 8, the CCP adopted two decisions. First, a memorial hall would be built for Mao in that his body would be permanently displayed in a crystal box. Second, a new edition of Mao’s Selected

59 The CCP leaders had not adopted this term, for the reason which will be discussed in the next chapter. But it has been widely used in the West, referring to Mao’s radicalism, particularly during the CR.
Works was to be published under Hua’s editorship. Both decisions were designed to appropriate Mao’s remains and his writings so that they might serve the political objectives of Hua and his supporters.60

Hua’s overall strategy was to maintain some continuity with the recent past, but to redefine some of Mao’s legacy to promote faster economic modernization and greater political stability. He continued to deify the late chairman and to endorse Mao’s decision to launch the Cultural Revolution. Its catch-phrase is what came to be known as the ‘two whatevers’ (liangge fanshi). The phrase first appeared in January 1977 in a speech drafted for Hua and its content was determined by Wang Dongxing, a member of Politburo and head of the General Office of the Central Committee (CC).61

On February 7 the ‘two whatevers’ were published in a joint People's Daily, Liberation Daily and Red Flag editorial entitled ‘Learn the Documents and Grasp the Key Link’. The point was made that:

When Chairman Mao was alive, we united and fought under his banner. Chairman Mao now has passed away, but we should hold and defend his great banner better than before . . . Let us hold Chairman Mao’s great banner high, implement Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line more consciously, resolutely defend whatever (fanshi) policy decisions Chairman Mao made, steadfastly abide by whatever (fanshi) instructions Chairman Mao gave, rally most closely around the Party centre headed by Chairman Hua, closely follow its strategies, obey its orders in all our actions, work with one heart and one mind, march in step, firmly grasp the key link of deepening the exposure and criticism of the Gang of Four and strive for new victories in bringing about great order across the land.62

The crux of the ‘whatevers’ was to justify the continuation of the political line of Mao’s late years, pledged commitment to ‘continuing the revolution’ (jixu geming), ‘class struggle as key link’ (jieji douzheng weigang), and other key slogans of the Cultural Revolution (CR). It represented a classic example of dogmatism: not only the content but the manner in which the jargon was publicized was the characteristic of the arbitrary style of the CR. It was ideological absolutization. The claim of official doctrine to total truth gave grounding to constant imperative appeals to correct behavior and thinking.63

It should be noted, however, that the assertion of continuity by the early post-Mao leadership marks some significant changes from Mao’s last years. The preservation of the Mao cult provided a basis and a justification for the burgeoning cult of Hua himself, badly needed if this unknown successor was to establish a position among Party and people. Books and pamphlets

about Hua were churned out by the presses. According to Schram, writing in 1984, the card index in the library of Peking University contained approximately 300 entries of books contributing to Hua cult, a small fraction, in his judgment, of those published around the country.\(^{64}\) A favorite publicity photograph of Hua at this time was of him with Mao, supposedly at the moment when the late Chairman had uttered the magic words of benediction. The equality of importance given to speeches of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua was an important move beyond Mao’s exclusive dominance of authority since the CR.\(^{65}\)

Most importantly, the publication of *Volume V* of Mao’s *Selected Works* which were deliberately stressed in 1977 dated from the 1950s. It included Mao’s sixty-nine articles and speeches of 1949-1957. Concentration on these works enabled the leadership to use Mao to help to divert attention towards practical, economic problems and away from delicate questions of politics in command.\(^{66}\) It implied that Hua and his supporters had turned their attention to Mao’s more moderate statements before the CR and neglected his more inflammatory subsequent remarks. *Volume V* in fact served to project the image of a Mao still uncorrupted by the GLF and the CR. By this the Hua leadership sent its own political messages to the public in the post-Mao era: economic development was one of Chairman Mao’s major concerns; therefore, the new modernization program cohered with ideological fundamentals. Also, it revealed Hua’s strong belief that even in the “new period” there were no alternatives to Mao’s thought as the ideological guideline for economic modernization.\(^{67}\)

For example, the most publicized Mao’s *On the Ten Great Relationships*, written in 1956, appeared for the first time in newspapers on 26 December 1976. This speech marked a break with the Soviet model of economic development. It proposed a dialectical approach to problems of China’s socialist construction, with the deliberate cultivation of tensions among economic sectors and the achievement of goals by roundabout means. In addition, the publication of Mao’s commentary on the Anshan Steelworks Charter (*AnGang Xianfa*), written in 1960, was used to justify the importance of workers’ participation in factory management. Although it was essentially a radical document, its focus was on the management of production rather than on political campaigns. It was not a coincidence that this text came out right before the National Industrial Conference of 1977 to discuss the long-term planning of industrial development. ‘A Letter on the Mechanization of Agriculture,’ written in 1966, showed Mao’s concern with some concrete issues in economic development. Mao instructed that more power over the manufacture of agricultural machines be granted to localities. The publication of Mao’s letter was linked to the second National Agricultural Conference held in December 1976. Hua

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\(^{66}\) Ibid.

dominated this conference, in which agricultural mechanization was placed at the top agenda.\textsuperscript{68} Hua also seemed to recognize the country’s need for a period of political normalcy and economic development to heal the wounds of the previous decade. This realization explains not only his involvement in the purge of the Gang of Four, but also his selection of the phrase ‘great order across the land’ (\textit{tianxia dazhi}) as the principal political slogan of his administration, and his sponsorship of an ambitious ten-year development plan for the Chinese economy. Hua announced this ‘new leap forward,’ intended to transform China into a ‘great, powerful, and modern socialist country before the end of this century.’ As set out in his ten-year development program introduced in 1978, Hua’s strategy assumed that higher rates of growth could be stimulated by political stability, higher investment, and greater incentives, without any basic structural reforms.\textsuperscript{69}

Unfortunately for Hua, his strategy met increasing difficulties throughout 1977 to 1978. As with the similar movement in the past, the cost of these achievements was high. The rapid growth of imports was not fully matched by the concurrent increase in exports, and in 1978 China ran its largest trade deficit since the First Five-Year Plan.\textsuperscript{70} The expansion of capital investment far exceeded that which the state’s industrial resources could sustain and created acute bottlenecks of both construction materials and capital goods. The plan failed to take account of the lessons of the 1960s and the economic damages of the 1970s. Apparently Hua mimicked Mao’s grandiose visions; but, instead of covering himself with glory, he had pointed China toward another economic disaster. This, too, would be used against him.\textsuperscript{71}

\section*{1.3 Deng: ‘Seeking Truth from the Facts’}

If Hua’s economic ‘leap forward’ could be criticized for going too fast, many judged his political and organizational program as proceeding too slowly. The most serious manifestations of the ‘two whatevers’, in fact, were centered on the political platform. Citing Mao’s opposition to ‘revisionism’ (\textit{xiuzheng zhuyi}) and ‘capitalist roaders’ (\textit{zouzipai}), the Hua camp resisted the return of Deng Xiaoping and other victims of the CR to political power. ‘If we let Deng return to work immediately,’ Hua’s close ally Wang Dongxing asked, ‘where would Chairman Mao be placed? Would Mao’s instructions be carried out or not?’ On similar grounds, the Hua leadership resisted public appeals for the reversal of the Party’s and Mao’s verdicts on the Tiananmen Incident of 1976.\textsuperscript{72} At the central work conference held in March 1977, Hua reaffirmed the ‘two

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, pp. 36-9.
\textsuperscript{69} Yu Guangyuan, \textit{China’s Socialist Modernization}, Foreign Languages press: Beijing, 1984, pp. 29-36.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
whatevers,’ repeated the formulas from the CR, maintaining that the Tiananmen incident was counterrevolutionary, and asserted that the campaign against Deng and the right-opportunist wind to reverse the verdicts had been correct.\footnote{Ibid.}

Clearly, if the ‘two whatevers’ were to be taken literally, it would be difficult, if not downright impossible, to justify Deng’s return to power. Some of Mao’s very last instructions had consisted of extracts from his ‘talks on criticizing Deng and beating back the right-deviationist wing to reverse correct verdicts’ in late 1975 and early 1976. The extracts had been edited by the CCP central Committee’s General Office (of which Wang was the director), and released as Central Committee Circular No. 4 (1976) in early March 1976.\footnote{Michael Schoenhals, ‘The 1978 Truth Criterion Controversy,’ \textit{China Quarterly}, No. 126 (June 1991), p. 249.} It contained a number of very critical remarks about Deng, who was accused by Mao of never grasping class struggle, of failing to distinguish between Marxism and imperialism, and of ‘paying no attention to the color of the cat as long as it catches mice.’ Mao claimed that Deng was someone who ‘never gives away what he really thinks.’ Deng had a bad temper, and as a result ‘people are afraid of him, and dare not speak with him.’ On top of everything, Deng did ‘not read books, and is ignorant about Marxism-Leninism.’\footnote{Ibid., pp. 49-50.}

Mao was particularly concerned about Deng’s attitude towards the CR. To Mao, it was one of the two lifetime achievements (the other being ‘driving Chiang Kai-shek off to those islands in the sea’), for which he wanted to be remembered by posterity.\footnote{Ibid., p. 50.} To Deng, it was not only a national disaster but a series of personally humiliating experiences. In the winter of 1966 Deng was labeled the ‘No. 2 largest capitalist in the Party.’ Then a nationwide denunciation campaign that followed by years in internal exile in Jiangxi. Nearly every member of his family had been attacked. His eldest son Deng Pufang, a student of Peking University at the onset of the CR, had been tortured and crippled by Red Guards and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of life.\footnote{Harrison Salisbury, \textit{The New Emperors: Mao & Deng, a Dual Biography}, London: HarpertCollins Publishers, 1992, p. 324.}

After the fall of Lin Biao in 1971, Deng wrote twice to Mao, asking to be allowed to work once more for the Party and the nation. He promised Mao and the Party’s Central Committee that he would ‘never ever reverse the verdict’ (\textit{yongbu fanan}) passed on him as a ‘capitalist roader’. He had agreed that he had committed serious political errors, and suggested that ‘it was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that saved me from sinking even deeper into an abyss of heinous criminality.’ Deng had also expressed his total support for Chairman’s view that the CR is ‘absolutely necessary and very timely.’ Hence, in 1972, Mao had endorsed Deng’s return to power.\footnote{Michael Schoenhals, ‘The 1978 Truth Criterion Controversy,’ p. 250.}

But by the end of 1975 some of Deng’s remarks and deeds began to appear to Mao as veiled attempts to undo the CR. So Mao bluntly challenged Deng, raising doubts about his personal
integrity and sincerity. Was it not the case, Mao argued, that Deng’s promise to ‘’never ever reverse the verdict’ just cannot be trusted!’ Effectively Mao had withdrawn his mandate from Deng and launched the new campaign to ‘criticize Deng and repulse the right-deviationist wing to reverse the verdicts.’ In the wake of the Tiananmen Incident of 1976, Mao made perhaps one of his most important decisions on April 7, which ordered that Hua Guofeng should be immediately elevated to the premiership and first deputy chairmanship of the Party. At the same time, Deng was once again dismissed from office as ‘an unrepentant capitalist roader,’ and blamed for instigating the Tiananmen Incident. 79

But Deng had never accepted such a verdict. As a matter of fact, Deng started to challenge the whole notion of the CR when he was in charge of day-to-day of State’s affairs in 1975, for he realized fully that China was heading in a wrong direction under Maoist radical policies. That is why Deng became increasingly critical of the CR even when Mao was alive, fighting head on with the Gang of Four. In public he had never apologized for his political record. When his opponents called him an unrepentant capitalist-roader, they may or may not have mistaken the name of the road, but there could be no doubt that, whatever road he was on, he was unrepentant about his choice. And certainly he knew what he was driving for. After he was dismissed, Deng fled to South China, where his old PLA allies provided sanctuary. His political will had not been diminished, and the seventy-two-year-old Deng plotted his return to Beijing, reportedly contemplating civil war if necessary. 80

It was therefore hardly surprising that Deng found the ‘two whatevers’ unpalatable. He was particularly unhappy about the idea that the late chairman was still to have the final say in everything, and was apparently upset about the Central Committee Circular No. 4, for he believed that the Gang of Four had tampered with Mao’s words. 81 And now, with the death of Mao and the ‘smashing of the Gang of Four,’ the mood of the nation had changed rapidly and significantly. The attempt of Hua and the ‘whatever faction’ to don Mao’s protective mantle had already been challenged by Deng’s protectors in the south. 82

Also, Hua came under fire from Party veterans, notably Chen Yun, who had been a member of the Politburo Standing Committee and its predecessor for more than two decades up to the CR. Chen and another critic, Wang Zhen, focused on the linked questions of the assessment of the Tiananmen Incident and the need for a second rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping, which they claimed was universally demanded. 83

Not long after, eight provincial Party committees and several Politburo members petitioned the Central Committee for Deng’s rehabilitation, given the widespread belief that he had been

79 Hao Meigbi and Duan Haoran, eds., Zhongguo gongchandang liushi nian, xia (Sixty years of the Chinese Communist Party, part 2), Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe1984, p. 653.
unfairly dismissed from office in April 1976. These demands were supported by an ingenious form of popular protest in a few places: small bottles were placed along major streets and even at the base of the monument to revolutionary martyrs in Beijing; for the Chinese phrase meaning ‘small bottles’ (xiao ping) is a homophone for Deng’s given name. As the eyewitness, Roger Garside recorded that ‘from the carved cloud atop one marble column was suspended a small bottle of red glass with a label bearing the words Very Good.’ Nearby, there were posters praising Deng and calling for his return to office. ‘We want Chairman Hua Guofeng to give comrade Deng Xiaoping a job!’ Some stated.84

Eventually, in March 1977, Hua agreed to Deng’s return to active political life and acknowledged that Deng had had no responsibility for the Tiananmen Incident. But Hua extracted, in return, a letter in which Deng admitted his past mistakes, accepted the validity of Mao’s criticism, and expressed his ‘sincere support’ for Hua’s appointment as Party chairman. Deng also promised to accept whatever work assignment the Central Committee might give him.85 This seeming compromise was formally endorsed by the Third Plenum in July 1977, the first meeting of the full Central Committee since 1975, which confirmed Hua’s selection as Party chairman and reappointed Deng to the same positions - vice-chairman of the Party, vice-premier, and chief of staff of the Army - that he had held before his purge in 1976.86

But one thing is clear that Deng openly and privately criticized the notion of the ‘two whatevers.’ In his letter to Hua and the CCP Central Committee, Deng had suggested that the Party ought to consider using ‘accurate and comprehensive Mao Zedong Thought’ as its guiding line. In retrospect it is probably correct to argue that Deng put forward this formulation as an alternative, and not as a complement, to the ‘two whatevers.’ When Wang Dongxing came to see him talking about his return to office, Deng said to him that ‘two whatevers’ are unacceptable. If this principle were correct, there could be no justification for his rehabilitation, nor could there be any for the statement that activities of the masses of the Tiananmen Incident were reasonable.87 Deng then pointedly declared:

We cannot mechanically apply what Comrade Mao Zedong said about a particular question to another question, what he said in a particular place to another place, what he said at a particular time to another time, or what he said under particular circumstances to other circumstances. Comrade Mao Zedong himself said repeatedly that some of his own statements were wrong . . . He also said that Mark, Engels, Lenin and Stalin had all made mistakes – otherwise while did they correct their own manuscripts time and time again? The reason they made these revisions was that some of the views they originally expressed were not entirely correct, perfect or accurate.88

84 Roger Garside, China after Mao: Coming Alive, p. 176.
85 Deng’s letter, written on April 10, 1977, can be seen in English version in Issues and Studies, vol. 20 (March 1984), pp. 95-6. For the communiqué of the Third Plenum of the Tenth Central Committee, see Peking Review, 1977.
86 Hu Sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 416-7.
88 Ibid.
Deng continued to refine his approach to Mao. In a speech at the very Central Committee plenum in which he was formally reinstated, Deng drew a distinction between an essential component of Mao’s thought that was a fundamental significance and a specific content that was restricted by time, place, and subject context. To the former he designated Mao’s concepts of *shishi qiushi* (seeking truth from the facts) and *qunzhong luxian* (the mass line). By ascribing *shishi qiushi* to the essential component of Mao’s thought, Deng argued that certain individual, nonessential aspects of Mao’s thought might be discarded. But Deng was discreet enough not to attack the ‘two whatevers’ frontally at this stage; he had to prepare the ground before his next attack. Instead, he promoted *seeking truth from facts,* an old slogan of Mao’s that was to become the essence of Deng’s post-Mao ideology and policies.89

1.4 The Great Debate on the ‘Criterion of Truth’

The debate on the criterion for testing truth in the spring of 1978 was a public manifestation of the offensive against the ‘two whatevers’, led by the ‘practice faction’ with the main proposition that ‘practice is the sole criterion for testing truth’ (shijian shi jiannian zhengli de weiyi biaozhun). It had been declared officially very early on to be of the ‘far-reaching historical significance.’90

Politically, the debate was probably the most serious power struggle between the ‘whatever faction’ led by Hua Guofeng and Wang Dongxing, and the ‘practice faction’ with Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang as the chief advocates. Ideologically, it was the first major attempt to develop an autonomous, post-Mao standpoint which could justify flexibility and re-orient ideology to the demands of modernization.91

It was one of the courageous steps taken to undercut ‘religious’ attitudes toward Mao and his ideas, and thus provided strong ideological support for the innovative policies of the pragmatic leaders and exposed the theoretical hollowness and practical absurdity of the ‘two whatever’ position. Its endorsement by the Third Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee in December 1978 paved the way for the Party’s subsequent ‘demystification’ and ‘demythologization’ of Mao Zedong, and the repudiation of his theory of class struggle and continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Were it not for the political impact of the debate, ‘the fundamental change, not only in the balance of forces within the top leadership, but in the Party’s line and in the whole intellectual climate prevailing in China, would not have been

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90 *Peking Review*, No. 52 (29 December 1978), p. 15.
While Deng Xiaoping was the first leader who criticized the notion of ‘two whatevers,’ it was Hu Yaobang who actually ‘organized and promoted’ the debate that ‘made the theoretical preparations for a re-establishment of the Marxist ideological line of the CCP’, as showed in an official biography of Hu – prepared by the Party for the Chinese edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. It had been said that if Deng was the great commander who designed the strategy for overthrowing the political line of ‘whatever fraction,’ then it was Hu who led the troops into the front lines of the battle.

Hu was a long time associate and protege of Deng. He had served with Deng in Southwest China in 1950 to 1952. Hu moved to Beijing with Deng and had become active in the Communist Youth League, becoming its First Secretary in 1957. Hu was attacked during the CR because of his ties with Deng and Liu Shaoqi. When Deng returned to power, so did Hu. He steadily rose to the top after Deng’s rehabilitation in 1977. Hu was later appointed to the Politburo’s Standing Committee and to the position of General Secretary as the Party’s new leader to replace Hua in 1980.

Hu Yaobang initiated the debate in 1977 when he became second vice-president of the Central Party School (CPS). He immediately took up residence on campus. On paper he was only third in command, but in reality he wielded considerable power and influence. His immediate superiors, Hua Guofeng and Wang Dongxing (the president and first vice-president respectively) held too many concurrent posts to be able to concern themselves on a day-to-day basis with what went on at the school. So Hu was responsible for the daily administration at the CPS. Ever since it was established in 1933 in the early period of communist revolution, the CPS has been the foremost institution of the Party for training, education and indoctrination of its members. It plays a unique role in providing a platform where existing and aspiring future leaders of the Party come together to get to know each other better and be familiar with the important tenets of Party ideology. Almost all high-ranking Party cadres and government officials such as ministers and governors attended this school prior to their promotion.

When Hu was in charge, the CPS witnessed an intense ideological struggle between the whatever and practice factions. During the spring and summer of 1977, Hu removed some of the most radical pro-CR elements from the CPS and won compromises from others. He brought in a number of new faces and established a degree of normality and bureaucratic order. An official school history later described Hu’s first months in office noting that ‘in no more than half a year, the factional machine of Kang Sheng and the Gang of Four was made to topple like a house of

95 Hu Sheng, ed., *Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian* (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), p. 429.
cards. A new leadership was established.\textsuperscript{97}

But next stage of political and ideological restructure seemed rather difficult. As Hu observed, the school staff, including those leading theorists, were afraid of making a political mistake. Were they to attempt to write and teach within the confines of ‘two whatevers’? Or were they to go ahead and operate within the more flexible ‘accurate and comprehensive’ discursive framework proposed by Deng? The CR was a sensitive issue, no matter how you chose to look at it. As one senior staff member was to admit two years later, ‘it was a tricky subject, and one which, in 1977, nobody had as yet dared to touch.’\textsuperscript{98}

So far the contradiction between affirmation of Maoist continuity and rejection of the proceeding direction of policy was overcome by claiming that the Gang of Four distorted Mao’s Thought and directives, and acted as usurpers. There were specific arguments that political economy of the Gang was un-Marxism and un-Maoism as well as general charges that they used quotations taken out of context, thereby distorting and displacing the scientific system of Marxism. While this type of the critique of the Gang is, in general, well taken, the thesis that they usurped Mao’s leadership is unsatisfactory. Not only does it raise hard historical question but, in fact, as Professor Tang Tsou has showed, the Gang’s ideology is a logical if dogmatic extension of one major aspect of Mao’s political thought.\textsuperscript{99}

Therefore, a direct attack on the real ideological orientation of the Gang of Four, and any reassessment of past events or policies would logically extend to a criticism of Mao himself. Such a development would be catastrophic for a leadership group that owed its political advance to the CR and based its legitimacy on being Mao’s chosen successors.\textsuperscript{100}

Although the two tenets of claiming Maoist legitimacy and abjuring the Gang of Four were shared by all factions of China’s post-Mao leadership, significant differences have existed on the questions of the degree of continuity and extent of changes. Divergences can be explained in part by the political backgrounds of various leaders: rather more beneficiaries of the CR, those leaders like Hua and Wang owed much of their advancement to Mao, while Deng and Hu’s strengths were their past leadership experiences and their struggle with radicalism over modernization. Whereas the importance of the primarily economic concerns of modernization generally was admitted, there were differences on the requisite extent of superstructural and ideological changes. Undoubtedly a part of the leadership viewed the downfall of the Gang as an occasion to return to the plans for modernization which had been discussed in 1975, but others, led by Deng, seized the opportunity for more drastic reforms. Despite some protestations


\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
of loyalty, there were already signs that Deng planned to challenge for the new leadership.\textsuperscript{101}

Against this background, Hu Yaobang started to organize and promote debates. He first convened a meeting to let the people around him know what he thought they ought to bear in mind when dealing with controversial issues. Hu wanted to give the CPS staff some working guidelines, and began by emphasizing that the history of the CR was extremely important, and they could not avoid dealing with it. He tried to alleviate their fears, calling upon them to ‘liberate your thinking!’\textsuperscript{102} Hu then introduced the two research principles which he expected them to observe in their studies and teachings. The first one was basically Deng’s formula, that they should have an ‘accurate and comprehensive understanding’ of Mao’s relevant instructions. Secondly, he wanted them to use practice as the criterion for testing the truth and for determining the rights and wrongs of a political line. Hu pointedly encouraged that:

\begin{quote}
In your research, you must seek truth from facts. Chairman Mao pointed out that the only yardstick of truth is the revolutionary practice of millions of people. Whether a line is correct or not is not a matter of theory, but a matter of practice. It is something that has to be proved with results in practice, and judged against the practical outcome of a line struggle. If you polemicize about whether a line is correct or not without regard for practice or with your eyes closed to the facts of history, nothing will come out of it, you will only be taken in and deceived.\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}

Inspired by Hu Yaobang’s speech, one leading theorist, the 44-year-old deputy director of the CPS’s Theory Research Office, Sun Changjiang, argued that Hu’s views could be summarized as a single methodological master-principle, i.e. that of practice. Sun’s argument had been shared by his immediate superior Wu Jiang, the director of the Theory Research Office. When Sun suggested to Wu that someone ought to write an article on the topic of practice as the only criterion of truth, Wu is said to have answered by saying ‘O.K. You go ahead and write one!’ This, then was how work on what eventually was to become the article ‘Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth’ began. And by March 1978 Wu Jiang had succeeded in securing Hu Yaobang’s support for the idea of writing this article.\textsuperscript{104}

At the time the article was writing, Sun Changjiang was contacted by The Gaungming Daily, for the newspaper had received a similar article entitled Practice is the criterion of truth. The author was Hu Fuming, who was then vice-chairman of the Philosophy Department of Nanjing University and a young teacher. He later claimed he had submitted the article for publication in the autumn of 1977 in opposition to the ‘two whatevers’ entirely on his own initiative, because

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. pp. 165-6.
he felt that without rebutting that doctrine there was no hope of Deng’s returning to power.\textsuperscript{105}

As they realized the importance of the content, the editor of the paper invited Sun to join and rewrite, for the original copy seemed a bit weak on a number of points. So, after the meeting of the two authors with the editor, a decision was taken, after consulting with Wu Jiang, to make a single article out of the two being written by Hu Fuming and Sun Changjiang. A comparison of extant drafts shows that most of what Sun ended up copying from Hu consisted of Hu’s quotes from and comments on the Marxist classics. Thus, on the basis of his own initial drafts and revised copies of Hu’s manuscripts passed on to him, Sun finalized the text of ‘Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth.’\textsuperscript{106}

On 27 April, Sun’s manuscript was ready to be typeset, and was passed to Hu Yaobang for final approval, Hu liked it, and suggested only a very small number of changes. One concerned the penultimate paragraph, in which a passage read ‘wherever there are “taboos,” there is no science, no practice criterion and no Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. There is only obscurantism.’ At Hu Yaobang’s suggestion, this was changed into ‘wherever there are supposedly absolute “taboos,” held above practice, there is no science and no real Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. There is only obscurantism, idealism and cultural despotism.’ Apparently Hu tried to highlight the issue and to make it more strongly worded.\textsuperscript{107}

There is no doubt that it has been one of the most controversial and influential articles ever published in the post-Mao era. In its published form it is divided into a brief introductory paragraph and four major parts. The first part addresses the question of how one determines whether a theoretical construct is ‘the truth’ or not. It is argued that it is only on the basis of social practice that one can determine what ‘the truth’ is. Here the point has been emphasised that the ultimate criterion for testing truth is practice, rather than theories such as Marxism and Maoist doctrine.\textsuperscript{108}

The second part addresses the concerns of those who might argue that to make practice the sole criterion for testing truth is to undermine the ‘relevance’ of the theory. It argues that a theory in itself can never be the criterion of truth, although it can be the truth. All theories are dependent on, and will always have to be judged against, practice. The superiority of practice to theory is a fundamental Marxist principle endorsed by Mao himself, and thus to respect practice is to hold high Mao’s banner. Hence, to maintain that practice is the sole criterion for testing truth is not to claim that theory is of no importance.\textsuperscript{109}

The third part defends the practice criterion against those who might argue that it is heretical, and introduces examples of how Marx and Engles and Mao revised their own theories, predictions and assumptions on the basis of experience derived from practice. The fourth part

\textsuperscript{105} See Stuart Schram’s report of his interview with Hu in his ‘Economics in command?’ pp. 417-19.


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p. 259.

\textsuperscript{108} ‘Shijian shi jianyan zhenli de weiyi biaozhun’ (Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth), \textit{Guangming Daily}, May 11, 1978

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
contends that truth is only relative, and that any theory that purports to be truth has to be constantly ‘supplemented, enriched and corrected.’ All theories are subject to revision. Once a theory has been proved wrong and unsuitable to practice, it must be modified immediately. A final paragraph attacks those who ‘rest on the ready-made clauses of Marxism’ and fail to deal with ‘the boundlessly rich revolutionary practice that is developing at a rapid pace.’

The whole message boiled down to the following: as the authors declare, ‘Undoubtedly we must adhere to the most basic principles of Marxism, the Marxist standpoint, viewpoint, and method. But the Marxist theoretical treasure-house is not a petrified, unchanging dogma, it must in practice, continuously add new viewpoints, new conclusions and discard those specific old viewpoints and old conclusions which are not suited to the new conditions.’ And there should be no ‘forbidden zone’ in political studies. ‘Forbidden zones’ are fettering people’s minds. ‘We must have the courage to touch “forbidden zones” and tell right from wrong.’

1.5 The Turning Point

The article marked a turning point in the dispute over how to handle Mao’s legacy. It struck at the roots of CR doctrine, which, whether expressed by Lin Biao, the Gang, or Hua Guofeng, held that Mao’s writings and instructions were eternal verities that should not tempered with, whatever the circumstances. Until then, most of the discussions on ‘seeking truth from facts’ only putatively defended the postulate as a fundamental tenet of MLM and a fine tradition of the Party. By contrast, this article declared ‘Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth’ as the most fundamental principle on a philosophical ground, that is, on Marx’s dialectical materialist epistemology. In so doing, the article sought to weaken the ideological ground of the ‘two whatevers.’ The political importance of such a ground was evident because the very publication of the article had been backed by Hu Yaobang, who now emerged as a leading figure of the ‘practice fraction.’ Therefore, the article that became a chief bone of contention is due as much to the opposition it provoked as to its content.

More significantly, the article had been arranged to be published first in *Lilun dongtai (Theory Trends)*, the most important of the internal journal put out by the CPS. In the spring of 1978 it appeared in a small edition of a few hundred copies, but its readership included all the Party’s senior leaders and members of the CPS staff. Between 1977 and 1980 Hu Yaobang exerted direct control over it through his ghost-writers. One official account has it that he ‘personally organized, and in a concrete way guided, the writing and editing work of the group that put out the journal. It carried a series of articles aimed at refuting the ‘two whatevers.’ As these views...

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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
were considered bold and fresh at the time, *Lilun dongtai* became very influential among cadres.\(^{113}\)

The publication process was also designed to make clever use of loopholes in the Party’s censorship regulations. Normally, the organ of the Central Committee would not have been able to publish this kind of article without the prior approval of Wang Dongxing, the politburo member who formally in charge of censoring *The People’ Daily*. But the paper did have the right to reprint articles from *Lilun dongtai* without having to secure permission from Wang, because the journal was already being censored by Hu Yaobang, who was supposedly acted on behalf of the leadership of the CPS. So the journal would shoulder the responsibility for what was bound to be a politically explosive article. Indeed, after the article appeared in *Lilun dongtai* on May 10, it was reprinted under the name of a ‘special commentator’ in *The Guangming Daily* on May 11, which caught widespread attention immediately. The *Xinhua News Agency* broadcast it on the very afternoon of that day. *People’s Daily* and other national and local papers reprinted it the next day.\(^{114}\)

Not surprisingly, the response of the ‘whatever faction’ to this article was vehement. They tried a variety of ways to suppress the article. Wang Dongxing even explicitly ordered that *Hongqi* (Red flag) not reprint it. Thus, *Hongqi*, the CCP’s theoretical organ, deliberately kept silent on the discussion of the criterion of truth for several months, while other national and local newspapers made it one of the hottest topics. On May 17, Wang Dongxing told a small gathering of propaganda officials that the ‘spearhead’ of the article was ‘directed at the Chairman’s thought’ and that ‘investigation must be made to find out who was behind it.’ He declared that ‘our Party newspapers must not do things like this!’ Faced with growing pressure for a public debate of the issues raised by the article, Wang laid down a policy of ‘three don’ts’: don’t cut down the banner; don’t give up the weapon; and don’t make a 180-degree turn.\(^{115}\)

On May 18, the Director of the CPD, Zhang Pinghua, addressed a meeting of provincial Propaganda Department leaders and provincial Party secretaries responsible for culture and education. His talk dealt specifically with the article. In essence, he told his audience that they should feel free to criticize these views raised in the article. Zhang’s words were interpreted by part of his audience as a veiled denunciation of ‘practice is the sole criterion for testing truth.’ And the CPD was not in favour of it, nor was certain other central level leaders.\(^{116}\)

Perhaps the most trenchant philosophical critique came from Wu Lengxi, an influential CC member, in his telephone call on May 12 to the chief editor of *The People’s Daily*, Hu Jiwei. Wu Lengxi had been the chief editor of the People’s Daily between 1957 and 1966, when Hu had been one of the paper’s deputy chief editors. Wu was very critical of the article. He was also

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\(^{116}\) Ibid.
extremely dissatisfied with the *People’s Daily* for having reprinted it. The following is his key points of what he told Hu over the telephone:

This article commits an error in orientation. Theoretically, it is erroneous. Politically, there is an even greater problem. It is very bad, very bad.

The article denies the relative nature of the truth. It also denies the universal truths of Marxism. The article says the Marxism has to be proven in practice for an extensive period of time before it becomes the truth. Lenin’s thesis about how a single country may achieve revolutionary victory during the period of imperialism was to have become the truth only after it had been proven by the practice of First World War and the October Revolution. This is to say that at the time when Lenin formulated his thesis it was not yet the truth. According to this argument, the 11th line as formulated by the Party is not yet the truth, and we have to wait for another 23 years of proof in practice before becomes the truth. If so, then how are people to be able to warmly support it, and fight for its implementation?

The article supports the notion of doubting everything, and of the truth as being unbelievable and unknowable, claiming that relative truth does not exist, and that when the truth is first formulated, it is not yet the truth. Only after having been tested in practice does it become the truth. This is an error in principle….

The article devotes considerable space to a discussion of how Marx and Engels revised the Communist Manifesto, and how Mao revised his own writings. The aim of the author is to encourage us to doubt Chairman Mao’s instructions, and to revise Mao Zedong Thought. It argues that some of Chairman’s instructions are incorrect, and that we must not deal with Chairman Mao’s instructions as if they were dead dogma, or worship them as if they were the Bible. It is very obvious the author’s intention is to cut down the banner . . . .

These reactions from the ‘whatever faction’ led Deng Xiaoping to respond by publicly endorsing the article at the All-Army Conference on Political Work on June 2. It was a blow to the objections raised against the ‘practice faction, and, indeed, marked the beginning of a broad attempt to reformulate the Party’s ideology. In his speech, Deng devoted half his time to expounding on the criterion of truth. What the article placed ‘seeking truth from facts’ as the essence of Marxist philosophy, Deng now called the postulate the ‘most fundamental component’ of Mao’s Thought. He criticized those people who ‘talk about Mao Zedong Thought every day, but often forget Comrade Mao Zedong’s fundamental Marxist viewpoint and abandon or even oppose his method of seeking truth from facts, and of proceeding from reality and integrating theory with practice.’

In order to convince his audience, Deng then thoughtfully selected some of Mao’s works to emphasize his argument. Deng said that in his ‘On Practice,’ Mao pointed out ‘Marxists hold that man’s social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external

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117 See the full text of Wu’s telephone call to Hu in Ruan Ming, *Zhenli biaozhun zhi zhan (The battle over the truth criterion)*, ms., pp. 78-80, quoted in Michael Schoenhals, ‘The 1978 Truth Criterion Controversy,’ pp. 260-262.
The dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge places practice in the primary position, holding that human knowledge can in no way be separated from practice and repudiating all the erroneous theories which deny the importance of practice or separate knowledge from practice.’ Mao also said in his ‘On Contradiction’: ‘Our dogmatists are lazybones. They refuse to undertake any painstaking study of concrete things, they regard general truths as emerging out of the void, they turn them into purely abstract unfathomable formulas, and thereby completely deny and reverse the normal sequence by which man comes to know truth.’ Indeed, in 1956 Mao had said, ‘Integration of theory with practice is one of the fundamental principles of Marxism. According to dialectical materialism, thought must reflect objective reality, and must be tested and verified in objective practice before it can taken as truth, otherwise it cannot.’

Astutely, Deng used these well-known quotations from Mao’s works to prove that the principle of ‘seeking truth from facts’ did not mean rejecting him but, on the contrary, represented a return to the best tradition and practice of the Chairman himself. He then concluded with a rhetorical flourish:

Comrades, let’s think it over: Isn’t it true that seeking truth from facts, proceeding from reality and integrating theory with practice form the fundamental principle of Mao Zedong Thought? Is this fundamental principle outdated? Will it ever become outdated? How can we be true to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought if we are against seeking truth from facts, proceeding from reality and integrating theory with practice? Where would that lead us? Obviously, only to idealism and metaphysics, and thus to the failure of our work and of our revolution.120

Deng’s speech intensified the resistance of the ‘whatever faction’. On June 7, Hua used the occasion of the conference on learning from Dazhai and Daqing to warn against ‘deviation from correct political direction’ and reiterated the ‘superiority of socialist production relations.’121 On June 15, at a meeting of leading personnel from major media organs, Wang called for a criticism of the article and those of related reform views. Raising the issue as one of the media’s ‘Party spirit’ (dangxing) versus its ‘individual spirit’ (gexing), Wang strongly supported the former over the latter, thus asserting the Party’s authority on intellectual authority. He further disparaged recent media articles on distribution according to labour, material incentives, and the reversal of verdicts on the victims of past political campaigns. He even criticized several leaders of the practice faction by name.122

But Deng’s remark had been a great boost to the practice faction, particularly to the people involved in the writing and publication of those articles promoting of the debate. For example, at the offices of the People’s Daily, the chief editor Hu Jiwei made the most of it. On his paper’s

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119 Ibid., p. 129.
120 Ibid., p. 132.
121 See Hua’ speech on June 7, 1978, People’s Daily.
front page, he made a heading out of the sentence in the *Xinhua News Agency*’s official press release that read ‘Vice-chairman Deng makes important speech at conference, succinctly setting forth Chairman Mao brilliant concept of seeking truth from facts.’

What eventually settled the issue in favour of the proponents of ‘practice’ was a direct intervention by the PLA. On June 24, *The Liberation Army Daily*, controlled by the secretary general of the CCP Military Affairs Commission Luo Ruiqing, published a second ‘special commentators’ article by Hu Yaobang’s ghost-writers at the CPS, under the title ‘A Most Basic Principle of Marxism.’ This article deepened the debate over the criterion of truth by addressing the distinction between the teachings of revolutionary leaders and the criterion of truth. For the first time in the debate, the article advanced the argument that political leader’s teachings were not equivalent to the criterion of truth and the leaders and their political lines were not above the criterion or truth, that is, practice. This article put the military openly on Deng’s side.

After its publication, the debate on the criterion of truth, otherwise known as the campaign to ‘emancipate the mind,’ began to spread nationwide. Political implications of this debate soon became even more visible. In July, at a State Council meeting, the senior Party leader Li Xiannian affirmed that formulation ‘practice is the sole criterion of truth’ in his view was ‘correct.’ Over the next few months, leading officials in all provinces and military regions fell in line with the ‘practice faction.’ Meanwhile, many national, local and academic papers and magazines joined the debate. The new journals *Zhhexue Yanjiu* (*Philosophical Studies*) and *Jingji Yanjiu* (*Economic Studies*) ran conferences on the theme of practice as the criterion for testing truth. Obviously a massive campaign was underway to turn all levels of Chinese leadership away from ideological habits of the CR and towards an uninhibited confrontation with the tasks of modernization.

It was at this point that a central work conference, originally proposed by Deng two months earlier, convened in Beijing on November 10, leading to the Party’s Third Plenum of 1978 to formalize the results of the work conference. The Third Plenum was subsequently hailed officially as ‘a crucial turning point of far-reaching significance in the history of our Party,’ which has indeed proved to be the case. The Third Plenum implemented three decisions that had a lasting impact. First, economic modernization was made central to all Party work, proclaiming ‘a shift of focus to socialist modernization’ that marked a decisive departure from Hua’s transitional leadership and indeed from China’s revolutionary era. This ‘shift’ replaced Hua grandiose development goals and claims to Maoist legitimacy with a readiness to do whatever was necessary, within the bounds of socialism, for China’s modernization.

Second, despite the Plenum’s decision to forget about the past and concentrate on the future,

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124 Ibid.
126 See the text of the Plenum’s Communique in *Peking Review*, No. 52 (December 29, 1978), pp. 6-16.
the new ‘practice’ slogan was used at the meeting and subsequently to reverse a whole series of previous political judgements. These were used both to undermine the basis of legitimacy of Hua and his supporters, and to establish the credibility of Deng’s policy positions. To award themselves the mantle of popular legitimacy the Tiananmen Incident of April 1976 was reassessed and soon proclaimed a revolutionary movement that had demonstrated support both for Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping.

Third, the plenum formed the source for a new policy direction that gradually increased the influence of market forces in the Chinese economy. First and foremost, it took several steps away from agricultural collectivization, and rejected Hua’s program and the Dazhai model. Instead, it recognized that ‘private plots, family sideline occupations, and trade in rural collective markets are necessary supplements of the socialist economy.’ So the Plenum returned to the policies of the early 1960s and established a framework that proved to be only the beginning of a radical reform of rural economy in particular and nationwide polity in general.\textsuperscript{127}

More importantly, the plenum ‘highly evaluated the discussion of whether practice is the sole criterion for testing truth, noting that this is of far-reaching historic significance in encouraging comrades of the whole Party and the people of the whole country to emancipate their thinking and follow the correct ideological line. For a party, a country or a nation, if everything had to be done according to books and thinking became ossified, progress would become impossible, life itself would stop and the Party and country would perish.’\textsuperscript{128}

Thus the ‘two whatevers’ policy was officially rejected. Consequently, a number of rewards and punishments related to the campaign were meted out. Hu Yaobang became a member of the Politburo, head of the CPD (supplanting the influence of Wang Dongxing and Zhang Pinghua). Chen Yun was restored to his old position as a CCP vice-chairman, and made first secretary of a new body, the Discipline Inspection Commission (DIC), which set out to purify the Party ranks of CR leftists. In addition, some senior victims of the CR were made Politburo and Central Committee (CC) members, and this was enough to tip the balance of the leadership in Deng’s favour.\textsuperscript{129}

Hua and his supporters of the whatever faction maintained their positions on the Politburo, but the writing was now on the wall for them. Actually, not long after the main antagonists were all ousted. At the Fifth Plenum in February 1980, Wang and other three Politburo members (Known as the ‘little gang of four’) were relieved of all their Party and state posts. Chen Yonggui, the model peasant leader from Dazhai, who was regarded as incompetent rather than malevolent, was simply allowed to drop out of Politburo activities. The political burial of Hua was accomplished in a courteous but pragmatically efficient fashion. In September 1980, he was


\textsuperscript{128} See the Plenum’s Communique in Peking Review, No. 52 (December 29, 1978), p. 15.

\textsuperscript{129} For a full summary of the results of the work conference and the Third Plenum, as well as some of the events leading up to them, see Materials Group of the Party History Teaching and Research office of the CPS, Zhongguo gangchandang lici zhongyao huiyi ji, xia (Collection of Various important conference of the CCP), pp. 274-80.
forced to resign his position as Premier in favour of Zhao Ziyang, whom Deng had elevated to the Politburo in January. Also in 1980, Hua’s long powerless position as Chairman of the CCP became purely titular when Deng decided to revive the Secretariat as the leading Party organ, an office Deng himself had headed in the 1950s before Mao abolished it. Named General Secretary (and thus formal head of the Party) was Deng’s another protege, Hu Yaobang.  

Hua quietly resigned from the now figurehead position of Party Chairman in June 1981, at the same Central Committee meeting that produced the official assessment of Mao Zedong. Hua’s record was submitted to pitiless scrutiny. He was censured for serious errors and failure to correct himself on a number of issues of principles. In sum, the meeting agreed that Hua ‘lacks the political and organizational ability to be the chairman of the Party. That he should never have been appointed of the Military Commission, everybody knows.’

A year later Hua was dropped from the membership in the Politburo, but he retained his seat on the CC until 2002. He did not play any significant role in politics, but he came to symbolise the not-quite-eliminated Maoism in the institutions, ideology and policies of China’s politics in the period between Mao’s death and Deng’s ascendancy. At a time of deep political crisis when public outcry for change was high, Mao’s chosen successor Hua Guofeng committed a serious mistake by stressing ‘continuity’ with the past rather than ‘change’ and failed to present new and inspiring ideas with a direct power. Still, Hua had supported the arrest of the Gang of Four and endorsed the shift to economic modernization – aspects of his life that were officially recognized when he died in 2008.

### 1.6 Redefining Fundamental and Practical Principles

The Third Plenum is rightly appraised by CCP historians as a major turning point in post-1949 history, and signalled a watershed between Hua’s teetering regime of continuity and Deng’s robust era of reform. It is the beginning of the end of Maoism without Mao. Mao was officially declared to be fallible, but his pre-eminent place of honour in CCP ideology was recognized. The Third Plenum made sweeping reversals of CR verdicts and promised a future free from such disturbances. The general re-evaluation of the CR was postponed, but the Plenum holds that it ‘should also be viewed historically, scientifically and in a down-to-earth way. . . As for the shortcomings and mistakes in the actual course of the revolution, they should be summed up at the appropriate time as experiences and lessons so as to unity the views of the whole Party

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130 Hu Sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), p. 425.
and the people of the whole country.”  

In January 1979, the CCP Central Committee convened a National Theory Conference, which discussed a wide range of theoretical issues of great significance. Hu Yaobang, then head of the CPD, was put in charge of organizing the conference, which lasted nearly three months. The participants were those of ideological officials from central and local levels, and leading political theorists and social scientists. Many of them were recently rehabilitated intellectuals. At the start of the meeting a common understanding was reached: in order to research for a new road to make China rich, strong and prosperous, no zones should be ‘forbidden’; nothing would be immune from re-examination and re-evaluation. The dark age of the Gang of Four was over; and Conference members concluded, ‘We all were mistreated then and we should not now do the same thing to ourselves.”

As it progressed, the conference became a forum to criticize openly and heatedly the ‘whatever fraction’. Critics took aim at the theoretical foundations of the CR, such as Mao’s concepts of the principal contradiction of Chinese society, and his serious political errors. These efforts set the momentum for a public criticism of the fundamental tenets of the radical line nationwide. It was this forum that started widespread criticism of Maoist radical policies, denouncing the Cultural Revolution and urging political reforms, which forced the CCP eventually to restructure and reorientate its official doctrine.

These intensive and comprehensive debates and nationwide campaign of the ‘emancipation of mind’ led to some extend of a consensus among Party leaders and theorists to redefine and readjust official ideologies at the fundamental as well as the practical levels. The initial statement of the position that ‘practice is the sole criterion for testing truth’ was seminal in that it breached a key ‘forbidden zone’ of epistemology, but it was only beginning of the process of elaborating an epistemology intended to be both non-dogmatic and Marxist. The basic position is not far from man-in-the-street realism: knowledge is about things which exist objectively, but complexity and change in the objective world limit our ability to grasp truth.

Ontologically this view emphasizes the primacy of objective existence over subjective ideas: in methodology an experimental flexibility is preferred to dogmatism. However, this commonsense position seemed to pose a serious dilemma: What was the relationship between the practice criterion and the guiding role of Marxism? If Marxism were universally truth, as the CCP claimed, why should it be tested by practice? If practice were the sole criterion for evaluating truth, why should the Party use Marxism as a guide? The most basic of these was

whether correct theory could also be a standard of truth.137

The advocates of the practice criterion addressed these questions from two perspectives: (1) regard MLM as a method of analysis, the guide to action rather the criterion of truth; and (2) apply MLM as a system of thought open to practice and adjustment. The first aspect of the new approach to ideology was to treat Mao Zedong Thought as a ‘scientific system.’ As Deng Xiaoping wrote in 1977 in his letter to the Central Committee, ‘Comrade Mao’s remarks on a given subject are correct under a particular time and condition, and are correct on the same subject under another time and condition. But his words on the same subject can differ in variance with time and condition, in emphasis, perspective, and even in wording.’ So it was not enough to understand Mao Zedong Thought ‘from his individual sentences,’ but rather, ‘from the entire system of Mao Zedong Thought.’138

The emphasis on the connection between Mao’s teachings and their special contexts was to suggest that the whatever approach was arbitrary, mechanistic, and unscientific because it amounted to an inaccurate and one-sided understanding. By ignoring the connections between Mao’s words and their contexts, it ran counter to dialectical materialism and was guilty of metaphysical idealism (xingshangxue de weixingzhuyi), as it placed cognition above existence, neglecting the interaction among things. In Marxist terminology, ‘cognition’ refers to the human perception and conception of the material world, whereas ‘existence’ refers to the material world. According to dialectical materialism, existence precedes cognition, though the two interact. And different principles are interconnected and reflect the relationship among different aspects of objective reality, with each specific principle connected with specific historical condition.139

The concept of a ‘scientific system,’ however, did not suggest discarding any specific principles of Mao Zedong Thought. It only purported to balance some of Mao’s words against those of others. Also, Deng and his supporters insisted that MLM was composed of universal and concrete truth. Universal truths, such as dialectical materialism and historical materialism, were universally applicable for it was a scientific worldview. Concrete truth, however, was an application of universal truth in concrete circumstances and thereby true only under certain historical conditions. If we took every concrete assertion and conclusion made by Marx, Lenin, and Mao as universally true, they argued, we would not be able to handle current problems.140

This new conception distinguished between two levels within MLM: the level of jiben yuanli (fundamental principles), which were universal and indispensable, and the level of gebie yuanli (specific principles), which changed with time and context. This distinction provided not only the basis for purportedly new approach to official doctrine but also a more coherent repudiation

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137 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
of the whatever approach.\footnote{Li Shixin, \textit{Zhongguo gongchandang zexue xiangshi} (The History of the CCP's Philosophical Ideology), Beijing: zhongguo dangshi chubanshe, 2003, pp. 406-8.}

This bifurcation is structurally similar to, but semantically different from Schurmann’s distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘practical’ ideology. In his view, only Marxism-Leninism belongs to the universal ‘pure ideology.’ The constantly developing Mao Zedong thought serves as the ‘practical ideology’ of Chinese revolutionaries. Now the Party theorists declared that both Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought contained universal ‘fundamental principles’ and practical ‘specific principles’. What should be aware is that specific principles were the products of applying fundamental principles to concrete situations. As some commentator put it, fundamental principles ‘have the significance of universal laws’ whereas specific principles and conclusions arrived at on their basis ‘concern the problems of specific revolutionary experiences under different historical conditions.’\footnote{Special commentator, ‘The Scientific Attitude of Marxism,’ \textit{Guangming Daily}, September 19, 1978.}

The notion of the ‘fundamental principle’ differed from that of the ‘scientific system’ in that it emphasized different types of components that existed within classic teachings. The fundamental ones were essential, but the specific ones were not. Thus, while Deng continued to use the term ‘scientific system,’ he modified it to denote only the fundamental principles: ‘what we should uphold and use as a guide to action are the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, in other words, the scientific system consisting of these fundamental principles. As to the specific conclusions, neither Marx, Lenin, nor Mao can avoid making this or that error. These do not belong to the scientific system formed by the fundamental principles.’\footnote{Deng Xiaoping, \textit{Deng Xiaoping wenxuan} (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983, pp. 157-8.}

Within the so-called fundamental principles, however, dialectical materialism was given an almost exclusive emphasis, so to make the case for the changing nature of theory. That is, as the material world changed, human condition – being a reflection of that world – must change accordingly. As a leading theorist Li Honglin said, ‘nothing in the world is eternal except the eternally moving material world and its inherent dialectical laws,’ and this ‘applies to Marxism itself.’\footnote{Li Honglin, ‘Science and Superstition,’’ cited in Yan Sun, \textit{The Chinese Reassessment of Socialism, 1976 – 1992}, p. 39.}

More significantly, CCP leaders sought to reconcile the practice criterion with the guiding role of Marxism by positing a new fundamental principle in MLM: seeking truth from facts. Deng himself in 1978 on several occasions, emphatically referred to ‘seeking truth from facts’ as ‘a fundamental viewpoint of Mao Zedong Thought,’ ‘the quintessence of Mao Zedong Thought,’ and ‘the basis of the proletarian world view and Marxism.’ Deng also portrayed Mao as a revolutionary leader who derived his ideas and strategies from practice rather than from

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In Deng’s view, Mao always fought resolutely against the erroneous tendency to divorce theory from practice and to act unrealistically (according to wishful thinking), or mechanically (according to books and instructions from above). The Chinese revolution, Deng argued, would have never succeeded if Mao had understood Marxism-Leninism dogmatically, as those ‘Returned Students’ from Moscow did. Deng extolled Mao’s *On Practice* which summed up the party’s struggles with the dogmatism of ‘Returned Students.’ According to Deng, Mao’s work laid down the ideological and theoretical foundation for the Party.  

The emphasizing primacy of ‘seeking truth from facts’ united the practice criterion with the guiding role of Marxism. The fundamental principles of Marxism were not derived from idle dreams. They were summaries of the experiences of revolutionary movements. As long as a theory, view, or policy was produced from and tested by practice, then, according Deng’s logic, it should agree with Marxism. Indeed, this kind of interpretation of Marxism maximized the flexibility of the ideology the CCP leadership needed to innovate for a new modernization program. The post-Mao economic and political reforms theoretically based on the practical formulations are made out as deriving from Mao’s key slogan of ‘seeking truth from facts’. Party leaders insisted that as Mao’s thought represented an application of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of China, Mao Zedong Thought has to be ‘developed’ (i.e., reinterpreted) for application to new conditions ‘that did not exist in Chairman Mao’s lifetime but exist now.’

In this regard, the most important development is the formulation and promotion of ‘practical materialism’ (*shijian weiwuzhuyi*) by Chinese Marxists in the post-Mao period. They argued that, as far as the Marxist philosophical concept of practice is concerned, practice is the most fundamental concept, not only in terms of Marxist epistemology, but also in relation to the entirety of Marxist philosophy. Since Marxist existential and phenomenological theories of nature and history have developed on the basis of the concept of practice, Marxist epistemology and theory of value should be developed on the same basis. The concept of practice helps to consolidate various aspects of Marxist philosophy into an organic whole. Dialectical materialism and historical materialism, as a combination of materialism and dialectics, and the materialist concepts of nature and history, can thus be regarded as ‘practical materialism.’ This theory had thus added philosophical perspective to the principle of ‘seeking truth from facts.’

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146 Ibid.
1.7 Significant Changes of the Orthodox Ideology

The redefinition of the fundamental principles of MLM laid down a theoretical ground for some profound ideological changes of the CCP regarding the relationship of revolution and production, class and class struggle, and notions of historical materialism and scientific socialism. Politically, the Party decisively changed its direction of socioeconomic development with the shift from ‘class struggle’ to ‘modernization’. The Third Plenum of 1978 stated that ‘the large-scale turbulent class struggle of mass character have in the main come to an end’ and decreed that the Party and people should shift their prime attention to socialist modernization, which is now regarded as ‘a profound and extensive revolution.’ It also declared that the implementation of the four modernizations ‘requires great growth in the productive forces’ and that ‘those aspects of the relations of production and the superstructure not in harmony with the growth of the productive forces’ would need to undergo major changes.149

Thus, class struggle was in effect modified, redefined and demoted in favour of economic progress as the ‘key link’ in Chinese politics.150 The central argument against the doctrine of ‘class struggle as the key link’ was that it was a misconception of the principal contradiction in Chinese society which had contributed to a misplacement of the Party’s priority since 1958. Prior to the theory conference of 1979, efforts to modify the concept of class struggle did not challenge its theoretical basis, even though the readjustment was made by the Party. It simply sought to redefine the purpose of class struggle in terms of material benefits of the people, basing the argument on the Marxist thesis that all class struggles stemmed from conflicts over material interests. By contrast, the kind of class struggle waged in the Mao era did not serve the majority people because it had decreased rather than increased their material interest.151

But this redefinition of class struggle fell short of removing the theoretical ground of the doctrine, that is, the designation of basic contradictions. The Party leading theorist Hu Qiaomu was the first official who questioned the underlying assumptions of this doctrine. In his speech in January 1979, Hu made a convincing analysis about what scope and conditions do class struggle still exist, and what role do they play in propelling social development, as opposed to the role of production activities. More fundamentally, he rejected that the conflict between working and bourgeois classes should remain the principal contradiction. He concluded that Mao’s misconceptions on these issues had led to the overexpansion of class struggle in his later years.152

These analyses were soon endorsed by Hu Yaobang and Deng Xiaoping at the Theory

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150 Colin Mackerras, ‘Chinese Marxism since Mao,’ p. 125.
151 Ibid., pp. 125-7.
Conference of 1979, and the CCP leaders thus identified three major causes of Mao’s misconception accordingly. The first was Mao’s failure to characterize correctly the nature of the transitional period between the pre-socialist and socialist stage as well as the nature of socialist stage. Mao ignored the fact that by 1956, after the transformation of private ownership, the transition to socialism had been completed, thereby eliminating the sources of the fundamental conflict between major classes. Any residual class struggles – arising from remnants of former class enemies or overseas forces – could not function as the motive force of social development. In other words, the empirical context of class struggle no longer existed. In continuing to focus on class struggle, the theory and practice of the key link resulted in artificially engineered political campaigns and misguided policy priorities.\(^{153}\)

Second, a deeper source of the neglect of changed social conditions was attributed to the special experience of the CCP, as it changed from being a party out of power to a party in power. That is, the Party was more familiar with the destruction of the old order than with the building of the new one. The Party’s 1981 Resolution conceded, ‘our Party had long exited in circumstances of war and fierce class struggle and was not prepared, either ideologically or in terms of scientific study, for the swift advent of the newborn socialist society.’ Consequently, the CCP was prone to extending its wartime experience and strategy to the postrevolutionary period. ‘Even after the basic completion of socialist transformation, we were liable . . . to continue to regard issues unrelated to class struggle as its manifestation.’\(^{154}\)

Third, a one-sided understanding of Marxist theory was also said to have given rise to overestimation of class contradiction in socialist society. For example, Lenin once observed that small-scale production would give rise to bourgeois forces during the transitional period of the Bolshevik revolution. Yet, well after the consolidation of China’s transition to socialism, Mao still followed Lenin’s precept. Because some classic masters were misunderstood or dogmatically interpreted, says the 1981 Resolution, the Party’s ‘subjective thinking’ found a false ‘theoretical basis’ in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.\(^{155}\)

The Party had also rejected another of Mao’s ideological legacy – ‘continuing the revolution’ (\textit{jixu geming}), one of the most fundamental doctrines and justifications for the CR. The doctrine held that the revolution was anything but completed with the accession of the CCP to power; it was necessary to continue the struggle against class enemies and bourgeois within society more or less indefinitely. The Party itself, the vanguard of proletariat, was not without bourgeois elements, hence the need to dismiss so many leading members. Mao also came to think that a new bourgeoisie was actually engendered after the victory of the Party. In the early days after the fall of the Gang of Four, the theory of continuing the revolution and the prevention of bourgeois restoration remained intact. In his political report to the 11th CCP National Congress


\(^{155}\) Ibid.
in 1977, Hua Guofeng even described the ‘theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat’ as ‘the most important achievement of Marxism in our time.’\footnote{Colin Mackerras, ‘Chinese Marxism since Mao,’ p. 129.}

It was the attack on the CR that led to the criticism of the notion that bourgeois elements had found their way into the Party and government, and asserted that there were no grounds at all for defining the CR as a struggle against capital road. The idea that political revolutions in which one class overthrows another would recur in the future was also rejected.\footnote{‘Continuing the Revolution,’ \textit{Beijing Review}, No. 34, 24 August, 1981, p. 3.} Instead, revolutionary goals would be reached through a lengthy and orderly process without ‘fierce class confrontation and conflict’. When the Party’s new leader, Hu Yaobang, gave a speech commemorating the centenary of Marx death in 1983, he listed the abandonment of the theory of ‘continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat’ as the CCP’s major political achievement of recent years.\footnote{\textit{China Daily}, ‘Karl Marx Commemorative Supplement,’ 14 March 1983.} With the rejection of Mao’s radical legacy, the CCP began reform and opening-up policy in 1978, emphasizing the political primacy of economic development to achieve modernization. This led to some profound ideological changes regarding the relationship between revolution and production.

During the past decades, Mao always put the importance of revolution over production, for he believed that only incessant revolutionary changes could prevent Chinese society from degrading into capitalism, and revolutionary movements could also liberate and adjust the relations of production and therefore promote development. The CR radicalized official thinking further as the Party followed the line that production was best promoted by ‘grasping revolution’ and that ‘when revolution is handled well, production will automatically go up.’ In daily practice, the slogan was \textit{zhengzhi guashuai} (politics in command), and believed that revolutionary goals should be pursued even at the expense of production. Radical Maoists repeatedly argued that emphasis on productive forces over relations of production would lead to revisionism and capitalism, which they called ‘satellites go up and red flag falls down’ (\textit{weixing shangtian, hongqi luodi}), meaning that economically may sound great but politically it fails its goal, which they believed had happened in the Soviet union. As the result, the cost the Chinese economy paid for this Maoist ideology was tremendous. Not only did radical policies hinder the development of production, they contributed to the wanton destruction of productive forces. At the end of the CR, the Chinese economy was virtually on the brink of collapse.\footnote{Yu Guangyuan, \textit{China’s Socialist Modernization}, Foreign Languages press: Beijing, 1984, p. 7.}

Deng Xiaoping was the first of the top CCP leaders to emphasize the political primacy of production in the post-Mao period. At the Theory Conference of 1979, Deng explicitly pointed out that major contradiction in contemporary China lay in the gap between low productivity and people’s increased demands for consumer goods, thus overturning Mao’s long-standing belief that the struggle between socialism and capitalism constituted the major contradiction in China. During the CR Deng had been lambasted for the ‘\textit{theory of productive forces}’ (\textit{wei shengchanli}
In 1984, Deng took ideological revenge elevating the development of productive forces as fundamental ideological principle. Turning the tables on his leftist antagonists, he claimed that Marxism pays the greatest attention to the development of the productive forces. He argued that Marxism was a theory of communism, and communism must be built upon advanced productive forces and material wealth; therefore, Marxism was a theory of production.  

With this view, Deng defined the development of productive forces as the fundamental task for socialism. He contended that if socialism could not create more advanced productivity than capitalism, the Party would not convince the people of the superiority of socialism. For Deng, the superiority of socialism over capitalism must present itself in terms of speed and efficiency of economic development. Without high productivity, Deng pointed out, socialism was nothing but a boast.

Deng virtually set out a new criterion – the productivity criterion – to measure the Party’s and the socialist system’s performance, a criterion that would eventually test genuine versus phoney Marxism. In support of this assertion, Party leaders and theorists repeatedly cited an article published by Lenin in 1918 entitled ‘The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government’. Lenin had so conveniently declared that ‘in every socialist revolution,’ after the proletariat has successfully seized the power and completed the task of ‘expropriating the expropriators,’ what ‘necessarily comes to the forefront’ is ‘the fundamental task of creating a new social system superior to capitalism,’ which means ‘raising the productivity of labour and in this connection (and for this purpose) securing better organization of labour.’

Accordingly, the Party happily rejoiced in the primacy of economic development. Thus China’s modernization drive in the ‘new period’ (xinshiqi) was defended by the CCP in terms of more Leninist-Marxist than Maoist-Marxist, but it is considered a Marxist (or Communist) program all the same.

As the Party’s ideological reorientation became manifest in official rhetoric, it seemed necessary to provide a theoretical justification for it, indeed, it was considerably important for the leadership to establish a ‘relationship’ between the productive forces criterion and Marxism. Reformers of the Party experienced no difficulty in interpreting the productive forces in Marxist terms, because, after all, production was a central concept of Marxist historical materialism. They even argued that the emphasis on the primacy of production was a return to genuine Marxism, which they believed had been distorted by the radical Maoists of past decades. They cite, for instance, Marx’s statement that:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into contradiction

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with the existing productive relationships, or, what is but a legal expression for these . . . From forms of development of the productive forces these relationships are transformed into their fetters. Then an epoch of social revolution opens. With the change in the economic foundation the whole vast superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.164

To reform Party leaders, the convincing argument for the productive forces criterion was its compatibility with Marxist historical materialism. They believed that productive forces (shengchanli) were the only criterion by which Marxism should measure historical progress. The relation of production (shengchan guanxi) and superstructure (shangceng jiasnzhu) reflected corresponding productive forces and would change sooner or later with the advancement of the latter. This, as the most active factor and revolutionary element in human history, the productive forces played the determining role in propelling forward; it was the nature of the productive forces that made them the fundamental objective criterion for judging social progress.165

A big mistake made by the past leadership was to pursue ‘advanced relations of production’ without taking into account the state of the productive forces. Mao and his followers took the relation of production as the sole criterion by which to measure social progress. This made them believe that the larger the scale of the public ownership of economy, the more complete and perfect socialism became. As a result, their effort to subjectively upgrade the ownership system did more harm than good to economy. Mao’s socialism was just utopian. As some theorists argued that the full development of human beings (a goal of communism) must rely on a high degree of economic advancement, and without progression of production, China could not eliminate poverty and fulfil the socialist promise of common prosperity, let alone realize the full development of human beings.166

1.8 Trends of Ideological Development

Building on the favourable momentum generated by the intellectual debate and the new approach to both fundamental and practical principles of Marxist doctrines, the CCP had made two strategic decisions in the post-Mao period, which had profound influence in shaping Party’s ideology and policies in the years to come. One is that the Party had redefined Mao Zedong Thought in its 1981 Resolution that will be the topic of the next Chapter.

165 Zhang Xianyang, ‘Seriously Studying the New Development of Marxism in China,’ Makeshizhuya yanjiu (Studies in Marxism), 1988, No. 21, pp. 15-34.
The other is the announcement of Deng’s theory of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ at the 12th CCP Congress in 1982 amid high expectation of economic reforms. Deng attributed it as a historical watershed comparable to the 7th CCP Congress in 1945, which established a relative ideological uniformity in the Party and laid a political basis for The CCP eventual victory in 1949. It indicated Deng’s intention to create a new unifying theory based on generally accepted ‘truth criterion’, rejecting radical policies, and establishing new guidelines. While Chapter 3 will examine this in much greater detail, suffice it to say here that, Deng Xiaoping Theory marked a new milestone of innovation and adaptation of CCP’s doctrines. In terms of Sinification of Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory (Deng Xiaoping lilun) had been regarded as liangge feiyao (two flying forward) of the Party’s ideological development and theoretical achievements (lilun chengguo).\footnote{Hu Sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), p. 438; Wei-wei Zhang, Ideology and Economic Reform under Deng Xiaoping 1978-1993, p. 26.}

It is worth noting that Deng’s Theory is regarded as the outcome of the integration of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism with the practice of contemporary China and features of the times, a continuation and development of Mao Zedong Thought under new historical conditions; it represents a new stage of development of Marxism in China, it is a Marxism of contemporary China and it is the crystallized, collective wisdom of the Communist Party of China. Deng’s Theory gave absolute priority to economic development – ‘economic development is the centre of party work’, and laid out the ideological rationale for the introduction of market reforms into China’s economy and letting some of aspects of capitalism (such as the profit motive and private ownership of business) be driving forces for the country’s economic development.\footnote{J. Townsend and B. Womack, Politics in China, 2nd, pp. 395-7.}

The promotion of Deng’s Theory encouraged Party leaders and theorists to rethink orthodox doctrines. In his commemorative address on the centenary of Marx’s death in March 1983, Hu Yaobang proposed treating Marxism as a ‘developing science’ and warned against isolating it from ‘other cultural achievement of mankind.’ This meant Marxism should be integrated both with other human knowledge and with indigenous conditions. Hu even declared that ‘one cannot expect the works of Marx and Lenin written in their time to solve all of today’s problems’, although this created a stir both in China and abroad at the time. However, Hu and his followers reminded critics that ‘Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action’; and remarked that at present ‘there are many new things that do not appear in books at all.’ Therefore, they declared that ‘more than ever before, we cannot cut our feet to fit our shoes.’\footnote{Cited in Charles Burton, Political and Social Change in China since 1978, p. 56.}

Hu’s supporter Zhu Houze, head of CPD, argued that Marx’s theories were originally formulated on the basis of non-Marxist materials, so the development of Marxism should not be limited in a self-enclosed framework of Marxist theories. The positive ideas of even the bourgeoisie may be adopted and used for socialist society.\footnote{Cited in Yan Sun, The Chinese Reassessment of Socialism, 1976 – 1992, p. 188.}
Su Shaozhi, Director of the Institute of MLM under China’s Academy of Social Science (CASS), published during the debate, an article entitled ‘Developing Marxism in the Reform and Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.’ Su distinguished between Marxist conclusions of universal application and those of non-universal application, calling for a new version of Marxism that could explain and guide China’s unique reform and rejecting the ‘old antiques’ (chennian gudong), a suggestive reference to some classical Marxist concepts. He stated that Marxism is a branch of the social sciences, but not an all-encompassing ‘science of sciences.’ And he pointed out that due to the influence of dogmatism and sectarianism, many Chinese officials have understood Marxism in terms of specific words, specific conclusions, or specific quotations. In a way, Marxism is treated as a religion; or, more accurately, a dogma.\(^{171}\)

Wang Ruoshui, a leading theorist, argued, ‘Marxism must constantly be supplemented, revised, developed through testing practice; as soon as it comes to a stop, its life is over; it will be Marxism no longer but dogmatism. Not only is dogma not Marxism, it is the antithesis of Marxism.’ He and other Party theorists placed priority on adapting established socialism to the requirements of reforms and on ‘developing’ Marxism under contemporary conditions. They encouraged a critical reassessment of established theory and practice, and permitted this effort to extend to China’s entire experience with Marxism.\(^{172}\)

These efforts have been so transformative that they have brought revolutionary changes in Chinese thinking of, approach to, Marxism. They also spelled out the direction and manner of the theoretical shift in 1980s. First, the development of Marxism should be taken as a precondition to ‘upholding’ of Marxism. Second, the focus of development was to break away with those conclusions that had proved ‘out dated’ or ‘not entirely correct’ by practice. Third, development should include incorporating ‘other cultural achievements of mankind.’ More significantly, they investigated new questions that had arisen during the implementation of reform and modernization in an attempt to bring new vigor to Marxism.\(^ {173}\)

On the other hand, some critics have been challenging the whole notion of restructuring Marxism, as they suggest the futility of developing Marxism in China. Wang Shuoqiang’s remarks seem typical, ‘Marx had no answers to many problems of our contemporary times; he was indeed unable to foresee or answer them. Classic Marxism was the theory of the impoverished proletarian class during the early capitalist period. Some of his conclusions are no longer applicable in our contemporary highly-developed capitalist society.’\(^ {174}\)

Fang Lizhi, an internationally known astrophysicist and a hero to many Chinese university students in 1980s for his vigorous advocacy for democracy, asserted that Marxism had already proved to be a failure in theory from Marx to Mao and a failure in practice from China’s


experience over the past thirty years. He openly criticised Chinese social scientists for lacking a standard of value and independent mentality as he stated that ‘there is also a tendency within social sciences themselves toward pedantic, hidebound interpretations of Marxism that have no relevance to dealing with real issues. Another tendency is to quote the leaders, especially the leaders who are currently in power.’\textsuperscript{175} Shared with this view, a famous writer Wang Ruowang attacked Chinese socialism as ‘utopian and fictional design’ that took fantasies for correct goals. For them, Marxism was not worth developing.

In the wake of the student protests at the end of 1986, those discussions of developing Marxism were blamed for causing a values confusion among youth and for encouraging bourgeois liberalization. Fang and Wang were accused of utilizing the controversy to repudiate Marxism. Even radical reformers were criticized; Su Shaozhi lost his directorship of the Institute of MLM.\textsuperscript{176}

But Su Shaozhi remained a Marxist even when he took up the role of figurehead in the Democratic Front set up in Paris shortly after the Tiananmen Invent of 1989.\textsuperscript{177} This is because, as Yan Jiaqi, prominent political theorist and chairman of the Democratic Front, admitted that Marxism had already taken root among the younger generation in China and could not be shaken. And ‘it successfully incorporated aspects of traditional culture, as well as nationalism, a more recent source of identity.’\textsuperscript{178}

It should be noted, however, that the trend of adaptation and development of CCP’s ideology have been continuing as we shall see in the following chapters. The earlier example is the Party’s 1986 Resolution which stresses the need to take Marxism as guide in building socialist spiritual civilization – ‘a socialist society with an advanced culture and ideology’. The Resolution states that the Party has already ‘abandoned a series of ossified concepts’ in its interpretation of Marxism; also, it is emphasized that ‘no country can progress if it refuses to accept elements of advanced science and culture from abroad.’\textsuperscript{179}

As leading China scholar Brantly Womack observed earlier on that the Truth Debate had been the key to the ideological reorientation of 1978. ‘The pressures of this political role have shaped the campaign as much as its epistemological content, but the process has been reciprocal. Politics and philosophy have been bent rather than broken by this interaction because of basic commonalities. Both politically and ideologically China has become more secular, professional and diversifed.’\textsuperscript{180}

Professor Colin Mackerras observed that ‘…whatever the social results, there has clearly been

\textsuperscript{177} Bill Brugger and David Kelly, \textit{Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era}, p. xii.
\textsuperscript{179} For the text of the Resolution, see \textit{Beijing Review}, No. 40, 1986, inset, pp.i-viii.
\textsuperscript{180} Brantly Womack, ‘Politics and Epistemology in China since Mao,’ p. 789.
a substantial broadening in the Chinese approach to Marxism since the Third Plenum. To judge from what they write, Chinese Marxists show greater familiarity with the works of Marx and Engels now than was ever the case during the decade 1966 to 1976. Far more scholars have written theoretical articles in a much wider range of journals and newspapers. Moreover, ‘...in any event, the Chinese still claim to be Marxists. Indeed they argue they are more so than ever, because primary authority in Marxist ideology has been transferred from Mao Zedong to Marx, where surely it rightly belongs.’ 181

Dr. David Shambaugh’s recent studies provide ample evidence to show that CCP’s ideology certainly did not die after the reforms began in 1978 – but its nature and functions fundamentally changed. Before the ‘Practice Is the Sole Criterion of Testing Truth’ debate, the relationship between ideology and policy was a deductive one. That is, policies were largely derived from a series of ideological principles and were thereby justified. The CCP leaders and theorists have now turned this relationship around. Thereafter, ideology became an inductive means for validating empirical realities. 182

Thus, the CCP has changed the role that ideology plays in the Chinese politics while remolding MLM doctrines. More significantly, the CCP had learnt the lesson about the role that ideology played in the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ideology there became stagnant, rigid, ossified, and disconnected from reality. Thus it was not simply enough to justify contemporary policy with historical references to Marx or Mao. New concepts needed to be invented – those that were based on broad Marxist principles but were derived from and respectful of local conditions, that is, ideology with ‘Chinese characteristics.’ 183

181 Colin Mackerras, ‘Chinese Marxism since Mao,’ p. 146.
182 David Shambaugh, China’s Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation, p. 105.
183 Ibid.
Chapter 2

Redefining Mao Zedong Thought

2.1 Overview

The formulation of the term ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ and the CCP’s adoption of it have evolved through a long, complicated process. When Mao became a convert to Marxism in 1920, many of the intellectual predispositions that were to mold his knowledge of communism and his concept of revolution were already present. Mao’s ideas were reinforced and developed later by his personal experiences as a CCP’s leader. The Yan’an period (1936-1947) constituted the highpoint of Mao’s political thinking as a Marxist theorist. The concept of ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ was first articulated at the Party’s 7th National Congress, which had been defined as the integration of the ‘universal truth’ of Marxism-Leninism with the ‘concrete practice’ of the Chinese revolution when the CCP formally proclaimed it as the Party’s guiding ideology in its Constitution of 1945.184

As discussed before, the universal truth of Marxism refers to class struggle as the key to understanding the development of human history and the belief in the inevitable downfall of capitalism and the triumph of socialism-communism. Leninism specifically offered the theory of the building of a vanguard of proletarian party to lead the revolution and the nation. It is Mao’s adaptation and enrichment of these universal truths applying to Chinese circumstances that form the essence of Mao Zedong Thought. In a sense, Marxism-Leninism is the ‘pure ideology’ part of Chinese Communist Party, while Mao Zedong Thought is the ‘practical ideology.’185

China scholars have vigorously debated the extent to which Mao Zedong is based on Marxism-Leninism. One side argues that the core of Maoism is faithful to the fundamental principles of that ideology. The other side points out that Mao’s Thought, while employing communist terminology and rhetoric, deviates so sharply from Marxism-Leninism that it should be considered as an entirely different school of political thought, one more deeply influenced by other sources, such as Chinese philosophy and culture. Some see Mao Zedong Thought as an innovative amalgamation of Marxism and Chinese characteristics. According to Arif Dirlik, Mao’s thought is the articulation of a ‘Chinese Marxism,’ at once Marxist and Chinese.186

The CCP leaders and theoreticians described it as the so-called Sinification of Marxism. It is

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184 Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 176-8.
185 Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, p. 21.
Marxist not only because Mao himself has placed his thought unambiguously within a Marxist
tradition, but more importantly because the categories of his philosophy are derivative of
Marxism; indeed, we might suggest that there is no constituent conceptual element of Mao’s
thought that is not traceable to Marxism. At the same time, there is something inclusively
Chinese about Mao’s Marxism.187 As Li Rui observed that the sources of Mao’s writings came
more from Chinese history than Marxist classics.188

In 1981, the CCP issued a lengthy document called ‘Resolution on Certain Question in the
History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China.’ While the
Resolution reaffirms that Mao’s ideology remains ‘the valuable spiritual asset of our party’ and
that ‘it will be our guide to action for a long time to come’, it stresses that the CCP must
acknowledge that Mao made serious mistakes, especially in his later years, and that some of
these were guided by parts of his ideology that simply were wrong. Mao’s political and
theoretical errors included his over estimating the role of subjective will, the flouting of
objective economic laws, such as in the GLP; the widening and absolutizing of class struggle,
and the mistaken identification of the principle contradiction in socialist society as that between
the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as happened in the CR. Shortly after the successful transition
to socialism in early 1950s, Mao began adopting utopian approach as he became ‘smug and
impatient,’ as Deng put it.189

In his later years, Mao became increasingly radical, ‘confused right and wrong and the people
with the enemy,’ which were not only at variance with Marxism, but also divorced from China’s
realities and Party’s orthodoxy. Mao wrongly criticized Peng Dehuai at the Lushan meeting of
1959 which seriously undermined democracy in the Party, and dramatically elevated the
personality cult of Mao. As a consequence, the ‘Yan’an Round Table’ was cracked and an
absolute cultural despotism reigned, under which anyone who was regarded as ‘opposed to Mao
Zedong Thought’ could be punished and even sentenced to death.190

Besides, the Resolution made clear, Mao’s mistakes in his later years should not be allowed to
outweigh his enormous achievements earlier. It dealt at length with Mao’s role up to 1957, and
particularly up to 1949. Mao was acknowledged as ‘the most prominent’ of the ‘many
outstanding leaders of the Party’. He had ‘more than once’ saved the revolution from disaster.
Deng Xiaoping emphasized that the late Chairman’s accomplishment outweighed his mistakes.
Mao’s life was rated as ‘70 percent good, 30 percent bad.’191

But Womack argued that this assessment is somewhat misleading. ‘He is viewed as 100 per

187 Ibid.
188 Li Rui, ‘Preface’, in Jiang Shubai, The Chinese Gene of Mao Zedong Thought, Hong Kong: Commercial Press,
1990, pp. 3-6.
189 Li Shixin, Zhongguo gongchandang zexue xishengshi (The History of the CCP’s Philosophical Ideology), Beijing:
190 Ibid.
191 Deng Xiaoping, ‘Answers to the Italian Journalist Oriana Fallaci’, in O. Schell and D. Shambaugh, eds., The

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cent right for 70 per cent of his career, and close to 100 per cent wrong for the last 30 per cent.’ However, as Womack continued that the dichotomy between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ Mao is very convenient for post-Mao Chinese orthodoxy, allowing it to uphold Mao Zedong Thought (properly understood) and still reject Mao the leftist.192

Schram put it succinctly, ‘Welcomed by many in 1949 as a liberator from corrupt, oppressive, and ineffectual government of Kuomintang, and as the protagonist of a great revolution in the countryside, he came to be seen as a harsher tyrant than ever Chiang Kai-shek had been, and the bringer not of liberation but of slavery and starvation to the peasantry.’193 But Mao’s personality was many-sided and contradictory, and in his time he played many roles. So Mao must be seen at various times and under various conditions.194

Dr. Henry Kissinger offers in his new book a more considerate observation: ‘If China remains united and emerges as a twenty-first-century superpower, Mao may hold, for many Chinese, the same ambiguous yet respected role in Chinese history as Qin Shihuang, the Emperor he personally revered: the dynasty-founding autocrat who dragged China into the new era by conscripting its population for a massive national exertion, and whose excesses were later acknowledged by some as a necessary evil. For others, the tremendous suffering Mao inflicted on his people will dwarf his achievements.’ And personally, Mao left ‘with the legacy of his grandiosity and brutality, of great vision distorted by self-absorption.’195

More significantly, as a way to depersonalize even the positive components of Mao Zedong Thought, the 1981 Resolution declares that the ideology of the CCP is ‘a crystallization of the collective wisdom’ of the Chinese Communist Party, not the product of one person. Mao was thus ‘de-deified’, and the new orthodox view is that Mao Zedong Thought refers to accumulated wisdom through the whole process of the Chinese revolution and socialist construction. Mao may have been the main individual who articulated or expressed the results of this collective endeavor, but there were other contributors to ‘Mao Zedong Thought’, Such as Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Liu Shaoqi. They are Mao’s close colleagues, the leaders of the first generation of the CCP, and founding fathers of the PRC. They had also contributed quite significantly to the development of the Party’s doctrine.196

This approach of redefining and revising Mao Zedong Thought allowed not only the selective use of Mao but also the flexibility for continuing addition to the official ideology. Mao Zedong Thought as a product of collective experience could continue to adopt and grow, as the revolutionary movement developed and assimilated new elements. This is especially useful for

194 Ibid.
self-justification, attempting to sanitize Mao to justify and legitimize the pursuit of ‘four modernizations’. It becomes easier to provide ideological explanations for new policies and practices, as responses to new conditions and experiences, without restraint by former ideological precepts.\textsuperscript{197}

Theoretically, such surgical operations of enclosure and exclusion were possible precisely because of the definition of Mao Zedong Thought as a ‘method’, the very quintessence being ‘practice as the sole criterion for testing truth’.\textsuperscript{198}

This chapter explores and discusses the development of Mao’s political ideas, how Mao became a Marxist, the Sinification of Marxism, the major features of Mao Zedong Thought; and then Mao’s political and theoretical errors, how the Party redefined and revised its official doctrine; and, in the last section, a review of neo-Maoism.

\section*{2.2 Genesis of Mao's Political Ideas}

According to Stuart Schram, an authoritative biographer of Mao, in terms both of age and of experience, Mao Zedong was a member of the May Fourth generation. Although he had many strongly marked individual traits, Mao shared certain attribute characteristics of this group as a whole. One of the most important was that it was a transitional generation, which spanned not merely different phases but different eras in China’s development. It marked a great climacteric after which nothing would be the same again.

In a word, the members of the May Fourth were aware of the certainties regarding the enduring superiority of the Chinese way that had comforted their elders, but they were never able to share this simple faith. Some of them, including Mao, soon espoused Western ideas to which they remained committed for the rest of their lives, but most remained deeply marked both by faith in the intrinsic capacities of the Chinese people, and by the traditional modes of thought which they had repudiated. Thus they were fated to live in circumstance of permanent political and cultural ambiguity and instability.\textsuperscript{199}

But Mao’s political ideas began to take shape before the May Fourth when he was in his early 20s, at the time ‘I was a student in the normal school for five years,’ as Mao described to Edgar Snow.\textsuperscript{200}

In his childhood, Mao was deeply influenced by Chinese traditional culture. He was born in the village of Shaoshan in Hunan in 1893 into a family of a formerly poor peasant who had

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.


gradually risen to the status first of middle peasant and then rich enough to become a grain dealer as well. However, Mao’s father was an ex-soldier who had received only two years’ schooling, just enough to enable him to keep his accounts. Mao’s mother was completely illiterate, a devout Buddhist. Mao attended the local primary school where he learned to repeat the Confucian classics without much understanding of them. But he enjoyed reading popular romantic literature depicting heroic adventures, peasant rebellion, and contests of states. He was particularly interested in historical novels such as *Water Margin, Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Travels in the West*.  

In 1906 when he was thirteen his father insisted that he leave the school to devote all his attention and time to the land. However, Mao continued to read and together with the literate villagers he devoured political writings. Like most young Chinese of his generation, Mao was also exposed to a variety of modernizing and Westernizing influences. When he was first time reading Cheng Guanying’s *Warning to the Seemingly Prosperous Age*, Mao got very excited and impressed by the book. The author was then an old reformist scholar and leader of a group of intellectuals urging the Chinese to develop themselves scientifically and to modernize China’s economy. It also contained denunciations of various social abuses and an indictment of the foreigners’ treatment of the Chinese in Shanghai as second citizens.

Reading political books as such stimulated Mao to resume his studies and he managed, despite his father’s opposition, to return to his education at the advanced age of sixteen in a modern higher primary school, a few miles from home. There Mao heard something of the activities of the Dowager Empress Cixi and the vast corrupt bureaucracy in Peking that attempted vainly to unite a nation that was disintegrating as the Manchu dynasty drew towards its end. At that school Mao was influenced by a radical teacher who was opposed to Buddhism and wanted to get rid of the gods. He urged people to convert their temples into schools. Mao admired him and agreed with his views, and confessed that this made lasting impressions on his young mind, already rebellious.

In this period, Mao began to have a certain amount of political consciousness, especially after he read a pamphlet telling of the dismemberment of China. ‘I remember even now that this pamphlet opened with the sentence: “Alas, China will be subjugated!”’ Mao recalled, ‘It told of Japan’s occupation of Korea and Taiwan, of the loss of suzerainty in Indochina, Burma, and elsewhere. After I read this I felt depressed about the future of my country and began to realize that it was the duty of all the people to help save it.’ There can be little doubt that this helped to inspire the nationalist tendency which never left him and later caused vast trouble in his relations with the Soviet Union.

Typically, Mao reached outside the school curriculum for two key works. One was a volume

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202 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
of *Journal of the New People*, edited by Liang Qichao, the leading political writer of the day. The other, *Reform Movement of 1898*, a manifesto of the last-ditch upsurge of reform, was written by Kang Youwei, its preeminent philosopher. These books gave Mao his first strictly political ideas. Learning about the reform politics of the time led him to believe that knowledge could remake the world. The two great reformers Kang and Liang became Mao’s models and remained so until they were displaced later by Sun Yat-sen, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi.²⁰⁵

Another book, an anthology called *Great Heroes of the World* had inspired young Mao too. After having read the stories of Napoleon, Washington, Peter the Great, Gladstone, Lincoln, Catherine the Great, Rousseau, and Montesquieu, Mao said fervently to his fellow pupil, ‘We need great people like these.’ Certainly, to Mao, that sort of great people would make China rich and strong ‘so as not to follow in the footsteps of Indochina, Korea, and India.’ Mao particularly admired George Washington, claiming: ‘Victory and independence only came to the U.S.A. after eight long bitter years of fight under Washington.’ Like a gleam from over the horizon, the West had been noticed by young Mao. Then as later, it fascinated him less for its own sake than for what lessons it might hold for China. America had a revolution; what about China? As seeking for heroes to feed his appetite, Mao loved to read about China’s ancient emperors, and two of them stuck in his mind for life: Qin Shihuang, the first emperor who unified China, and Han Wudi (the ‘Martial Emperor’), who extended it.²⁰⁶

In September 1911, Mao, driven by a desire to see more of the world, ventured to Changsha, the capital of the province, then home to 800,000 people. Opened to foreign trade in 1904 as a Treaty Port, the city was booming, and it was also a very exciting moment in modern Chinese history, for the revolution was in the air, which would soon overthrew the Manchu Dynasty. Mao was first registered at a middle school there, but not long he found himself involved in the revolution. It was then Mao saw a newspaper for the first in his life, and he had learned to cherish the printed page as a window on history. The newspaper, *Strength of the People* was an organ of Sun Yat-sen’s nationalist movement. Mao was particularly inspired by a report in the paper of an unsuccessful uprising at Canton, which was led by a Hunanese revolutionary called Huang Xing. ‘I was most impressed with this story,’ Mao recalled, ‘and found *Strength of the People* full of stimulating material.’²⁰⁷

This apparently encouraged him to write his own first political comments on a wall poster in the school. This form of expression based on tradition was then popular. It was later to become one of Mao’s favorite instruments in the CCP especially during the CR.

When the revolution did break out on October 10 of 1911 in Wuhan, Mao and his friends were naturally excited, and indeed, Mao was on the point of leaving the town to join the republican

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 23.
forces as the movement spread to Changsha. A spokesman for the revolutionary army came to Mao’s school and talked to the students about the promise of the era. Mao was so stirred that he decided to ‘join the revolution.’ After five days to think out his exact course, he enlisted in the Hunan revolutionary army. Many students were now joining the army. But just as the Hunanese were preparing to take action, Sun Yat-sen reached an agreement with Yuan Shikai, a shady strong man with his feet in Republican China and his heart in old regime. The scheduled war was called off; North and South were ‘unified’. The military phase of the revolution had ended. ‘Thinking of the revolution was over, I resigned from the army and decided to return to my books. I had been a soldier for half a year.’ Mao recalled.208

At this stage, Mao seemed more self-confident and mature, as he found ordinary schools no longer enough to satisfy his wants. ‘Its curriculum was limited and its regulations were objectionable.’ Mao commented. So in that year, he left the school and spent six months for self-education, which consisted of reading every day in the Hunan Provincial Library. Mao said he was very regular and conscientious about his plan that he went to the library in the morning when it opened. At noon he paused only long enough to have simple lunch and then back to read until it closed. ‘During this period of self-education I read more books, studied world geography and world history. There for the first time I saw and studied with great interest a map of the world. I read Adam Smith’s The Wealth of Nations, and Darwin’s Origin of Species, and a book of ethics by John Stuart Mill. I read the works of Rousseau, Spencer’s Logic, and a book on law written by Montesquieu.’ Mao later judged this half year among books to be a high point of his life.209

Not long afterwards, Mao was accepted at the Hunan Normal School. Like all colleges then in China, the school was new and modern, yet its excellent teachers carried on Hunan’s rich scholarly tradition. Mao found himself reading Chinese history before lunch and German philosophy by siesta time. Mao’s core education there consisted of ethics plus newspapers – a lifelong double love. Thus in the next five and a half years, until 1918, when he finally got the degree, Mao’s political thoughts had been shaped and developed. It also provided a venue Mao acquired his first experiences in social action. Mao began to stand out as a bright, intelligent, youthful leader among the other students at the school as well as in the city. Like most youths, Mao leaned as much by example as by exhortation, and his ethical model was a man with a rare skill for making disciples. Mao was proud to relate that he came under the tremendously important influence in his life at this time, in the shape of a professor of ethics, Yang Changji, who had studied in Japan, England and Germany. Later, Mao was to marry his daughter.210

Yang, who was a disciple of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the most prominent figure of Neo-Confucianism, as well as Immanuel Kant and T. H. Green, taught a moral philosophy which

208 Edgar Snow, Red Star over China, p. 167.
209 Ibid., p. 169; also see Ross Terrill, Mao: A Biography, p. 27.
210 Ross Terrill, Mao: A Biography, pp. 28-30.
combined the emphasis of Western liberalism and self-reliance and individual responsibility with a strong sense of man’s duty to society. To this end, he had compiled a volume of extracts from the Confucian Analects, which accompanying commentaries, to illustrate his own interpretation of ‘self-cultivation’. Yang’s influence is no doubt reflected in Mao’s emphasis on conscious action, which had, in Mao’s case as in Yang’s, both Chinese and Western antecedents. Thus Mao justified the importance of subjective factors by quotation from the Confucian teaching, ‘what the superior man seeks is in himself.’ That is: ‘If one has an unbreakable will, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished.’

Mao also learned from his teacher the practice of cold baths as an aid in strengthening the will, of which Yang was an enthusiastic partisan. In addition, Mao absorbed from his mentor a powerful dose of idealism. It was under the influence of Yang, Mao wrote and published his first article entitled ‘A Study of Physical Education’ in New Youth in 1917. This text is of great interest both for what it reveals of Mao’s mind and personality on the eve of the May Fourth movement, and as a point on the trajectory that carried him from a Chinese intellectual world to the adoption of Marxism-Leninism as his basic world view. It also reveals something of sources of his political thoughts, which notably included nationalism, the martial spirit and heroism, and the importance of conscious action and individual activities as opposed to a mere mechanical execution of orders. All these themes run through all of Mao’s life and thought.

2.3 Becoming a Marxist

Mao Zedong, himself, dates his conversion to Marxism from 1920, as he said in his autobiography: ‘In the winter of 1920 I organized workers politically for the first time, and began to be guided in this by the influence of Marxist theory and the history of the Russian Revolution. During my second visit to Peking I had read much about the events in Russia, and had eagerly sought out what little Communist literature was then available in Chinese. Three books especially deeply carved my mind, and built up in me a faith in Marxism, from which, once I had accepted it was the correct interpretation of history, I did not afterwards waver. These books were the Communist Manifesto, translated by Ch’en Wang-tao and the first Marxist book ever published in Chinese; Class Struggle, by Kautsky; and a History of Socialism, by Kirkup. By the summer of 1920, I had become, in theory and to some extent in action, a Marxist, and from this time on I considered myself a Marxist.’

Mao was one of the few intellectuals at the time who were conscientiously turning to Marxism seeking inspiration for Chinese revolution. In the fall of 1918, Mao went to Peking, where for

211 Li Rui, Mao Zedong de zhaogqi geming huodong (Mao Zedong’s Early Revolutionary Activities), Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1980, p. 30.
212 Stuart Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung, p. 23.
213 Edgar Snow, Red Star over China, p. 181.
the first time he entered into personal contact with leading protagonists of the new intellectual currents that were shortly to be projected by the May Fourth Movement into still greater prominence. By a fortunate coincidence, his professor of ethics, Yang Changji, with whom he had established close relation, had just left the Normal School in Changsha for a chair at Peking University (Beida), and was thus able to help Mao find a job as a librarian’s assistant under the direction of Li Dazhao, the man who, perhaps better than any other, represented the combination of the most radical Western ideas with Chinese nationalism. Li was also a professor who was the first to teach Marxism in China. At the same time, Mao came to know Chen Duxiu personally as he was then a dean and professor at Beida. Both Li and Chen became the leading figures of the May Fourth Movement and later co-founders of the CCP. They had an enormous influence on Mao for his understanding and spreading of Marxism-Leninism in China, as Mao admitted that “they became for a while my models.”

Li Dazhao was the first to declare himself in 1920 a Marxist in China, which inspired many young intellectuals to embrace the radical ideology. At the beginning, China’s early revolutionaries perceived in Marx’s writings a doctrine that was too historically specific to be of any utility in the Chinese context. Marxism was regarded as a theory grown out of European conditions. Therefore, it appeared to have little to say about the sort of problems which confronted young Chinese radicals who were passionately concerned with China’s plight, such as humiliation at the hands of the West, the poverty and backwardness of her people, and the corruption and ineptitude of her rulers. Although there was some interest in Marxism when it was introduced at the turn of the century, this early interest had given way to a growing commitment to the ideals and practices of anarchism, which seemed preferable to a Marxist theory stressing the necessity of a capitalist phase of development prior to the achievement of socialism, and indicating the lengthy nature of such social transformation.

Only after the October Revolution did the Chinese begin to show real interest in Marxism. Li Dazhao was the first major intellectual who stood out openly to support the Bolshevik Revolution. He also began the tradition of adapting Marxism to Chinese perspectives, which combined, as Maurice Meisner phrases it, a voluntaristic interpretation of Marxism and a militant nationalism.

More significantly, Li Dazhao argued that the Russian Revolution appeared superior to French Revolution of 1789 because it was internationalist. Li believed that Russia was destined to play a vital role as a mediator between East and West – he also held that China was to have a pre-eminent part in the great synthesis. Certain ideas characteristic of Li’s Marxism were to appear subsequently in the writings of Chinese Marxists, especially in Mao’s. Li was amongst the first

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214 Ross Terrill Mao: A Biography, p. 38.
216 Ibid.; also see Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 9-10.
of the Chinese Marxists to perceive the importance of the peasantry to the revolution. However, peasants would not be able to raise a revolutionary demand for their own liberation without the prompting of the educated youth of China who were urged by Li to ‘go to the villages’ and rouse the peasants to revolution. There are clear parallels between this populist sentiment in Li’s and the views expressed by Mao at a later stage in the Chinese revolution.217

The other aspect of Li’s populism which is paralleled in Mao’s thought is the belief that backwardness constituted a virtue in revolutionary terms. Li was convinced that China would avoid a capitalist future with all its attendant evils. China’s backwardness, he declared, rather than suggesting (as orthodox Marxism did) that a socialist revolution was out of the question, suggested instead that Chinese society had abundant ‘surplus energy’ which had not tapped. Through the exploitation of this ‘surplus energy’, China would be able to bypass the capitalist stage of development, building socialism directly through a re-organization of society and premised on the virtues inherent in the primitive simplicity of Chinese rural community. This clearly foreshadowed the thesis that China can progress faster because she is ‘poor and blank’ advanced later by Mao.218

The most impressive of the leaders of this period was the brilliant intellectual-activist Chen Duxiu, who was already a major personality before the 1911 revolution. Between 1915 and 1921, he founded and edited New Youth, the most influential magazine of the period, which initiated and promoted the new cultural movement, advocating ‘Mr Democracy’ to establish the democratic government; and ‘Mr Science’ fighting against superstition, backwardness, and feudalism, particularly of doctrines of Confucius. New Youth brought together a number of progressive intellectuals; and among its prominent editors and contributors were Li Dazhao, Lu Xun (a leader of the new literary movement), and Hu Shi, the Deweyan pragmatist and a leader of language reform actively promoting the vernacular (baihua) instead of literary Chinese (wenyan) to facilitate the spreading of public literacy. The magazine was regarded as the pioneer in thinking for the May Fourth Movement and paved the way for the spreading of Marxism-Leninism in China.219

It was in New Youth that Li Dazhao published his celebrated article ‘The Victory of the Bolshevism’ in 1918, and edited a special issue of Marxism in 1919. All their writings molded the beliefs of a whole generation of young students who were to achieve political prominence during the May Fourth movement and to become the leaders of the modern revolution in China. Among their avid readers and followers was the youthful Mao Zedong, whose first published writing appeared in that magazine in 1917.220

Chen Duxiu embraced Marxism in 1920, and he adopted virtually all aspects of a largely

217 Ibid.
218 Stuart Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung, p. 31.
orthodox interpretation of Marxism and historical materialism. Chen’s basically Eurocentric Marxism was to have important implications for the early Chinese Communist movement, for it introduced historic ideas and political categories which were often unsuited to the realities of Chinese society, and which were utilized in an uncritical manner by his followers within the CCP. Chen adopted a concept of ‘dual revolution’ to signal that the Chinese revolution could not lead China immediately into socialism. Rather, the bourgeois-democratic revolution (then in process) was quite a distinct revolution from the socialist revolution which would follow it.221

Because the current revolution was bourgeois-democratic in nature, Chen believed that the bourgeoisie would lead it. And related to Chen’s rather mechanistic Marxist doctrine of the ‘dual revolution’, was the low opinion he held of China’s peasantry, which stemmed from Chen’s adoption of the traditional Marxist view of the peasants as essentially conservative, with a poorly developed class consciousness, and unable to lead progressive revolution. So Chen believed the centre for political struggle resided in the cities and industrial areas in which the proletariat was represented, political strategy had to be based on the proletariat, building up the labor unions, and employing strikes and industrial disruption to achieve political ends.222

Thus two different interpretations of Marxism were expounded in China in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the May Fourth Movement. Mao, who met Chen several times during his visits to Peking and later Shanghai, claimed ‘He had influenced me more than anyone else.’ At the same time, Mao also said that under Li Dazhao in 1918-19, he had rapidly developed toward Marxism. According to Schram’s studies, Mao’s development of Marxist views was shaped by both these men, but more by Li than by Chen. More importantly, Mao is a genuine communist revolutionary, and while the categories in which he reasons are Marxist categories, the deepest springs of his personality are, to a large extent, to be found in the Chinese tradition, and China’s glory is at least as important to him as is world revolution. As in that of Li’s case, Mao’s impulse to revolution came before the commitment to Marxism as an intellectual system, and this impulse was to a considerable extent transmitted to Mao by Li.223

On the basis of Mao’s writings and speeches published during this period, Chinese historians define Mao’s world outlook then as follows: belief in the guiding role of Marxism-Leninism in China’s revolution and the imperative need for radical revolution through which the proletariat could seize political power; belief in the basic Marxist principles on questions concerning the communist revolution; advocacy of Marxist-Leninist theories concerning the organization of a political party of the proletariat; and the concept of relying on the masses and having faith in the masses.224

221 Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 34-7.
223 Stuart Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung, pp. 30-32.
2.4 The Sinification of Marxism

Mao Zedong’s conversion first to Marxist philosophy and then to communism as a means of China’s revolution marked a new phase of Mao’s political career. Thereafter he never wavered from that self-identification. Anarchism, reformism, utopianism, were squeezed out as frameworks for his political thought. In 1919, Mao returned to Changsha, where he found himself plunged almost immediately into the political activity that sprang up following the May Fourth demonstrations in Peking. The energy displayed by Mao during this period was prodigious. As Mao recalled that he became an editor of the Xiang River Review, the Hunan students’ paper, which had a great influence on the student movement in South China. He also helped found the Wenhuashuhui (Cultural Book Society), an association for study of modern culture and political tendencies. This organization, and more especially the Xinminxuehui (New People’s Study Society) Mao founded earlier, were violently opposed to the local warlord.\(^{225}\)

More importantly, following Li and Chen’s examples, Mao organized a CCP branch that enabled him to be one of twelve delegates, representing 53 party members nationwide, participated in the First Congress in Shanghai in 1921, which announced the establishment of the CCP in China, with Chen Duxiu elected as the first Party leader.\(^{226}\)

Mao had been certainly inspired by the founding of the CCP, as he predicted that ‘If we work hard, in about thirty to fifty year’s time the Communist Party may be able to rule China.’\(^{227}\) He soon returned to Changsha with two hats: Mao was now province secretary of the CCP, and also province head of the Labor Secretariat, which was the infant Party’s key project. Mao thus played a leading role in the Hunan labor movement. He organized unions, initiating more than a dozen major strikes. Now and then he quietly spawned a new Party cell. The work grew. Within two years 20 unions with 50,000 workers were formed in Hunan. The carefully selected ranks of the CCP in the province grew from 10 in the mid-1921 to 123 a year later. As each new union started Mao would try to place a CCP cadre as its secretary.\(^{228}\)

Based on his experience, Mao also put forward ideas on the importance of organization that may be regarded as very close to the Leninist conception of democratic centralism. He proposed that the labor unions should have democratically formed executive organs entrusted with full powers, for if authority were too much divided, the result would be unsatisfactory. Perhaps there was in his personality a kind of ‘natural Leninism’, analogous to the ‘natural morality’ of the theologians: i.e., a certain intuitive understanding of the importance of organization that is one of the reasons for his emergence as the leader of the CCP.\(^{229}\)

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227 Ross Terrill *Mao: A Biography*, p. 58
228 Ibid., 64.
229 Stuart Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, p. 35.
Mao then devoted himself, in 1925-7, largely to organizing the peasant movement, as he came to Canton and began lecturing at the Peasant Movement Training Institute (which he was to head in 1926). By this time he come to hold the view, from which he was never afterwards to waver, that the centre of gravity of China’s revolution lay with the peasant in the countryside.\textsuperscript{230}

In the year between 1927 and Mao’s rise to power within the CCP in 1935, the Moscow-based Comintern controlled and led the Party from one crisis to another, and from one defeat to another. Under Li Lisan, the CCP attempted through military means to capture and control large cities in southern China. When this policy ended in failure, Li was removed (and like Chen Duxiu, blamed for the failure), and leadership of the Party fell into the hands of the Returned Students Faction. This group had lived and trained in the Soviet Union, and was thoroughly imbued with Stalinist Marxism. Wang Ming and Bo Gu who led the Returned Students’ Faction quickly found themselves in conflict with Mao Zedong. Mao’s opposition to the Returned Students’ Faction was premised on the belief that a dogmatic adherence to a foreign brand of Marxism could not but hinder the cause of the Chinese revolution. Rather than leading to a strategy based on China’s particular characteristics, the doctrine of this Faction attempted to impose on the CCP a blueprint for revolution based on foreign models and experience.\textsuperscript{231}

By 1930, Mao had come to the conclusion that Chinese revolution was characterized by several distinctive features, and that failure to take account of these would lead to mistaken tactics in the revolutionary struggle. It is based on his personal experiences and understanding of distinctive features of China’s revolution, Mao started developing his political ideas in late 1920s. But, it was not until the debacle of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign which drove the CCP’s army from the Jiangxi Soviet and onto the Long March that Mao was to gain a position of authority which would allow his brand of Marxism to influence the strategy pursued by the Party.\textsuperscript{232}

At the Zunyi Conference in January 1935, the political line followed by the ‘Returned Students’ Faction was rejected and Mao elevated to a leading post within the Party. In the years which followed (frequently called the Yan’an period), Mao set out in earnest to forge a Marxism which was well suited to the particular needs and characteristics of Chinese society and the Chinese revolution, and which would contribute to the victory over Japanese imperialism, leading the CCP to power in 1949. Mao thus had formulated his version of Marxism through the process that is subsequently recognized as the *Sinification of Marxism* (Zhongguohua de Makesizhuyi). The notion of the Sinification of Marxism was first put forward by Ai Siqi, a leading CCP theorist during the Yan’an period.\textsuperscript{233}

But it was Mao who officially defined the meaning and illustrated its significance in his report


\textsuperscript{231} Hu sheng, ed., *Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian* (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 91-3.


to the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee in October 1938, as he called for the Sinification of Marxism in the following terms:

A communist is a Marxist internationalist, but Marxism must take on a national form before it can be applied. There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used. If a Chinese communist, who is part of the great Chinese people, bound to his people by his very flesh and blood, talks of Marxism apart from Chinese peculiarities, this Marxism is merely an empty abstraction. Consequently, the Sinification of Marxism – that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese peculiarities, using it according to these peculiarities – becomes a problem that must be understood and solved by the whole party without delay. . . We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models . . . we must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and Chinese manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people.234

The essence of the Sinification of Marxism was, as Mao indicated in the report, to establish a formula by which a universal theory such as Marxism could be utilized in a particular national context and culture without abandoning the universality of that theory. Mao believed it possible to discover particular ‘laws’ (of nature, society, history, war), which unlike the universal laws of Marxism, have no universal applicability. This belief in the existence of particular ‘laws’ describing the regularities present in particular of localized contexts comes across clearly in the following passage from ‘Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War’, written by Mao in 1936:

The different laws for directing wars are determined by the different circumstances of those wars – differences in their time, place and nature. As regards the time factor, both war and its laws develop; each historical stage has its special characteristics, and hence the laws in each historical stage have their special characteristics and cannot be mechanically applied in another stage. As for the nature of war, since revolutionary war and counter-revolutionary war both have their special characteristics, the laws governing them also have their own characteristics, and those applying to one cannot be mechanically transferred to the other. As for the factor of place, since each country or nation, especially a large country or nation, has their own characteristics, and here, too, those applying to one cannot be mechanically transferred to the other. In studying the laws for directing wars that occur at different historical stages, that differ in nature and that are waged in different places and by different nations, we must fix our attention on the characteristics and development of each, and must oppose a mechanical approach to the problem of war.235

Here Mao rejected the notion that there can only be laws of war in general. On the contrary, he

234 Ibid., p. 29.
argues that it is possible and desirable to seek out ‘laws’ describing the characteristics of special theatres of war. In this way, a universal law could aid in the elucidation of the particular, and only by the union of the two could the universal law cease to be an abstraction with no content. As a complete ideology, Marxism comprised universal (or ‘abstract’) laws utilized to disclose ‘laws’ at the level of the particular instance; Marxism would remain incomplete without the union of the universal and particular in this manner. Therefore, the Sinification of Marxism was not a question of the elevation of Chinese realities at the expense of ideology, but the completion of Marxism as an ideological system. It is in this context that Mao’s theory of practice finds relevance. Ideology could only serve as a guide to action by presenting an accurate assessment of the historical situation of process.236

It is up to the political actor, utilizing direct and indirect experience, and taking full cognizance of the regularities (special ‘laws’) of the situation, to draw the necessary inferences and formulate an appropriate response accordingly. Such a response could not be regarded as ‘correct’ in advance of its implementation, it could only be seen as ‘appropriate’. The only method of ascertaining whether the seemingly appropriate action was correct was by performing the action and evaluating its result.237

Mao’s approach of the Sinification of Marxism was shared by the CCP leaders and theorists, and, eventually, they regarded Mao’s thought as the product of the Sinification of Marxism. The term ‘Mao Zedong’s thought’ first appeared in 1943 when the Yan’an rectification campaign was in full swing. It was first used by Wang Jiaxiang, a senior Party leader at the time, in an article published that year, referring to Mao’s thought as ‘Chinese Marxism-Leninism, Chinese Bolshevism, and Chinese Communism’. Also in that year, Liu Shaoqi said in his report to mark the 22nd anniversary of the founding of the CCP: ‘All cadres and all Party members must study conscientiously the historical experiences of the Chinese Communist Party over the past 22 years; they must study conscientiously Comrade Mao Zedong’s theories on Chinese revolution and other aspects; they must arm themselves with the thought of Comrade Mao Zedong and adopt his ideological system to combat Menshevik thinking inside the Party.’238

The CCP’s Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party adopted in April 1945 observed: ‘Ever since its birth in 1921, the Communist Party of China has made the integration of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution the guiding principle in all its work, and Comrade Mao Zedong’s theory and practice of Chinese revolution represent this integration.’ And later, the concept of ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ was first articulated in May 1945 when Liu Shaoqi said at the Party’s Seventh National Congress: ‘Mao Zedong Thought means the continuation and development of Marxism in the national,

237 Ibid.
democratic revolution in a colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal country of our time; it is a fine prototype of Marxism with a given national character.’ Consequently, the Party Constitution adopted at that time declared: ‘The Communist Party of China takes Mao Zedong Thought – the thought of unity of Marxist-Leninist theory with the principles of the Chinese revolution – as the guiding principle in all its work and opposes any dogmatist or empiricist deviations.’

2.5 Major Features of Mao Zedong Thought

When the CCP adopted ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ as its guiding ideology in the Party Constitution of 1945, the Party leaders were conscious in its decision to use the term Mao Zedong sixiang (Mao Zedong Thought) as the designation for Mao’s contribution to communist ideology. They could have chosen – and did consider – other terms, including what would be translated as ‘Maoism’ (Mao Zedong zhuyi), but that particular rendition had a foreign connotation, as in the Chinese translation for Marxism-Leninism (Makse zhuyi, Liening zhuyi). ‘Mao Zedong Thought’ was chosen as an unmistakable statement that Mao’s thinking was neither derivative of nor subordinate to Marxism-Leninism, but embodied the successful ‘Sinification’ of Marxism-Leninism. ‘Sinification’ refers to the process of being absorbed or deeply influenced by Chinese culture, society, or thought. What has been emphasized is that Mao had cited adapting the European ideology of Marxism-Leninism to China’s particular situation as a critical step in the revolutionary process.

Professor Ronald Keith has observed that Mao preferred to describe his thought as ‘Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought’ rather than “Maoism” which conveyed a negative connotation of dogmatism. The former militated against the supposedly unscientific rigidity of a tradition of emperor-worship or ‘one-man rule’ (renzhi), the legitimacy of which was grounded in the dogmatic assertion of absolute moral standards. In his theoretical thinking at least, Mao reacted against tradition stressing the importance of recognizing mistakes on the part of everyone. It seemed that Mao also warned his colleagues against an ‘upstage attitude’ vis-a-vis the outside world. China would have to learn from the outside, and in this way China would learn more about herself.

After the founding of the PRC in 1949, the relationship of Mao Zedong Thought to Marxism-Leninism and the ‘true’ meaning of Mao Zedong Thought itself would become a matter of both spirited ideological contention and ferocious political struggle within and outside the CCP. But the general formulation that Mao Zedong Thought is the integration of the ‘universal truth’ of Marxism-Leninism with the ‘concrete practice’ of the Chinese revolution became the Party’s
standard definition early in the Yan’an period and remains so today even in the heady context of market reform.242

The CCP’s Resolution on Questions of Party History, adopted in June 1981, defined, or, in some cases, redefined the distinctive features of Mao’s Thought, which have been regarded ever since as the authentic notion of Mao Zedong Thought, and its salient aspects are as follows.

First, Mao’s theory of new-democratic revolution – a revolution against imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism waged by the masses of the Chinese people on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance under the leadership of the proletariat. Mao pointed out that ‘the united front and armed struggle are the two basic weapons for defeating the enemy.’ Together with Party building, they constituted the ‘three magic weapons’ of the revolution. They were the essential basis which enabled the CCP to become the core of leadership of the whole nation and to chart the course of encircling the cities from the countryside and finally winning countrywide victory.243

Second, Mao’s thinking on the socialist revolution and construction was eulogized. On the basis of the economic and political conditions for the transition to socialism ensuing on victory in the new-democratic revolution, Mao followed the path of effecting socialist industrialization simultaneously with socialist transformation and adopted concrete policies for the gradual transformation of the private ownership of the means of production, thereby providing a theoretical as well as practical solution of the difficult task of building socialism in a large and backward country such as China.

Third, Mao pointed out that policy and tactics were the life of the Party, that they were both the starting-point and the end-result of all the practical activities of a revolutionary party and that the Party must formulate its policies in the light of the existing political situation, class relations, actual circumstances and the changes in them, combining principle and flexibility.244

The 1981 Resolution then focuses on ‘three basic points’ regarded as ‘the living soul of Mao Zedong Thought’ that are particularly of continuing to the CCP in how it legitimizes its rule in China. The first is ‘seek truth from facts’ which conveys the pragmatic side of Maoism. Mao adamantly affirms that ‘social practice alone in the criterion of the truth’ and that only by constant reengagement with concrete reality can a person claim to have true knowledge of anything. As he colorfully put it, ‘if you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear by eating it yourself.’ He goes on to say, ‘if you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution.’ Mao further elaborated the law of the unity of opposites, the nucleus of Marxist dialectics.245

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242 See ‘How to Define Mao Zedong Thought: Changes Over Forty Years,’ Beijing Review, No. 9, March 2, 1981, p. 12;


244 Ibid.

245 Ibid., pp.33-5; also see Wu Shuqing, Mao Zedong sixiang, Deng Xiaoping lilun he ‘san ge dai biao’ zhongyao sixiang gailun (An Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the Important Thought of the ‘Three Represents ’), Beijing: gaodeng jiaoyue chebanshe, 2008, pp. 16-7.
The second is the ‘mass line’ as the guiding principle of the Party in ‘all its work.’ It was an effective method for securing the support of the masses. The application of the mass line required that both leaders and the masses go through an educational process, learning from and supporting each other. It provided for a continuous dialogue between the leaders and the led. In going through the various stages of the mass line process, the masses were given ample opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, and the leaders were able to obtain popular commitment for policies and programs.246

The third is ‘independence and self-reliance.’ This encompasses the idea that China must chart it own way and must always ‘maintain our own national dignity and confidence and there must be no slavishness or submissiveness in any form in dealing with big, powerful or rich country.’ This may sound somewhat ironic, given the depth of China’s current integration into the international economy and its rise to great power status. But the idea of self-reliance persists in the PRC’s contemporary statements on the overall orientation of its foreign policy and in the revived emphasis on the importance of China’s own domestic market. Mao was aware, of course, that China’s revolution and construction are not and cannot be carried on in isolation from the rest of the world. It is always necessary to try to win foreign aid and, in particular, to learn all that is advanced and beneficial from other countries.247

Scholars in the West have put forward a variety of views on the major features of Mao Zedong Thought. For example, Lucian Pye lists the following features: contradiction and struggle (celebration of the merits of confrontation, conflict, and struggle); class struggle and class attitude; human spirit over machines (the superiority of human spirit over material forces); self-reliance (emphasis on the danger of dependence), distrust of specialization; rural over urban (more emphasis on the importance of rural life over urban life); and the collective over the individual (emphasis on collectivity and distrust of individualism).248

In their studies, Townsend and Womack define the structural features of Mao’s thought as follows: revolutionary populism (mass participation was the only way to bring about a real revolution in society); practicality (analyzing problems on the basis of concrete investigation with the slogan of ‘no investigation, no right to speak’); dialectics (seeing a changing world driven by internal contradiction rather than a static world of separate objects, and using dialectics as a flexible process and movements than institutions and professionalism); and the unity through struggle (coordination and targeting of effort, reaching a broad coalition of basically compatible classes by arraying against a small number of clear and irreconcilable enemies).249

Mao Zedong Thought has also been implicitly defined itself by its departure from and restructuring of the main premises of Marxist doctrines. First, it broke away from the Marxist

246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
orthodoxy that capitalism is the essential prerequisite for socialism. Accordingly, Mao redefined the Marxist faith in the industrial proletariat as the necessary bearer of the new society, instead looking to the peasantry as the truly creative revolutionary class in China. In fact, victory in the Chinese revolution was achieved through the triple alliance of a disciplined Party and army working in combination with peasantry. The urban proletariat played only a limited role, although leadership of the revolution remained the prerogative of the proletariat and its vanguard party.\(^{250}\)

Second, Mao placed great emphasis on man’s inherent rationality and malleability. He believed that people could be taught to see errors of their ways and view the communist revolution as one not just of economic but also ideological change in which people’s ways of thinking would be gradually transformed. This voluntarist element in Maoism is also frequently cited as one of the main point separating it from orthodox Marxism, notably its ‘economic determinism.’ Third, Mao was aware of the danger that under the communist state a new party elite would arise, presiding over a new form of ‘state capitalism.’ Thus he was vigilant against the emergence of bureaucratism and privilege and saw the need for a regular series of ‘rectification campaign’ to keep the elite on their toes.\(^{251}\)

Last but not least, at the heart of Mao’s political philosophy was the concept of ‘from the masses, to the masses,’ as mentioned above as the mass line, which is considered Mao’s theoretical contribution to populism. Closely associated with the mass line is Mao’s belief that human will – diligence, hard work and self-reliance, in the end, would remove all obstacles to making a better world.\(^{252}\)

Actually, Mao’s thought is the articulation of a ‘Chinese Marxism’, at once Marxist and Chinese. It was marked by powerful voluntarism, nationalist, and populist, that greatly modified the inherited corpus of Marxist-Leninist theory. For Mao, the essential factor in determining the course of history was conscious human activity, and the most important ingredients for revolution were how people thought and their willingness to engage in revolutionary action. As Li Rui observed Mao’s works have been based more on China’s literature than Marxist sources.\(^{253}\)

This point has been famously demonstrated in his speech that the Chairman gave in June 1945 at a national congress of the CCP, in which Mao quoted an ancient Chinese fable, ‘The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains.’ Mao’s invocation of this fable at that critical moment of the Chinese revolution was meant to be a clarion call to party members to keep faith in their mission and themselves despite the ‘objective’ difficulties.\(^{254}\)

\(^{252}\) Ibid.
In the final analysis, Mao’s faith in communism was not based upon Marxist confidence in the objective forces of historical development. This implied that revolution in China was not dependent on any predetermined levels of social and economic development and that revolutionary action need not be restrained by inherited Marxist orthodoxies. So, if Mao’s voluntarism mitigated the more deterministic implications of Marxist theory, his nationalistic proclivities were equally important in adapting Marxism to the needs of revolution in China. Mao deeply believed that the Chinese revolution was central to the world revolutionary process. Implicit in this confidence was a faith that assigned the Chinese nation a very special role in building of a future world revolutionary order.255

2.6 Mao’s Political and Theoretical Errors

In 1981, after years of hot debate and divisive argument in the early post-Mao era, the CCP released a ‘Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China’ as the authoritative (and still largely upheld) assessment of Mao’s political career and redefinition of Mao Zedong Thought.

The writing of an ‘official’ resolution on the matter was raised by Marshal Ye Jianying in his speech on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the PRC in 1979. Drafting of the resolution started in March the following year under the direct guidance of the PBSC and Secretariat of the CC. Members of Party’s top leadership took up the matter personally by defining the contents and structure of the document, attending briefings, making concrete suggestions and revising the rough draft. In October 1980, 4,000 senior Party leaders discussed the first draft for twenty days and revised it. It then went through the hands of some fifty senior Party leaders. In May 1981, the Politburo held an enlarged session lasting twelve days and made further revisions. Finally, 130 leading members of China’s democratic parties were asked in June for their comments and suggestions. The aim, then, was obviously to reach as wide a consensus as possible. The Resolution went through six major revisions in all and must surely rank as one of the most carefully polished statements ever produced by a ruling Communist Party.256

The pragmatic leaders, the victims of the CR, and considerable number of youths favored a candid and critical assessment of Mao’s achievements and failings. They regarded his legacy as unfit for the new mission of modernization. On the other hand, the large number of Party and military leaders and cadres who owned their status to Mao’s revolution, particularly the ‘old timers’ and those who rose during the CR, argued that such an assessment tantamount to a

255 Ibid.
defamation of the man who led the revolution to success, founded the PRC, and pioneered the socialist cause in China. Sympathetic to this latter view were many others who grew up under the influence of ceaseless indoctrination that Mao saved China from imperialism, feudalism and capitalism, and gave the people a new life. These people could not easily renounce their habitual reverence of the Chairman.257

But it was Deng Xiaoping who made the final decision, as he fully appreciated the political need to preserve Mao as a symbol of both revolutionary and nationalist legitimacy.258

As Deng Xiaoping insisted, the final version of the Resolution generously praised Mao’s leadership in long revolutionary struggle and lauded his ‘brilliant achievements’ in economic development and ‘socialist transformation’ in the early years of the People’s Republic. Yet while praising as a great Marxist and modernizer, the Resolution was severe in criticizing the late Chairman’s gross political as well as theoretical ‘mistakes’ during the last two decades of his rule. Among the mistakes were the decision to broaden the scope of the anti-rightist campaign in 1957, resulting in the persecution of many innocent cadres and intellectuals.259

More serious was Mao’s leftist errors, which were responsible for the economic disasters of the GLF. Moreover, it was charged that Mao had undermined Leninist principles of ‘democratic centralism within Party life’ by ruling with ‘personal arbitrariness’ and by fostering a ‘personality cult’ during his later years. Even more serious was his invention of the ‘erroneous left theses’ that sanctioned the CR, which was now unambiguously condemned as a decade-long catastrophe ‘responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the PRC.’ Although the worse evils of the era were attributed to Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, Mao was not spared blame. ‘Chief responsibility for the grave error of the CR, an error comprehensive in magnitude and protracted in duration, does indeed lie with Comrade Mao Zedong,’ the Resolution concluded.260

From early on in his career Mao was a visionary, a strategic genius, a realistic revolutionary, a nationalist, and a dedicated Marxist. By all evidence, a far-reaching change in Mao’s politics and thinking began to emerge by the end of 1957 with the initial moves toward the GLF. This is the official dividing line as laid down in the Resolution between the overwhelmingly positive Mao of the wise leader and early PRC period and the ‘later Mao’ who fell prey to conceit, ‘leftist’ ideology and autocracy. Paradoxically, the seeds of later disasters can been found in the victory of 1949, which marked a major turning point as Mao was then the new emperor, the founder of a new dynasty.261

Most fundamentally, Mao’s power, while uncontested within the Party as long as successes continued during the struggle for national power, became unchallengable upon coming to

258 Maurice Meisner, Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic, p. 444.
259 ‘On Questions of Party History,’ p. 23.
260 Ibid.
power and would remain so for rest of his life. In many senses, leadership politics under the Chairman was like the highly personal court politics of imperial China that could be altered into more arbitrary forms at any time of the emperor’s choosing. Now the aging emperor appeared, prone to grand initiatives and visionary objectives devoid of significant pragmatism, intolerant of opposing views, changeable and difficult to read in his preferences, and increasingly paranoid and despotic in his relation with his colleagues. This intemperate Mao became apparent early in the GLF. In pushing widely unrealistic production targets and totally unprecedented social and economic methods promising full communism in a very short period, Mao created a hyper-tense atmosphere where policy issues were turned into questions of political line, thus it became impossible for anyone dared ‘say him nay.’

The later Mao’s leftist errors are ideological tendencies that Marxists traditionally have denounced as ‘utopian’, ‘voluntarism’ and ‘unscientific.’ As the Resolution elaborated, Mao ‘overestimated the role of man’s subjective will and effort,’ indulged in theories and practices ‘divorced from reality,’ and raised entirely unrealistic expectations of the imminent advent of a communist utopia amid conditions of material scarcity. Mao thus violated what his more orthodox Marxist successors took to be ‘the objective laws’ of history.

The Resolution singled out that Mao wrongly criticized Peng Dehuai at the Lunshan meeting of 1959, which seriously undermined democracy in the Party. The Lushan meeting was supposed to thrash out new policies to correct ‘communist wing’ brought by the GLF and the movement of people’s communes. At the time people throughout China were puzzled as the economy was out of balance, commodities were scarce, and life was hard. They hoped that the Party central committee would continue the rectification of ‘leftist’ errors, which had begun in the winter of 1958, and follow the right track. But, when Defence Minister Peng, following Mao’s encouragement of critical opinions, criticized the GLF approach to socialist transformation as ‘hasty and excessive’, equated it with ‘petty bourgeois fanaticism’ and called for further modification of GLF policies in a private letter to the Chairman at the Lushan meeting, Mao reacted violently, taking it as a personal attack and removing Peng from his portfolio. These developments stunned the gathering for their unpredictability and vehemence, causing further deterioration of leadership collegiality.

One of the most significant was that Mao now seemed explicitly to have broken the unwritten rules that had governed debate among the top leadership to that point. Before Lushan, it was accepted that any leader could freely voice his opinions at a Party meeting, and debate could be heated. Nobody would be taken to task subsequently for what he said, as long as he formally accepted and acted in accord with the final decision reached. Mao’s action then at Lushan can be interpreted as having changed all that. Thus, for the first time in the PRC period, Mao

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262 Ibid.
263 Hu Sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), p. 428.
264 Ibid.
dismissed a Politburo member for exercising the right of policy discussion guaranteed by the Party norms established in Yan’an in the 1940s. The result in the short term was a re-radicalization of the GLF, and in the longer term a further chilling of candid discussion between the Chairman and his colleagues. As Li Rui, at the time was Mao’s secretary, observed ‘what happened at Lushan had an extremely profound and grave impact on the course of Chinese history. From then on, class struggle was escalated in the theory and practice, brought into the party, and finally led to the decade of turmoil.’

More sinisterly, it dramatically elevated the personality cult of Mao. As a consequence, the ‘Yan’an Round Table’ was cracked and an absolute cultural despotism reigned under which anyone who was regarded as ‘opposed to Mao Zedong Thought’ could be punished and even sentenced to death.

Mao’s most serious political as well ideological mistake is so called the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ (wenge, the CR for short), which the Resolution portrayed as a total disaster without any redeeming features:

The ‘cultural revolution’, which lasted from May 1966 to October 1976, was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People’s Republic. It was initiated and led by Comrade Mao Zedong. . . . The history of the ‘cultural revolution’ has proved that Comrade Mao Zedong’s principal theses for initiating this revolution conformed neither to Marxism-Leninism nor to Chinese reality. They represent an entirely erroneous appraisal of the prevailing class relations and political situation in the Party and state . . . . Practice has showed that the ‘cultural revolution’ did not in fact constitute a revolution or social progress in any sense, nor could it possibly have done so. It was we and not the enemy at all were thrown into disorder by the ‘cultural revolution’.

The CR, designed to infuse selfless revolutionary values in the population and to weed out those Mao believed were practicing ‘revisionism,’ was from any point of view one of the most bizarre events in Chinese history, which marked the most destructive phase of Mao’s politics. The CR was also the result of a complex mix of policy dissatisfaction, paranoia and personal vindictiveness that led Mao into totally uncharted waters.

While the GLF had been a disaster, it was based on a program, carried out by the Party organization and the established leadership, and sought objectives that were at least comprehensible to the public. None of this applied to the CR, with the Party dismantled as an institution, leadership unity in ruins, and an approach that simply lacked pragmatism, but barely had any coherent objectives beyond managing the chaos it had created. Through all this Mao

266 Li Shuxin, Zhongguo gongchandang zexue sixiangshi (The History of the CCP’s Philosophical Ideology), (Beijing: zhongguo dangshi chubanshe, 2003), pp. 361-5.
was prepared to accept enormous social, economic and human costs in pursuit of a revolutionary purity he could hardly define. Even when he attempted, in his last years, to save the CR by correcting its shortcomings and introducing realistic policy objectives, he refused to give up the implausible dream of a modernizing state that was both authoritarian and allowed rebellion against any signs of revisionism. Moreover, in a display of callous behavior, Mao either initiated the abuse or stood by as senior leaders were ‘persecuted to death,’ including Politburo members Liu Shaoqi, Peng Dehuai and Marshal He Long.268

As the Resolution pointed out Mao’s CR ideas on class struggle and continuing revolution, were misconceived and misguided. They challenged Party orthodoxy and departed significantly from Marxism-Leninism. Su Shaozhi observed that Mao had dramatically changed his view of socialist transformation in early 1950s and began pursuing his radical policy ever since, eventually leading him to launch the CR. Among the multifarious ideological mistakes of the CR, it was Mao’s radical calling into question of the Party, and of authority in all its forms (except that of the Chairman himself) which attracted the most criticism in the post-Mao era. At the beginning of the CR, Mao indicated his willingness to depart from an essential feature of Leninism by not only launching an attack on the Party, but by mobilizing non-party elements as the spearhead of that attack. 269

For Lenin, the party represented the vanguard of the working class, its most advanced and politically conscious section. In the Leninist conception, there is no suggestion that the vanguard party might itself become an agency for retrogressive ideas, policies or actions that might threaten the attainment of the revolutionary goals of the working class. Mao, however, appears to have made no presumption that the party was above and beyond the struggle taking place elsewhere in society. Contradictions and class struggles occurring in society were reflected within the party, leading to the possibility that the party could be characterized by negative and counter-revolutionary elements. Such elements had to be struggled against, and if their position within the party was so powerful that they could not be dislodged by an intra-party struggle, then it was necessary to mobilize progressive forces from the wider community to dislodge them.270

During the years of the CR, Mao led a coalition of non-party elements (the Red Guard, Revolutionary Rebels and the military) in his attack on those within the party who ‘had taken the capitalist road’ and become revisionists, as what happened in the Soviet Union, he declared. But, ironically, although Mao demonstrated a rather different appreciation of the vanguard status of the party than had Lenin, it remains true that Mao would not permit the final destruction of the party. When events moved in such a direction, in early 1967, that the threat to the very existence of the party became acute, Mao was forced to choose between Leninism and anarchy.

269 Su Shaozhi, Marxism and Reform in China, p. 35.
270 Ibid.
He had no hesitation in preferring the former.271

While it is tempting to reiterate Lord Acton’s famous observation the ‘power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,’ Mao’s case is more complex, as his sin was less corruption than hubris. Deng Xiaoping commented that Mao’s ‘patriarchal behavior’ to be his major shortcoming, and associated with that was Mao’s ‘smugness’ about his early success that he became ‘overconfident’ and ‘arrogant.’ That is clearly demonstrated by the personality cult of Mao, which had been initiated and promoted by Mao himself and his confidants. During the last fifteen years of his life, Mao, portrayed as the Chinese ‘Lenin and Stalin combined,’ was sanctified as an all-knowing, all-wise demigod who could do no wrong. It was an incredible cult of personality that surpassed even Stalin’s.272

Following his campaign, launched in 1960, to turn the PLA into a ‘great school of Mao Zedong Thought,’ Lin Biao proceeded to use that school to educate the entire nation – and deify Mao and his ‘thought’ in the process. It was the Political Department of the army that published the first edition of Quotations from Chairman Mao in May of 1964. In his introduction to the various editions of that soon to be famous – and fetishist – ‘little red book,’ Lin Biao made increasingly extravagant claims for the universal validity and extraordinary power of Mao’s thoughts. ‘Comrade Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era’ whose genius had raised the doctrine to ‘a higher and completely new stage,’ Lin declared. Mao’s unscrupulous security chief, Kang Sheng remarked that ‘Mao Zedong Thought has become the banner of the international communist movement in our era.’ ‘For or against China’s Cultural Revolution, for or against Mao Zedong Thought – this has become the line of demarcation, the watershed, between Marxism and revisionism.’273

Thus Mao was projected to the Chinese people as having god-like quality, his ‘little red book’ of quotations became a symbol of revolution purity with almost mystical power, and Mao Zedong Thought was depicted as the solution to every problem. Meanwhile, Mao’s thought had been elevated and portrayed as the universal truth, with the status equal to, even surpassed, Marxism-Leninism. Prior to the CR, Mao himself had laid no claim to having added to the universal laws of Marxism. Mao’s own analysis of the particular ‘laws’ of Chinese revolution was not, therefore, of universal status, and could be employed in other countries only with discretion and with a sensitivity to their specific features.274

During the CR, however, Maoists openly announced that Mao’s contribution to Marxism had transcended its specific relevance to Chinese society and the Chinese revolution, and that it had assumed a universal stature describing laws of universal relevance. There can be no doubt that this was an integral feature of the continuing polemic with Soviet leaders. By claiming the

universal status for Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese was laying claim to a prerogative over Marxism, which, before 1956, had been exclusive to Moscow. With the open split between two parties as Maoists fighting against Khrushchev’s ‘revisionism,’ the Marxist apostolic succession had been diverted to those who had safeguarded its universal truths. But, at the very least, this claim to university, being such a departure from Mao’s previous practice, adds reinforcement of the argument that the Mao of the CR does not represent, as some interpretations would have us believe, the ‘essential’ Mao. Rather, certain elements of his thinking during this period seemed apparently as aberrations when compared with his previous record.\(^{275}\)

It is worthy of note that once Mao was dead and the Gang of Four smashed, Mao’s image quickly became tarnished. Long before the Party’s 1981 Resolution, the reputation of Mao was being gradually undermined by a long series of politically symbolic acts and ideological changes. The Third Plenum of 1978 abandoned many of Mao’s ideas and policies – clearly inaugurated the post-Maoist era. It called for a sweeping ‘reversal of verdicts,’ including the rehabilitation of many of Mao’s old political opponents. Of these, none had greater symbolic political import than the reversal of the verdict on Peng Dehuai. Just before the Plenum, the Red Guard, a symbol of Mao’s support of the CR, was dissolved; both the ‘little red book’ and Mao’s quotations on newspaper mastheads disappeared. Throughout the second half of 1978 wall posters and articles continued to criticize Mao’s mistakes, implying a concerted efforts to demystify him and to erode his image as a god-hero. Increasingly the editorials of the *People’s Daily* referred to Mao as comrade rather than chairman, and criticism of his role in the CR became more pronounced.\(^{276}\)

In January 1979 the widow of Liu Shaoqi reappeared in public after ten years of detention foreshadowing the rehabilitation of her husband. At Liu’s memorial service on May 17, 1980, Deng Xiaoping called him a ‘communist saint’ – a far cry from his previous designation as a Party’s traitor. The rehabilitation of Peng and Liu were clear negations of the GLF and the CR. Then Mao’s treasured models of socialist production – Dazhai in agriculture and Daqing in industry, lost their ‘paragon model’ status, as Dazhai was declared a failure and Daqing, ineffective and unscientific. Meanwhile, volume five of Mao’s *Selected Works* edited by Hua was to be revised, implying dissatisfaction with the editor and his selection.\(^{277}\)

More significantly, to undermine Mao’s popular prestige, the new leadership managed the televised trial of the Gang of Four, which opened on November 20, 1980, four years after their arrests. Over a period of two months, they were tried together with Mao’s onetime secretary Chen Boda, before a special tribunal of thirty-five judges. A separate panel simultaneously tried five PLA generals implicated in Lin Biao’s 1971 plot against Mao, although the relationship between the two proceedings was never clarified. The lengthy indictment charged the accused

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\(^{275}\) Ibid.


\(^{277}\) Ibid.
with forty-eight offenses, including plots to overthrow the government, attempts to assassinate Mao, illegal arrests, torture, and persecution of 700,000 people, resulting in 34,000 dead. But, it was of course clear from the outset that Mao was the unnamed defendant on trial with the Gang of Four. In the course of the proceeding, a defiant Jiang Qing unwittingly served as her late husband’s surrogate in her defense, at one point declaring: ‘I was Chairman Mao’s dog. Whomever he told me to bite, I bit.’

The chief prosecutor, in a closing statement drafted by the Politburo, noted (while ritualistically lauding Mao) that the Chinese people ‘are very clear that Chairman Mao was responsible . . . for their plight during the Cultural Revolution.’ There is no doubt that, for all its inconsistencies, loopholes, and lack of legal proceedings and evidence judged by the Western legal theory and practice, the trial may have achieved two objectives: to legitimize the coup to overthrow the Gang of Four, and bring about a partial de-Maoization.

2.7 The Collective Wisdom

In the official critique of Maoism that emerged in 1979 and 1980, Mao was rarely mentioned by name. Indeed, on other political and policy matter, his writings were still authoritatively (if selectively) quoted when it proves politically convenient to do so. But there were increasingly harsh denunciations of ‘the personality cult,’ a term that performed the same euphemistic function in China at the time as it had a quarter-century before during the de-Stalinization years in the Soviet Union.

The official remedy for the evil fostered by ‘the personality cult,’ sometimes referred to as ‘modern superstition,’ was adherence to Leninist norms of ‘inner party democracy’ and ‘collective leadership,’ which had been regarded as the Party’s fine tradition. Thus ‘collective leadership’ was cited in the redefinition of official ideology of ‘Mao Zedong Thought,’ which, increasingly purged of its radical ideas, was now proclaimed as the collective wisdom of the Party, not simply the creation of one man. Performing a similar function were new accounts of the sixty-year history of the CCP which emphasized the contributions of revolutionaries who had been neglected in the historiography of the Mao period. It was first declared in Ye Jianying’s speech on September 30, 1979, that ‘the Mao Zedong Thought is not the product of Mao’s personal wisdom alone; it is also the product of the wisdom of his comrades-in-arms, the party, and revolutionary people.’

And then it was stated in the Resolution: ‘Mao Zedong Thought is . . . a crystallization of the collective wisdom of the Chinese Communist Party. Many outstanding leaders of our Party

made important contributions to the formation and development of Mao Zedong Thought, and they are synthesized in the scientific works of Comrade Mao Zedong.\textsuperscript{281}

When Mao Zedong Thought was adopted into the CCP’s Constitution of 1945, it had been regarded as the Party’s doctrine. Personally, Mao never regarded it as the thought of an individual but as an expression of the collective wisdom of the Party and the Chinese people. During the 1942 rectification campaign in Yan’an when students of the Party school under the Party Central Committee were discussing what was meant by Mao Zedong Thought, Mao made it clear that Mao Zedong Thought was not just his own thinking, but something that had been written in blood by millions upon millions of martyrs and represented the collective wisdom of the Party and the people. ‘My personal thoughts are developing, and I, too, am liable to make mistakes.’ Mao emphasized. So he encouraged the students to study more of ‘the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin and the experience of the Chinese revolution.’\textsuperscript{282}

From the early years, up until the CR, the Party as a whole was cautious and realistic as to the implementation of its official doctrine. For example, the senior Party leader, Zhou Enlai, pointed out explicitly, on November 15, 1963, at the 19\textsuperscript{th} Session of the Supreme State Conference: ‘Mao Zedong Thought was brought about and established in the midst of adhering to what is right and revising what is wrong.’ In 1964, in a letter to reply to an old comrade, Liu Shaoqi said: ‘We must not accept Mao Zedong’s works and sayings as a dogma, just as we must not accept the theories of Marx and Lenin as a dogma. You should analyze the actual state of affairs in your locality, in the spirit and essence of Mao Zedong Thought and correctly sum up the practical experiences there, and draw up the correct policies, plans and steps in your forthcoming work.’ When Mao saw the letter, he sent a note to Liu with a comment: Have read your letter and feel it’s really great.\textsuperscript{283}

From theoretical point of view, the notion that Mao Zedong Thought was and remains to be the collective wisdom of the Party, not a product of one person, has clearly rejected Mao’s personality cult which had so severely damaged the CCP’s image during the CR, for it had not only exaggerated Mao’s role out of proportions, but distorted the history of Party’s ideological development. Mao was thus ‘de-deified’, and the new orthodox view is that Mao Zedong Thought refers to accumulated wisdom through the whole process of the Chinese revolution and socialist construction. Mao may have been the main individual who articulated or expressed the results of this collective endeavor, but there were other outstanding contributors to ‘Mao Zedong Thought’, Such as Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Liu Shaoqi. That, together with the reduction of Mao from a demigod to a leader of humanly fallible proportions, and the simultaneous repudiation of social and ideological radicalism of the last two decades of the Maoist era, provided a new approach of redefining, revising and developing the official

\textsuperscript{281} ‘On Questions of Party History,’ p. 29.
\textsuperscript{282} ‘How to Define Mao Zedong Thought: Changes Over Forty Years,’ pp. 12-3.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., p. 14.
ideology.284

Thus it allowed not only the selective use of Mao, but also the flexibility of continuing addition to Party’s doctrines. Mao Zedong Thought as a product of collective experience could continue to adopt and grow, as the revolutionary movement developed and assimilated new elements. This is especially useful for self-justification. It becomes easier to provide ideological explanations for new policies and practices, as responses to new conditions and experiences, without restraint by former ideological precepts. Theoretically, such operations of enclosure and exclusion were possible precisely because of the definition of Mao Zedong Thought as a ‘method’, the very quintessence being ‘practice as the sole criterion for testing truth.’ As Paul Healy and Nick Knight comment that the line of reasoning bears a striking similarity to that of Lukacs when he insisted that the ‘essence’ of Marxism relates not to any substantive proposition made by Marx, but to the dialectical method itself.285

More importantly, as the Resolution emphasized, the notion of the collective wisdom demonstrates the Party’s fine tradition of collective leadership which had been created during the Yan’an period. Many outstanding leaders, particularly Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Liu Shaoqi, had also contributed quite significantly to the formulation and development of Mao Zedong Thought. They were Mao’s close colleagues, the leaders of the first generation of the CCP, and founding fathers of the PRC.

The late Premier Zhou Enlai’s contribution to the CCP revolution and the establishment of the PRC has been well-known inside and outside China. Zhou joined the CCP in 1922 and led the Party’s branch travelling in Europe when he worked and studied in France and Germany in early 1920s. Zhou’s first Party rank was conferred in 1927 when he was elected to the Politburo. Zhou was the principal organizer of the Nanchang Uprising on August 1, 1927, which has ever since been commemorated as the birthday of the PLA. Early in 1930, he appeared in Moscow as head of the CCP delegation to the Comintern. Zhou returned to China to assume a key position in the Jiangxi Soviet in 1931, and late helped organize and lead the Long March. Zhou had been senior to Mao in the Party hierarchy until Mao became Chairman in 1943. Zhou was elected as one of five major secretaries (wu da shuji), together with Mao, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De and Ren Bishi, which formed the CCP’s Secretariat as the top leadership at the Party’s Seventh Congress in 1945. Upon the founding of the PRC, Zhou was named Premier of the government that he served till his death in 1976.286

It has been said that if Mao provided the theoretical and political impetus for the Communist Revolution, Zhou gave it its solid, practical administrative base. As Roger Garside observed, ‘if


the Chinese nation had been a family, Zhou, who was loved by the people, would have played
the role of mother and Mao, who was at first respected and later feared, that of the father. Zhou
would be an intermediary between a difficult father and his recalcitrant children . . .
Oversimplifying, one might say that in the terms of one ancient Chinese explanation of cosmic
creation and destruction, Zhou embodied the Yin (female and passive) force while Mao was its
complement, Yang (male and active). It is particularly true during the period of the CR, for it
was due to the Premier’s total devotion to the Party and the people that helped ‘to keep the
normal work of the Party and the state going, to minimize the damage . . .’

No wonder, in the post-Mao era, before any answers could be offered to deal with the CR
legacy, the Party had elevated Zhou to a position of near-parity with Mao in the hagiography
of the Chinese Communist movement. And before the Resolution of 1981 released, the Party had
complied and published Selected Writings of Zhou Enlai, which was to be used to demonstrate
the Party’s redefinition of Mao Zedong Thought as the collective wisdom of the CCP. For, as the
ereditor remarked, Zhou’s book is not only record of his revolutionary feats but also mirrors ‘his
brilliance, splendid qualities and fine style of work as a great Marxist and a proletarian
revolutionary. These writings profoundly sum up the experience of the Chinese revolution by
applying the Marxist theory to solve a series of important questions.’

Zhou has also been regarded as one of those earliest leaders who recognized and promoted Mao’s thought and
developed the Party’s doctrine during his political career. Meanwhile, Zhou criticized the
personality cult as he once pointedly said: ‘No belief should go beyond the limits of reason;
otherwise it becomes a superstition.’

Zhu De was also one of the towering figures of modern Chinese history, and ‘father’ of the
Chinese Red Army. When he joined the CCP in 1922, just a year after its founding, Zhu was
already a veteran military command who had taken part in the revolution of 1911, and became a
brigadier general in 1916. In the late 1920s, Zhu rose rapidly through Red Army ranks, as he
played an important role in the Nanchang Uprising and then in 1928 Zhu led his troops to join
Mao’s at Jinggangshan, thus began the famous Zhu-Mao army which was to change the fortune
of the Communist movement in China. Zhu was named commander-in-chief in 1930, with Mao
as political commissar. They were together during the greater part of the Long March.

Zhu commanded much of the revolutionaries’ war against Japan as well as the ensuing war
against the nationalist forces, and he carried on as commander of the PLA until government
reorganization in 1954, when the Chairman Mao of the PRC officially became head of the
armed forces. Zhu held top posts in the new government hierarchy established in 1949. He
served his remaining years as one of the country’s most revered figures. Zhu died in 1976,

291 Gu Anlin, Zhongguo gongchandang lishi ershiba jiang (Twenty-eight Lectures on the History of the Chinese
Communist Party), p. 43.
shortly after Zhou and before Mao in that year, at the age of 90. In the post-Mao era, Zhu had also been elevated to the status in the CCP history equal to Mao and Zhou. The Party had compiled and published in 1983 the Selected Works of Zhu De, claiming that ‘Comrade Zhu De was a great Marxist, proletarian revolutionary and strategist and an outstanding leader of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese people’s army and People’s Republic of China . . . He made brilliant contributions to the formation and development of Mao Zedong Thought, especially of Mao Zedong’s military thinking.’

Liu was an important Party leader and theoretician, and was regarded as Chairman Mao’s most likely successor until a bitter ideological struggle with Mao became apparent in the mid-1960s. Liu began his career as a labor organizer, and was one of the first Chinese Communists to study in Moscow in early 1920s. By 1932, he had risen to the post of Chairman of the All-China Federation of Labor and was a member of the Party’s Politburo. After completing the Long March, Liu was appointed Secretary of the Party’s North China Bureau. He emerged as the No.2 in the leadership, second only after Mao in the Party’s hierarchy at the Seventh Congress in 1945. Liu’s prominence as a theoretician had also become evident during the Yan’an period. He also developed the premise that Mao was the first person to link Marxist-Leninist principles to the concrete problems of China. Liu’s most famous work, *On How to Be a Good Communist*, was written in 1939 and was used as one of the important study materials during the Yanan rectification campaign.

Upon founding of the PRC in 1949, Mao became Chairman and Liu the second-ranking Vice-Chairman. During Mao’s first visit to the Soviet Union (December 1949-March 1950), it was Liu who was left in charge of Party and state affairs. In the aftermath of the apparent failure of the GLF, Mao stepped down from his position as Chairman of the PRC, and the office went to Liu in April 1959.

But, at the start of the CR in 1966, Liu became one of the movement’s earliest and most prominent victims. He and his wife were personally subjected to Red Guard self-criticism sessions, trials and humiliations. By the end of 1967, Liu had been totally discredited and repudiated as an ‘arch-enemy, traitor, and scab,’ and deprived of all official positions and authority. He had died in 1969 while under detention. The Party posthumously rehabilitated Liu in 1980. In his memorial speech that year, Deng Xiaoping reaffirmed that Liu is ‘a great Marxist and proletarian revolutionary’ and ‘a long-tested and outstanding Party and State leader’; praising him as ‘Marxist theoretician of our Party. He consistently attached importance to uniting theory with practice, was diligent in investigation and study and in summing up experience, and was good at raising practical experience to the height of theory’; and that his

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294 ‘Memorial Speech by Vice-Chairman Deng Xiaoping,’ *Beijing Review*, No. 21, May 26, 1980, pp. 9-11.
works ‘were a component of the scientific system of Mao Zedong Thought.’

According to the Resolution, Mao’s works had also been helped by the Party’s theoreticians and assistants, who contributed to the collective wisdom. It seems a bit far-fetched to say that Mao did not actually write a number of the Marxist works attributed to him, but merely added bits and pieces to drafts done by Chen Boda, Tian Jiaying and Hu Qiaomu, but they were his personal political secretaries, and well-known *xiu cai* (scholars) or Party’s theoreticians, sent by the Party to work for Mao.

Chen Boda had been regarded in China as a leading interpreter of Mao’s thought until his political demise in 1970. He served as Mao’s political secretary from 1937 to 1949. Chen was a professor of ancient Chinese history and philosophy before coming to Yan’an in 1937 and soon emerged as a leading theoretician in Maoist camp. His influence on the Sinification of Marxism and promotion of Mao Zedong Thought had been well documented.

Tian Jiaying worked as Mao’s secretary from 1942 to 1966. His most noted contribution is his writing for Mao’s opening speech to the Party’s Eighth Congress in 1956, when Chen Boda’s first draft was rejected by Mao. Some of his sentences were so well received that they entered into ‘the little red book’ becoming Mao’s quotations. Tian is also a member of editorial committee of Mao’s *Selected Works*, and he compiled and published *The Selected poems by Chairman Mao*.

Hu Qiaomu’s influence seemed more enduring and significant. Hu was an editor of *China Youth*, a popular magazine during the Yan’an period when he became Mao’s political secretary in 1938. Hu soon appeared to be the Party’s first pen, for he was also responsible for writing and compiling CCP’s documents. In the early 1950s, Hu became the chief propagandist for new China as he was Managing Director of the *People’s Daily* as well as Deputy Director of CPD. In 1951, Hu’s *Thirty Years of the Communist Party* was published and became an instant bestseller in China. More importantly, Hu was a leading draft of the CCP’s 1945 *Resolution on Party’s history*, in which Mao Zedong Thought was first defined as the official doctrine. And 36 years later, Hu, now a member of the Party’s Secretariat, became a chief drafter for the 1981 *Resolution*, which had more sophisticatedly redefined Mao Zedong Thought.

No wonder Hu remained as an ardent Maoist until his death in 1992, or, perhaps more properly, a neo-Maoist.

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295 Ibid.
298 Ibid., pp. 221-4.
2. 8 Neo-Maoism

Hu Qiaomu and other senior Party leaders such as Chen Yun, Peng Zhen and Deng Liqun, had been regarded as the Old Left, or the Neo-Maoists. They were known in the post-Mao era for their rather orthodox and conservative views regarding Deng Xiaoping’s policies of reform and opening-up. Although they opposed Mao’s utopian policies of the GLF and the CR, neo-Maoists sought to return to strong state and state-run, planned-economy established in 1949-1957. For them, the praise for Mao and the critique of his ‘leftist’ mistakes in the 1981 Resolution represented more than a search for revolutionary continuity and political legitimacy. Their praise also reflected the genuine respect and admiration for the early Mao – the Mao who was the leader of the Revolution, the Mao was the liberator of the Chinese nation, and the Mao who had been an economic modernizer – before he had been infected with ‘erroneous leftist’ ideas.

They nostalgically looked back to the Mao who presided over the new state in the early and middle-1950s, a time now they viewed as a golden age in the history of their land. So they sought to recapture the ‘uncorrupted’ Maoism before Mao succumbed to what they regarded as pernicious radical and utopian idealism. The purpose, of course, was to reinforce the legitimacy of the post-Mao regime by tying it to the Chinese Communist revolutionary tradition, a tradition in which Mao had played the largest and longest part. Consequently, the much de-radicalized image of the dead Chairman continued to be utilized and sometimes celebrated over the post-Mao years, as political circumstances dictated.

The ‘Old Left’ or ‘Neo-Maoists’ did not name themselves as such, but were imposed on them in certain circumstances by scholars and the media. More commonly they are referred to as the conservatives in the reform era, in contrast with those radical reformers such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, with Deng Xiaoping as the paramount leader in the middle.

Everyone agreed on the importance of reform, but there was significant disagreement over the scope and speed of some political and economic reforms. As individuals, these ‘conservatives’ were quite different from one another. For example, Hu Qiaomu, although he aligned himself with the radical reformers against residual Maoists in the successor leadership, had reservations about the discussions on practice and the attacks on Mao by intellectuals like Wang Ruoshui. As the reform unfolded, Hu joined forces with Deng Liqun to oppose ideological and political liberalization.

Chen Yun spearheaded the call for ‘seeking truth from facts,’ providing an accurate appraisal of Mao’s errors and failures, and initiating necessary reform measures. But he favored limited economic decentralization and continued reliance on central planning, and was wary of unleashing destabilizing growth. He was most famous for his ‘bird and cage’ theory. As Peng

Zhen, he was very active in earlier years of the post-Mao era legal reforms, but later, when he became Chairman of NPC, Peng seemed more conservative. He noticeably delayed ratification of the Enterprise Law, for fear of weakening the Party’s leadership in the wake of the 1987 campaign against bourgeois liberalization.302

Deng Liqun has often been identified as a leading neo-Maoist. Ironically, he was formerly Liu Shaoqi’s political secretary. Deng emerged as director of the CPD from 1982-5. Deng was aligned with Chen, Peng and Hu, becoming a formidable opponent of ‘spiritual pollution’ on ideological revision and liberalization. Zhao Ziyang’s strengthened position in 1986 led to the weakening of Deng’s influence over the propaganda apparatus and the Policy Research office. But he regained his authority in the period following the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 when he returned to power as an adviser to the Central Committee’s leading group on propaganda and was thus able to place his followers in high ideological positions.303

Maoist poet He Jingzhi replaced writer Wang Meng as minister of culture, Xu Weicheng became a deputy of the CPD, Yanan literary critic Lin Mohan became the All-China Federation of Literature and Art Circles, Gao Di became director of the People’s Daily, and Wang Renzhi became vice president of the CASS. Together they became well-known neo-Maoists in early 1990s when they launched Mao-like campaign against bourgeois liberalization and what they called ‘peaceful evolution.’ They also purged the remaining followers of former Party leaders Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang from these institutions.304

At the same time, the neo-Maoist opposed Deng’s economic reforms and sought to reestablish the Stalinist central planning policies that China had implemented before the GLF. Therefore, they used the media, particularly of three state-sponsored journals that were under their direct control – Pursuit of Truth (Zhenli de zhuiqiu), Contemporary Ideological Trends (Dangdai sichao), and Midstream (Zhongliu) – and sometimes even the editorial pages of the People’s Daily, to call for a return to an orthodox interpretation of MLM, and challenged reform policies directly. They repeatedly asked whether the reforms should be called ‘Mr. Socialism or Mr. Capitalism,’ with implication that the reforms were moving China in a capitalist direction. As one article declared that if we do not ask this question, ‘it will lead to privatization and marketization in economics, and to a multi-party system in politics, and intellectual pluralism and will lead socialism to a dead end.’305

Although there was a lull after the publication of Deng’s talks on his southern tour, by the middle-1990s they resumed using their journals to warn that the Party was losing its leading position in the economy to private interests and to denounce the admission of capitalists into the

304 Ibid.
Party. Responding to growing popular concerns about increasing official corruption, the neo-Maoist media traced the origin of the corruption to the new business class, as one article charging that ‘the corrosive influence of bourgeois ideology is what germinates corruption to begin with.’ When a Party member becomes corrupt, the author continued, ‘he first discards his Communist ideas and pursues individual fame and gain, status and pleasure, and then slides further into economic crime and a degenerate lifestyle to become a corrupt element.’ Therefore, the article concluded, ‘bourgeois liberalization is both the expression of political corruption and the ideological and theoretical grounds producing corruption.’

The neo-Maoists also used their media repeatedly to cite the collapse of the Soviet Union under the reformist rule of Mikhail Gorbachev as an example of what would happen to China if there were dilution of MLM and weakening of the Communist Party. They argued that the Soviet leader got it wrong as he reformed the party in accordance with the so-called humane and democratic socialist ideology that led to the political confusion and slack organization in the party. They pointed out that Gorbachev opposed the Marxist principle that a political party is the concentrated expression of the classes and negated the proletarian character of the Communist Party as he called for transformation of the party into one that transcends classes and belongs to the entire people and nation. Thus, they asserted that the collapse of the Soviet Union ‘was due not to a failure of Marxism, but rather the bankruptcy of Gorbachev’s revisionist line.’

They argued that part of the blame for the Soviet and Eastern Europe collapse was due to the strategy of peaceful evolution, ‘engineered by the Western hostile force,’ but in the final analysis it was ‘the ruling communist parties had got it wrong’, for they did not adhere to the Marxist guiding ideology, communist goals and democratic centralism. It was such a scenario that the neo-Maoists sought to prevent in China as they attacked those intellectuals’ emphasis in the 1980s on Marxist humanism and political reform.

A revival of the Mao cult in the national media and popular culture in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Event accompanied the neo-Maoist challenge to the economic reforms. Mao portraits, badges, and medallions were sold and hung everywhere, most conspicuously on the rear-view mirrors of Chinese taxicabs. The ‘Mao fever’ (Mao re) is also used by the many who have not profited from the reforms to express their frustration at the dislocation and economic difficulties caused by reform, and their yearning for the material security and intellectual certainties of the Mao era. Praising Mao was a politically safe means by which to call current leaders to account. For neo-Maoists, Mao’s name stands for ‘real’ socialism and means, in effect, ‘back to the 1950s.’ They even expressed nostalgia for some aspects of Mao’s later years.

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307 Wen Di, ‘Was It a Failure of Marxism or the Bankruptcy of Revisionism,’ Dangdai sichao, no. 6, Dec. 20, 1996, pp. 52-9, translation in FBIS-CHI-97-028, Feb., 12, 1997, p. 3.
308 Ibid.
An article in *Pursuit of Truth* asserted that although Mao did not see the final outcome of the Soviet evolution in 1990s, that outcome did prove Mao’s incisive and historic insight and vision in combating the problem of ‘contemporary revisionism.’ The article admitted that the CR was a failure, but argued that it ‘does not prove that the motivations were wrong,’ and ‘we need to treasure the rational parts of Mao’s strategic thinking in his later years.’ While acknowledging that Mao may have overly stressed the role of class struggle theory, the article argued that ‘not stressing class struggle is bound to blur the lines between socialism and capitalism, opening the door to “peaceful evolution”.’ Finally, the authors asserted that they did not want ‘to see our spiritual civilization sacrificed in exchange for temporary economic development or superficial prosperity.’

More aggressively, the neo-Maoists in the mid-1990s also adopted an approach similar to that used by disestablishment political activists to disseminate their views. They issued a series of remonstrance, or petitions, called the ‘ten-thousand-character letters’ (*wan-yan-shu*), so named for their length and political nature. As in their journal articles, these letters attributed China’s increasing unemployment, rampant corruption, and growing social and economic polarization to the acceleration of the privatization, the opening up to the outside world, and other economic reforms. Similarly, they argued that the reforms had betrayed the basic tenets of Marxism and socialism, resulting in the spread of unchecked bourgeois liberalization.

Their first letter entitled ‘Several Factors Influencing China’s National Security’, warned that the proportion of state-owned enterprises in China’s aggregate industrial output value had fallen sharply, that a ‘new bourgeoisie’ had already taken shape as a class in itself, that the nature of the Party was changing as more and more technically trained specialists were promoted to leadership positions, that the sovereignty of the country was being undermined by increasing economic dependence on the West, and that ‘bourgeois liberal’ thinking was once again on the rise and linking up with entrepreneurs to form a threat to the Party. The second letter entitled ‘A preliminary Exploration of the Shape of China’s Domestic and Foreign National Security in the Next Ten or Twenty Years and the Primary Threats to It’, also circulated in 1995, maintained that China faced a hostile international environment made up of ‘monopoly capitalists’ who view China as an enemy and that domestically China was undergoing a number of social changes that were threatening its national security and social stability.

It is worth noting that neo-Maoist documents of this sort keep coming out, and we shall discuss further in the following chapters of their ideological influence.

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310 Ibid.
312 Ibid.
Chapter 3

Ideological Adaptation: Deng Xiaoping Theory

3.1 Overview

Deng Xiaoping Theory is the most important development and innovation of the CCP doctrine in the post-Mao era, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Deng emerged as the paramount leader and initiated reforms since 1978 under the banner of the Four Modernizations. Deng’s ideas and policies on the reform and opening-up have been collectively called the Deng Xiaoping Theory, which was codified at Party’s 14th Congress in 1992, and its theoretical authority was thus established just as in 1945 in Yan’an Mao Zedong Thought was established as the supreme authority in the Chinese communist revolution. Deng’s achievement in economic reforms was compared to Mao’s in the war period in the sense that Deng was claimed to have found the right path for China’s socialist modernization construction combining the universal truth of Marxism with actual conditions of China.313

Jiang’s political report to the 14th Congress referred to Deng as ‘the chief architect of our socialist reform, of the open policy, of the modernization program,’ and eulogized Deng’s reform as ‘another great revolution’ comparable to Mao’s ‘New Democratic Revolution’. In 1997, at the 15th Party Congress, Deng Xiaoping Theory was enshrined into the CCP’s constitution, along with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, as the Party’s guiding ideology. Deng’s Theory is now defined as the outcome of the integration of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism with the practice of contemporary China and features of the times, a continuation and development of Mao Zedong Thought under new historical conditions; it represents a new stage of development of Marxism in China.314

But Deng’s Theory contrasted starkly with Maoist approach, and many of the changes and reforms were dramatic reversals of Mao’s late year policies. Deng picked up not where Mao had left off, but explicitly identified where he had gone wrong, beginning in the mid-1950s. He provided the CCP with the theory that correctly addressed the basic questions concerning the building, consolidation and development of socialism in China, which is precisely where Mao failed; thus, Deng’s Theory was described as the ‘developmental theory of Marxism’ (makesi

314 Ibid.
zhuyi de fazhan lilun), applicable to a large and populous developing country like China. The theme of Deng’s Theory is ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ (zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi), a decisive shift from Mao’s radicalism to modernization models. Mao regarded socialism as a mere way-station on the road to communism, trying to ‘jump’ the capitalist stage of development straight into communism only to find that its economic conditions were not sufficiently developed to accommodate this final phase, as happened during the GLF in which the so-called ‘communist wind’ (gongchan feng) stirred up, creating a manmade disaster in a scale unprecedented in China.315

Since 1978, in contrast, the view has come to be accepted that China still has a long way to go to build socialism. In 1987, the Party under Deng’s leadership presented its new doctrine of socialism, in what was called the theory of ‘the primary stage of socialism’ (shehuizhuyi chuji jieduan), which gave its theoretical explanation of the socialist market economy. Deng’s Theory gives absolute priority to economic development – ‘economic development is the center of party work’ – while Mao Zedong Thought, though certainly not shunning that as a goal, put ‘politics in command.’ Also, it explains in ideological terms the introduction of market reforms into China’s economy and letting some of aspects of capitalism (such as the profit motive and private ownership of business) be driving forces for the country’s economic development.316

If ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ conveys the economic feature of Deng Xiaoping Theory, the ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ expresses its political essence. The phrase ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ comes from Deng’s speech at the Theory Conference of 1979 soon after he had consolidated his position as China’s undisputed leader. Deng laid out what he called the Four Cardinal Principles by which acceptable political behaviour could be judged: 1. The socialist road; 2. The dictatorship of the proletarian; 3. The leadership of the Communist Party; and 4. Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.317

This shows that as a veteran revolutionary Deng genuinely believes in Marxist ideals, the vanguard role of the Party and a certain number of moral values he learned during the Yan’an period. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for ideological reinforcement against bourgeois liberalization, and fosters socialist modernization rather than promoting capitalism. Despite changes in and, as later developed, away from the centralized, planned economy, Deng never abandoned a commitment to socialism, though necessarily his understanding of socialism was somewhat broader than had previously been the case.318

As the Party’s ideology, there is an underlying continuity between Deng’s Theory and the Mao Zedong Thought in terms of universal truth, philosophical absolutism and communist end-goal at fundamental level. The Four Cardinal Principles are very similar to the ‘six criteria’ that Mao

315 Ibid.
317 Ibid.
318 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: A political biography, pp. 94-5.
laid out in his 1957 speech, ‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People’, during the Hundred Flowers movement. Mao said that these criteria should be used to distinguish between ‘flagrant flowers’ (non-antagonistic contradictions) and ‘poisonous weeds’ (antagonistic contradictions) when judging how to treat criticism of China’s political system and leaders. Deng urged the whole party and people to counterbalance the influence of ‘bourgeois liberalization,’ and emphasized that ‘in order to realize the Four Modernizations in China, we must, in the fields of ideology and politics, uphold the Four Cardinal Principles. This is a fundamental prerequisite to the realization of the Four Modernizations.’

However, there have been the brutal and controversial aspects of the Four Cardinal Principles as applied in the crackdown of the Tiananmen movement in 1989. According to Deng’s political biographer David Goodman, while it remains less clear of Deng’s exact role leading to the tragedy, it was certain that, as the Chairman of the CMC, Deng decided to adopt martial law and authorized the ‘crackdown’ which resulted in the killing of thousands of innocent people. Whatever Deng’s involvement in the events, in retrospect, he seems to have attempted both to take credit for dealing with the crisis while distancing himself from some of its more nasty processes and consequences. To justify the suppression of what the Party now described as a ‘counter-revolutionary political turmoil’, Deng argued that ‘this was a storm that was bound to happen’ largely because political work and education had been inadequate; and he declared that the strategy of reform and the Four Cardinal Principles were correct but they had not been ‘thoroughly implemented. They had not used as the basic concepts to educate the people, to educate the students, and to educate all the cadres and party members. The crux of the current incident is basically a confrontation between the Four Cardinal Principles and bourgeois liberalization.’

It should be emphasized that Deng Xiaoping is from very early on a committed Communist, as his daughter’s biography described that ‘By eighteen, he was an ardent Communist devoted to saving his country and his people’; or, as Dr. Goodman observed that Deng was ‘socialized into the organization of what later became the CCP at the early age of 16 or 17 when in France, his life has been, to quite a remarkable extent, the history of the CCP.’

More to the point, Deng’s other biographer Yang remarked that ‘Deng described himself as a true disciple of Mao and a faithful follower of Maoism. Yet to remain true to Maoism, he also argued, some of Mao’s own words and deeds had to be undone and redone’; and to develop a bit further, Yang commented that ‘there should be little doubt about Deng’s political importance and achievements. For more than six decades, he assumed various active roles in the Chinese

communist movement, enjoying a political career longer than that of any other Chinese communist leader and, in terms of influence, he was, perhaps, second only to Mao in shaping communist China’s cause. Mao brought the rule of communism to China, whereas Deng saved it in one sense and simultaneously buried it in another.323

Or, as Dr. Charles Burton put it pithily, ‘Maoist utopianism’ has been displaced by ‘Dengist pragmatism’.324

This chapter explores and discusses Deng’s political career, how he became the paramount leader and initiated reform and opening-up, and then features of Deng’s Theory, how they have been incorporated into the CCP’s doctrine and promoted as Party’s new ideology.

3.2 Becoming a Communist

Let us first look at a few simple facts of Deng’s family and education background. Deng Xiaoping was born in the small village of Paifang, Guang’an county, Sichuan Province, in 1904, the year of the dragon. At the age of five, he went to Si Shu, the old-style Chinese school. At the tutor’s suggestion, Deng’s father changed his given name, Xiansheng (Ahead of the Saint) to Xixian (Aspiring for Sagehood). It was customary in rural Sichuan for parents to express good wishes and high hopes in naming their children. Although Deng’s father certainly held high hopes for his son and heir apparent, it was perhaps too bold to be ‘Ahead of the Saint,’ if not seemed a little disrespectful to Sage Confucius, therefore, ‘Aspiring for Sagehood’ should be more proper. So Xixian was to be his name for next twenty years.325

The private tutorship was not a regular program of education but rather a kind of preschool enlightenment. The pupils were only to read two books, Sanzijing, a three-character-phrase textbook, and Baijiaxing, a book of common Chinese surnames, set forth in nursery rhymes. Then Deng went to a local primary school which offered a curriculum of reformed Confucian teachings. The learning method then was mainly reciting. The small children were repeated and recited sentence by sentence from the aphorisms of the age old Four Books and Five Classics, that embodied Confucian doctrine. When Deng entered the higher grades, a couple of courses such as mathematics and Chinese language were introduced, thus bringing in some modern flavour. In 1915, Deng attended a secondary school in the county seat of Guang’an, a fairly modern school which offered courses in mathematics, geography, history, nature science, music, painting, and physical training – more or less the same as nowadays.326

It has been said that Mao Zedong’s father was narrow-minded and mean to his son. By comparison, Deng Xiaoping’s father was rather kind, open-minded and supportive. Deng’s father was a relatively prosperous farmer, a landlord who rented out his land and who worked for most of his later life as a minor official in local government. He did not need, or want his eldest son to help with manual labor or household chores. What he wanted from his boy was for him to achieve something loftier than his own local businesses and activities. Therefore, he would encourage Deng to go as far as his own world outlook could reach and perhaps a little beyond. In this respect, the elder Deng certainly exerted a more decisive influence upon his son’s future than did Mao’s father on his son. In other word, Deng’s future career started more as an objective arrangement, whereas Mao’s started more as a subjective creation.327

Even more important, albeit less apparent, was the personal disposition and the philosophy of life that the father conveyed to his son. The old Deng’s philosophy of life was combination of various religious doctrines and ethical creeds that stressed the gradual improvement of one’s and one’s own family’s secular life and then, if possible, the improvement of society and all humanity through one’s own persistent and resourceful practices. Based on his study, Yang observed that what was shared between the father and the son was indeed a kind of pragmatism or utilitarianism, despite its different applications in their respective lives and careers.328

So when young Deng graduated from Guang’an secondary school in 1918, his father arranged him for further study in Chongqing, some 100 kilometres away from his home, there he started his independent life at the age of 14. There is no doubt that leaving his family had matured him, and leaving his home village broadened his insights, bringing about a remarkable change for Deng in terms of both time and space.329

The city of Chongqing is located at the intersection of the Yangtze River and its biggest tributary, the Jialing, at the bottom of the Sichuan Basin. This crucial geographical location made it the capital of a number of states and kingdoms in ancient times. Important as Chongqing was in old days as the hub of transportation and communication for the region, it was mainly during the last fifty years or so, the city had been developing rapidly ever since it was selected as one of the few ports for international business and trade by the Treat of Nanjing in 1862.

It had grown to be the largest city in southwest China, with more than half a million permanent residents when Deng came to the city, and he was first enrolled there at a high school, as planned. It was a boarding school, where the students could sleep and eat three meals a day. The curriculum was more or less the same as that in the Guang’an secondary school. In addition to attending classes on weekdays, Deng and his schoolmates sometimes toured the city after

327 Ibid., pp. 19-20; also see David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 23.
328 Ibid.
school in the evenings or on weekends. Major Western countries like France, Britain and the United States all had consulates there. Various commercial enterprises and industries, especially in manufacturing and textiles, were sprouting up like ‘bamboo shoots after a spring rain.’ Foreign steamers with colourful flags frequently came and went on the Yangtze.\(^{330}\)

But not before long, young Deng was attracted by ideas of going to study abroad, as he became aware – first through schoolmates and then through newspapers – of a notice for ‘preparatory school for work and study in France.’ At the time the Work-Study Program (WSP) was started – in Chinese it was called Qingong Jianxue, literally ‘diligent work, thrifty study’ – whereby Chinese students abroad engaged in part-work, part-study. It was promoted by some famous Chinese educators and advocates encouraging youths to go and learn from Western countries, and France was highly regarded as a suitable destination for study. Many new scientific ideas had originated in France where the bourgeois revolution had been thoroughly carried out. The Qingong Jianxue organizers sponsored the establishment of the Society of Part-Work and Part-Study in France, as well as preparatory school for students going to France. By June 1916 it had organized two groups of 80 students and sent them to France. In 1919 and 1920, the heyday of the WSP, twenty groups of more than 1,500 participants, among them 378 were Sichuanese, left China for France – a historical phenomenon overshadowed perhaps only by the ‘going to America craze’ of Chinese youths in the 1980s.\(^{331}\)

The first preparatory school for overseas studies in Sichuan was founded in the provincial capital of Chengdu in March 1918 under the joint sponsorship of the municipal government and some members of local elite. After passing a qualifying examination at the conclusion of the course of study, approximately 60 students, notable among them was Chen Yi, communist China’s future minister of foreign affairs, were accepted into the WSP and departed for France at the end of June 1919. In regard to his own decision to join the WSP, Chen Yi recalled a few years later, that ‘in the summer of 1918, I did some thinking about the WSP advertising. The program sounded like a worthwhile human life. Diligent work meant to produce and to enrich society with material resources; thrifty study meant to search for spiritual life and creative culture; to work and study at the same time meant to carry out theory and practice simultaneously. All this seemed far better than just sitting at home and idling away my breath.’\(^{332}\)

Far away in Tianjin, Zhou Enlai also joined the WSP and went to France in November 1920. The twenty-two-year-old Zhou wrote a poem entitled Farewell Words, which might well reflect the common sentiment of WSP students at the time. Preceded by some romantic lines, the future Premier’s poem goes on to declare:

\(^{330}\) Ibid.
\(^{331}\) Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, pp. 42-3; Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, p. 25.
Bear in mind your spirit,  
your determination,  
your courage,  
Make progress joyfully,  
and all depend on your brave struggle.  
Go abroad,  
Cross the Easter Sea, South China Sea, Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea,  
With surging waves  
Rolling on in the vast oceans,  
You are bound for coast of France, the hometown of freedom.333

Deng was too young at this stage to express his feeling of joining the WSP, for he was then 15, six years Zhou’s junior. He had left no writings, no personal letters, nor even a clear impression upon his classmates when he entered the Chongqing preparatory school that opened in January 1919. The entire course would take a year and a half, with three or four subjects, all very practical: Chinese, as some students could not yet read and write their native language well; mathematics, which could be taken as a basic requirement for other subjects; French, for the obvious purpose of living and studying in France; and industrial technology, in order to enable students to find a job there. But, shortly after the course started, the May Fourth Movement broke out in Beijing, which would bring about a whole new nationalist dimension to the WSP in particular.334

When the news reached Chongqing, students, youth, and people from all walks of life in the city were burning with patriotism and responded immediately. They not only denounced the traitors in various forms but also boycotted Japanese goods and opposed all transactions with Japanese businessmen. Student of Chongqing preparatory school also joined a demonstration at the municipal garrison headquarters and submitted an appeal to its commander in chief, accusing the Beijing government as traitorous and demanding Japanese withdrawal from all of Shandong province.

Deng took part the movement, and, as he once recalled that his patriotic ideas of national salvation were enhanced after participation in this action. Several decades later, when he attempted to explain to foreign guests his motive for going to France, Deng would talk about the influence of the May Fourth Movement and concluded that ‘China was weak and we wanted to make her stronger, and China was poor and we wanted to make her richer. We went to the West in order to study and find a way to save China.’ But, as his daughter commented that the kind of national salvation they talked about at the time was nothing but the idea of saving the country by means of industry. In his still naive mind, Deng was anxious only to go to France to study so

333 Cited in Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, 45-6.  
that he could learn something useful for China.  

History soon showed that the WSP was neither noble, not even feasible. Deng, like most his young schoolmates, seemed too naive as they followed the trend going abroad. When Deng arrived in France in October 1920, the country was sliding into the economic recession that followed hard on the Great War, which resulted in millions of people losing their jobs, thus making it practically impossible for Chinese students to find decent work opportunities. While the program had to be stopped in China, those WSP students already in France could not be called back. By early 1921, the situation had become so serious that, of 1,500 Chinese students there, only slightly 300 who were lucky enough to ‘diligently work’ on and off. The remaining three-quarters had to wait for months without any work.

As for the ‘thrifty study’ part, it had changed from an arranged aspect of the program to an activity undertaken only at the discretion of individual participants, who depended entirely on their own financial resources and wishes. Most of them simply could not afford. As Deng recalled, ‘I learned from those students studying on a work-study program who had come to France earlier that two years after World War I, labor was no longer as badly needed as during the wartime (when the work-study program was started), and it was hard to find jobs. Since wages were low, it was impossible to support study through work. Our late experiences proved that one could hardly live on the wages, let along go to school for study. Thus, all those dreams of “saving the country by industrial development,” “learning some skills,” etc., came to nothing.’

Chen Yi, who had been so optimistic about the program, had also become pessimistic of his adventure: ‘I feel totally disappointed with my original idea. Diligent work cannot support thrift study at all. If I keep on toiling for another eight or ten years, it will be nothing but a pitiful waste of my time, nothing to do with my intellectual evolution. It is ridiculous to regard this work and study program as a noble cause. A noble cause should have a noble purpose. What is the purpose of this program? To make a fortune for these French capitalists?’

But for Deng to join the WSP and stayed in France for five years is the turning point in his life, for he became much more mature, both in his thinking and political outlook. Arguably the movement had created a new generation of revolutionaries for China. Of the 1,500 plus WSP students, 200 later took on active roles in the nationalist and communist movements, and more than 20 became communist leaders.

Among the most outstanding of these leaders Zhou Enlai, Zhao Shiyan from Beijing, and Cai Hesen, a close friend of Mao Zedong, from Hunan, had been political activists even before they went abroad. They started to form new organizations almost as soon as they arrived in France.

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335 Ibid.
336 Ibid., p. 60.
In March 1921, a secret five-person communist group, including Zhou and Zhao, was formed in Paris, and their memberships were soon approved by the newly founded CCP. In June 1922, the Communist Youth League was founded, with 18 representatives. Zhou, Zhao and Cai served as its leaders. They passed a resolution to publish Red Light as league’s organ, with Zhou as the editor.

It was at that time Deng came to know and work with Zhou at Red Light. His initial duties included typing, copying, transcribing, and typesetting – for which, Deng earned from his comrades the amiable nickname ‘doctor of mimeography.’ Among the staff, Zhou was only person who worked full-time and received a full stipend – small as it was – whereas Deng had to support himself through other jobs and only worked for the journal at night and on weekends, almost without pay. But the personal relationship Deng forged with Zhou would have an indelible impact upon his later political career. As Deng revealed to his daughter, among the Chinese students in France, Deng was closest to Zhou: ‘I had all along regarded him as my elder brother, and we had worked together for the longest period of time.’

Deng also admitted that ‘from my working experience, with the help of progressive fellow students and under the influence of the French workers’ movement, I started to make changes in my ideology. I began to read some Marxist works and attend some meeting at which some Chinese or French activists propagated communism. Then I also wanted to join revolutionary organizations.’ In 1923, Deng became a member of the European Branch Committee of the Communist Youth League (CCYL). Then, in 1924, at its Fifth Congress, he was elected one of the five-man leadership of the CCYL, and eventually became a member of the CCP.

When Zhou left France for China in 1924, Deng took over his editorial responsibilities for Red Light. He was soon to become one of the most senior members of the CCP in France, though only 21 years old himself. In June 1925, a mass anti-imperialist rally, organized by the CCP, stormed the Chinese government’s embassy in Paris in a purely symbolic gesture of solidarity with the party and workers in Shanghai. French public opinion was horrified and the action led to the deportation of some fifty CCYL members to China. Deng found himself elected as one of the new leaders of the Party branch and as such came under close police scrutiny, not just because they were mere communist but because they were anti-Western imperialism. During the second half of 1925, Deng spoke on several occasions at meetings in the Paris area to promote the CCP’s cause or to discuss the current situation in China.

But, when the French police finally raided Deng’s house on 8 January 1926, he and his comrades had left for Russia just the day before. In an empty room, they found a lot of books and papers scattered on the floor, and there were revolutionary leaflets in both French and

339 Ibid.
341 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 27; Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, pp. 89-97.
342 Ibid.
Chinese, as well as booklets such as ‘The ABCs of Communism’ and ‘The Testament of Premier Sun.’ And especially the Chinese Communist newspapers Progress, published in Moscow; also, one circular dated January 7, 1926, that read as follows: ‘Twenty-one of our comrades are scheduled to leave for Moscow this very night. They will soon return to the motherland, comrades! On watching one group of our fighters after another marching off to the battlefront of the revolution, we should always keep in our mind the slogan “Go Back Home as early as Possible!”’

Partly, but not mainly, because of the French police harassment, Deng’s group quickly left Paris for Moscow via Berlin. They had planned to do so for a long time. The return to China was their constant slogan, if not the only way out for them as a political group. They followed their predecessors’ steps to the Soviet Union. They aspired to go there with a lingering idea of further study in Russia - the new socialist state as a convenient transit point back to China. Many of their old comrades were already there, and they wanted to visit the birthplace of world communist revolution.

3.3 The Path to Power

The path Deng followed from France to the Soviet Union was one that had been well trodden by young CCP members, and, since early 1920s, many Chinese were to study in Moscow at the University of the Toilers of the East, and Moscow’s Sun Yat-sen University. The latter had been founded in late 1925 – at a time of maximum co-operation between the CCP and the Nationalists – in order to train personnel for the revolution in China, and to use Marxism to educate cadres for the CCP in particular. When Deng arrived in early 1926, he was soon enrolled at Sun Yet-sen University. The general curriculum included courses in Marxist-Leninist principles, history of the Russian Communist Party, Soviet government and law, international labor movement, political economics, history of social development, dialectical materialism and historical materialism, and particularly for newcomers like Deng, the Russian language.

Through learning Marxist-Leninist doctrines in the classroom, as well as taking part in CCP organizational activities, Deng quickly changed from a romantic youth in Paris to a professional revolutionary in Moscow. Deng himself acknowledged such a basic change at the time: ‘The sufferings of life and the humiliation brought upon by the foremen, the running dogs of capitalists, have had a great influence on me directly or indirectly. At the beginning, I only had some dim ideas about the evils of the capitalist society. Because of my romantic life, I was unable to have a deep awareness. Later on, I acquired some knowledge about socialism, etc.

343 Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, pp. 45-6.
344 Ibid.
345 Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, p. 80.
especially communism, and accepted the propaganda by some awakened elements, in addition to the sufferings I personally endured." 346

This seemed also to sum up his experience in France. He then declared, 'after I arrived in Moscow, I became firmly determined to devote my whole body to our party and to our class. Ever since that time, I have been absolutely willing to accept the party’s training, to follow the party’s orders, and struggle for the interests of the proletarian class throughout my life.' 347

Personally, Deng and his Chinese students had been very well received and looked after the moment they arrived. Comparison could not be more striking. When they were in France, they were inferior laborers and poor students living at the bottom of society; they were members of the secret Communist organizations tracked down by the French police. Yet when they were in the Soviet Union, they became overnight guests of honor who were accorded the warmest of welcome, and they were regarded as dignified students of the advanced Communist university. The living conditions and social atmosphere for these Chinese youths in Moscow were far better than they had been in Paris. Here they were treated equally as revolutionary comrades, as if living in a big family. The university provided them with sufficient room and board, year-round clothing, full medical care, and even cultural entertainment, such as opera and ballet. During the few vocations, winter tours and summer camps were arranged free of charge around Moscow and Leningrad. 348

Although the university was not as academic as its name implied, it did provide Deng with a period of time during which he could uninterruptedly pursue an education outside China. He learned Marxist and Leninist principles which would prove very useful for his future political career; he also acquired some basic knowledge of communist revolution – in terms of both individuals and organizational structures – which would also prove necessary for his future activities. His political experience in France seemed to have provided him with an advantage over other students, so that he and his close friend Fu Zhong were assigned to the leadership of the CCP organization at the university. And they were also assigned to the seventh group, known as the ‘group of theorists,’ which gathered the important students from the CCP and KMT. 349

Both the Eastern University and Sun Yat-sen University played a significant role in the history of CCP’s revolution. Just like the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou, founded in 1924 and also sponsored by the Russians, which had trained a generation of China’s military leaders, these institutions in Moscow cultivated a generation of CCP’s political leaders. Their purpose was, as designated by Joseph Stalin, to cultivate leading communist cadres for the colonial and semi-colonial countries in the eastern countries in order to serve the world revolution led by the

346 Ibid.
348 Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, p. 105; Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, pp. 50-1.
349 Ibid.
Soviet Union. It was presumably administered by the Far Eastern Bureau of the Comintern but was actually operated by the Russian Communist Party and the Soviet government. Veteran leaders of the October Revolution, such as Nikolai Bukharin and Leon Trotsky, were invited to give lectures and speeches.350

From 1923 to 1926, a few hundred Chinese youngsters, either in groups or individually, came to study there. Among them, the most prominent communists were Liu Shaoqi, Ren Bishi, and Luo Yinong, who had come directly from China, and Deng Xiaoping, Zhu De, Zhao Shiyan, Fuzhong, and Nie Rongzhen, who had been sent there from Western Europe. All were to become important CCP leaders after returning to China. Among those Deng was likely to have encountered in Moscow would have been Wang Ming, the most high profile of the Returned Students faction who dominated the CCP from late 1930 to until early 1935; and Zhang Wentian, who was the Party leader before replaced by Mao Zedong in 1943. Among his classmates, one was Chiang Ching-kuo, the eldest son of Chiang Kai-shek; and the other was Feng Funeng, eldest daughter of Feng Yuxiang, a famous warlord of the time.351

Feng was not a typical warlord: he was a Christian who maintained a highly disciplined army. Despite his fundamental anti-communism, Feng was temporarily prepared to accept Soviet aid. In 1926, Feng went to the Soviet Union for a study tour, and was warmly welcomed by the Soviet government. During his visit, Feng announced his intention to join the nationalist revolution and support Dr. Sun Ya-sen’s Three Great Policies of alliance with Russia, cooperation with the Communist Party, and assistance to the peasants and workers. He remained in Moscow for more than three months, speaking to Chinese students at Sun Yat-sen University, consulting with CCP leaders and meeting with a few Soviet officials and generals. When he returned to China, Feng was followed by about a hundred Comintern advisers, including some CCP cadres, one of whom was Deng, who was to send and work as a political instructor for Feng’s troops at the end of 1926.352

But, when Deng arrived at Feng’s headquarters in Xi’an, the CCP-KMT united front was falling apart. As the Northern Expedition advanced and the northern warlord regime retreated, dissension within the united front intensified and eventually resulted in the Shanghai coup of April 12, 1927. The nationalist troops under Chiang’s command crushed the Shanghai workers militia sponsored by the communists. And soon, the KMT officially declared its break with the CCP – the latter’s organizations were seriously sabotaged, large numbers of outstanding leaders were killed. In this changed environment, Feng transferred his allegiance to Chiang Kai-shek, as he decided to dismiss all communist agents from his forces or, to use his words, ‘courteously

351 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 28.
352 Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, pp. 111-6; David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 28.
sent them away. Thus, only after four months, Deng was forced to leave the city of Xi’an.353

Deng soon started working as a secretary for the CCP Center, first in Wuhan, then in Shanghai, when the CCP-KMT relationship completely split and the Party forced underground. For security reasons, Deng changed his given name from ‘Xixian’ to ‘Xiaoping’ at this time. At the Party’s headquarters, Deng’s duties involved office chores, preparing papers, drawing up conference minutes, conveying directives, communicating messages, and so forth. But the job provided him a vantage to familiarize himself with the operation of the whole party machine, to work for Party’s top leaders, and witness their different work styles, policy debates and, above all, power struggle. He worked for Chen Duxiu for a while, finding him arrogant and autocratic. Deng attended, as a observer, the August 7th Meeting in 1927, an emergency meeting held by the Party’s Central Committee to criticize and remove Chen as ‘opportunist’ and ‘rightist capitulationist’; and elected Qu Qiubai, a 28-year-old writer trained in the Soviet Union, as a new Party leader.354

Later that year, another enlarged conference of the CCP Politburo was convened shortly after the Party Center moved to Shanghai. Deng once again attended as a record keeper and to take down the minutes. There Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong were harshly punished for their military defeats as a result of having, ironically, executed a ‘right opportunist line’. Not long after that, at the Sixth Congress, both Chen’s rightism and Qu’s leftism were criticized. Xiang Zhongfa, a proletarian figurehead, became the new general secretary, and the real power of the Party Center was divided between the moderate Zhou Enlai and the radical Li Lisan, both Deng knew well in France. Partly because of the connection, Deng was starting to play more important role as he was appointed a chief secretary of the Central Committee.355

Deng’s political career took off remarkably in 1929 when he was personally appointed by Zhou Enlai to Guangxi as the Party Center’s representative. At the time, Zhou was the director of the CCP Military Department. Deng’s mission was to help local Party agents to develop military forces and launch a peasant uprising. This was the first time Deng had played an independent, leading role in building revolutionary bases and mobilizing peasant movement in the region and beyond.356

As soon as he arrived, Deng behaved like a royal commissioner and took authoritative action promptly. He helped organize the Bose Uprising and establish the Right River Soviet Government. Quite quickly, the soviet spread to cover some twenty counties with a population of a million people, Deng, already the CCP’s ranking secretary in Guangxi, became the political commissar of the newly developed 7th Red Army. The local people had been politically mobilized; the army was to be expanded and improved in quality as well as quantity; the

353 Ibid.
354 Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, pp. 118-123; also see Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 68-70.
355 Ibid.
356 Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, pp. 118-123.
peasantry was to be armed under CCP leadership; landlords were to have their property confiscated; and land reform was to be introduced. Emboldened by success, the rebellion spread to Lonzhou on the Left River and in February 1930 a second soviet and the 8th Red Army were established, so Deng was the political commissar of both 7th and 8th Red Army.357

There is controversy among Deng’s biographers in describing and commenting this episode of Deng’s political career. Benjamin Yang, for example, believed that Deng’s daughter and official historians in China have exaggerated Deng Xiaoping’s role in the Guangxi Uprising, and argued that Deng made a mistake in March 1931 when he left his troops for Shanghai without a proper arrangement which caused the defeat of the 7th Red Army.358 Others have argued, either implicitly or explicitly, that Deng was in some way acting under either CCP orders, or agreed upon procedures, possibly even in concert with the Commander Li Mingrui. Deng and Li were separated at a river crossing, while blaming Li Lisan’s adventurous line for 7th Red Army’s tragic defeat.359

Certainly it could not be accused as ‘desertion of the troops’ or ‘betrayal of the revolution’ – a claim that was made by the Red Guards during the CR. From my reading and study, what should be noted is that Deng’s experience, and achievement there shows that, from very early on, Deng had realized the importance to engage the armed peasantry movement. To be sure, Deng is not the first or only person sent to Guangxi for the purpose, nor was he the first who established a Soviet government in China. Actually, it was Peng Pai (killed in 1929), another outstanding Party leader who championed the peasantry movement in Hailufeng areas of Guangdong in 1923. The point is that before and after the time Mao Zedong established the Jinggangshan revolutionary base, there had been other similar movement organized by other Party leaders.360

That is why Deng later emphasized that Mao Zedong Thought, as CCP’s ideology is the collective wisdom, as discussed in Chapter 2. And we shall see more how Deng applied, personally, what he learned of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of China’s revolution in his later stage of political career.

As a matter of fact, Deng went to Shanghai and reported his work to the Party Center and met up again with Zhou Enlai. In whatever manner his report on the Guangxi Uprising was accepted, and criticism was not too serious, for he soon found himself delegated to make an inspection tour of the CCP organization in Anhui for the Central Committee. In the middle of 1931, Deng was transferred to Jiangxi, and it was here that he first came into close contact with Mao Zedong, through his appointment first as party secretary of Ruijin County. Deng had become an energetic supporter of Mao’s policies and that a good relationship had developed between them.361

357 Ibid., pp. 163-173.
359 Deng Maomao, Deng Xiaoping: My Father, pp. 185-6.
360 Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), p. 90.
As already indicated, there was considerable tension within the CCP between Mao and his followers on the one hand, and the Returned Students faction on the other. As the latter moved into Jiangxi they tried to oust Mao and his followers from positions of authority and to undermine his political influence. They opposed his views on guerrilla warfare, argued that the local armed forces should be disbanded and that single powerful united Red Army should be created; and they were dogmatic in their belief that land reform should dispossess former rich and middle peasants as well as landlords. Presumably because his experiences in Guangxi, as well as later in Jinagxi, Deng found himself in opposition to the CCP leadership on almost all counts. In particular, Deng argued that it was necessary to pursue a lenient policy towards the relatively prosperous peasants so that the CCP had sufficient support to ensure it could implement land reform. As a guerrilla force the Party required a sound economic base for its own sustenance.362

Because of his views, Deng found himself subjected to the factional attack, regarded as a Mao’s follower, and punished consequently. Deng thus experienced his first of the three famous big falls in the life. At the time, Deng suffered setbacks not only in his political career but also in his private life as his wife left him for political reasons.363

Eventually Deng was appointed secretary-general to the Red Army’s General Political Department and became an editor of the Army’s official journal Red Star. It was a task he was to maintain right through the Long March. Deng attended the famous Zunyi conference in 1935, and, as minute taker, he witnessed how the leadership of the Returned Students faction was overturned and replaced by Mao, and how Mao’s strategy and policies adopted. Great changes took place in the Party’s central leadership as well as Party’s general policy after the Long March. Mao’s authority was firmly established, with Zhou Enlai as his chief assistant. Under Mao resourceful management and driven by the new united-front policy, the communist troops became firmly settled in the new base area.364

Deng in the meantime got more involved in the Party and army leadership. He followed Mao in the successful Eastern Expedition in March 1936, and was soon promoted to deputy director of the Political Department of the First Army Corps. From then on Deng was Mao’s trusted supporter. Deng and Mao were so close and friendly that they even could share some dirty jokes. Once, in 1936, after a serious meeting, Mao suddenly turned the conversation to Deng and Zhou’s experiences in France: ‘what did your guys learn in France?’ Deng replied modestly, ‘Well, I learned to work. I toiled in one factory after another for those five years.’ Mao seemed happy with Deng’s answer and grew a bit excited: ‘French women were said to be beautiful, aren’t they?’ While Zhou was at a loss about how to cope with Mao’s black humour, Deng responded, ‘Perhaps not. Women are all the same, especially in the dark.’ Both Mao and Deng

362 Ibid.
364 Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 110-5.
burst into hearty laugher, while Zhou grinned uncomfortably.  

With Mao’s newly granted trust in him, together with his expertise, and rich experience accumulated throughout the preceding years, Deng was now going to play a leading role, politically as well as militarily, in the following years of the CCP revolution, which would eventually lead the Party to power.

At the start of the Sino-Japanese War, Deng had been appointed Deputy Director of the Political Department of the Eighth Route Army under Ren Bishi as Director. Then, in 1938, Mao managed to send Deng as political commissar, joining Liu Bocheng as commander of the 129th Division, one of the three CCP forces. For Deng, the new position represented a big jump from ordinary political cadre to de facto guardian of one-third of Eighth Route Army. He had thus stepped up the political ladder, firmly planted on military ground, and he was to carry out Mao’s political and military line and remain personally loyal to Mao. Deng was regarded as a party man in the eyes of his troops, while simultaneously being regarded as a military man in the eyes of the Party Central leaders.

As political commissar, it was Deng’s duty not only to politicize and propagandize within the army but also amongst the civilian population. Indeed, under the conditions of guerrilla warfare this was a crucial responsibility for the CCP cause. In the border regions, where the Party was not well established and enemy attack always likely – as where Deng operated in the Taihang region for almost 12 years – the army required the support of the local population to survive. In a very real sense, there was no difference between army and party – CCP members had to be peasants by day and soldiers by night. Deng was thus responsible for political affairs within the military, and the ranking party cadre in the region.

So, when the CCP Central Committee established its Taihang Bureau in 1942, Deng’s status was recognized by his appointment as secretary, the highest ranked position. Deng spent considerable time travelling around the region, encouraging here, organizing there. Even allowing for hagiography towards a ‘paramount leader’ in his late years, it would seem that Deng played a central role in base area development. And Deng appears to have been particularly active in bringing the idea of a border region government, introducing some democratic and flexible policies, politically and economically, that would be more significantly in shaping his reform policies in the post-Mao era, for which we shall discuss later.

As the Sino-Japanese war wound down, and the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek loomed, the CCP became increasingly optimistic about its prospects. The 129th Division had developed into a substantial army, soon to be reorganized as the Central Plains and later the 2nd Field Army of the PLA, or well-known as the Liu-Deng Army. In July 1947, the Liu-Deng Army, now 120,000 strong, made a bolt for the south, marching into the Dabie Mountains, which eventually

365 Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, p. 82.
366 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, pp. 41-5.
367 Ibid.
368 Ibid.
proved to have been a strategic turning point for the communist army in the civil war – marking its shift from a defensive posture to an offensive one; and it allowed the CCP to use its superior strategic position to plan a final campaign in the south against Nationalists.369

That final campaign – the Huai-Hai campaign, came to be regarded as Chiang’s ‘Waterloo.’ In a classic encirclement, often cited by military historians as one of the greatest land battles of the twentieth century, the Liu-Deng Army, cooperated with the 3rd Field Army, destroyed a Nationalist army of half a million men. Together with CCP’s victory in the north-east and the surrender of Beijing, the success led directly to national power in 1949. The Huai-Hai campaign was for the CCP a monumental military victory, and Deng was the secretary of the General Front Committee, which had successfully conducted the campaign. This fact seems to have convinced many Deng biographers of his outstanding capacity and capability in military affairs.370

There is no doubt that Deng was convinced that after Mao’s, his own military genius knew no equal. With a touch of disdain, he once argued with Lin Biao: ‘You had your Liao-Shen, and I had my Huai-Hai. You fought from the northeast to the southeast, and I fought from the Central Plain to the southwest. So what?’371

3.4 The Paramount Leader

Shortly after the founding of the PRC, Deng was appointed the 1st secretary of the CCP in the South-west Region and now officially outranked Liu Bocheng, who was his deputy. During the first five years of the PRC, politics and government were highly regionalized under military control in order to facilitate the reconstruction of state power. The Chinese mainland was then divided into six administrative regions, each consisting of several provinces. The South-west Military and Administrative Committee, like its counterparts in China’s other five regions, was a temporary measure designed to start economic reconstruction, provide political stability, and consolidate the position of the CCP. Until 1952 the regional Military and Administrative Committees were responsible for all civilian and military activities in each region: a kind of military control commission.

Moreover, Deng held other official positions such as the mayoralty of Chongqing and the directorship of the Southwest Financial and Economic Committee, both with practical responsibility and executive power. His energetic working style and firm-handed approach made his actions seem even more authoritative than his formal titles warranted. All in all, it sounded no exaggeration to him to be called as the ‘Lord of the Southwest’ – as the Red Guards did

369 Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, p. 106.
370 Ibid.
371 Ibid. p. 110; also see Ruan Ming, Deng Xiaoping: Chronicle of an Empire, Boulder: Wesview Press, 1992, p. 56.
during the CR – with supreme power over the entire region. Deng and Liu headed the Southwest Military and Administrative Committee until 1952 when they were both called to national service of other kinds in Beijing.

During his official tenure in the southwest, Deng’s organizational skills and political perspectives were very much in evidence. What distinguished Deng from other regional leaders inside and outside the southwest was the practical way in which he implemented general policies communicated from Beijing according to the particular conditions within his territorial jurisdiction – something he had done vigorously and effectively. For the country as well as for the southwest, 1950-52 was a period of postwar restoration and reconstruction. For that purpose, one movement after another was instituted under various names, such as agrarian reform, suppression of counter-revolutionaries, fiscal and financial adjustment, rectification of party style, support of Korea against American imperialism, and so on. Mao in Beijing initiated these movements, and Deng in Chongqing implemented them.

Meanwhile, Deng took some initiatives to improve the new regime’s image and to increase the Party’s governing capability. Once, Deng gave a speech about rectification of party ideology and work attitudes. ‘It is very dangerous for some of our comrades to think that the revolution is now competed and we can just take a comfortable nap and be conceited and enjoy our personal life, and there are no more serious efforts to be made anymore.’ Deng went on, lecturing the audience as well as admonishing himself, ‘As communists, we must regard our party’s work, not just personal material enjoyment, as the first priority of our life. It must make crystal clear that our own material conditions cannot surpass the level of the general society’s.’

Deng was also concerned with news media and education, encouraging party’s leaders at all levels to read and write by themselves; also concerned with proper policies on intellectuals and businesspeople, as he said on another occasion, ‘The united front is a temporary tactic, but it also has the nature of a fundamental strategy – that is, to unite as many people as possible.’

From what Deng had said and done during this period, one can see he was a more resourceful and open-minded communist leader.

In 1952, when the CCP started the process of recentralization, Deng, along with every other senior regional leader, moved to Beijing and national politics. His first position, as Vice-Premier, reunited him working closely with Zhou Enlai as Premier. However, it was not long before his even closer political relationship with Mao occupied his attention, first in helping to settle the untoward consequences of factionalism within the party’s highest leadership, and then in running the CCP. In early 1954 he was once again became the Secretary-General to the CCP Central Committee, and then, after his election to the Politburo in 1955, Deng was subsequently

372 Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, pp. 115-6.
373 Ibid.
374 Deng Xiaoping, ‘Overcome the unhealthy tendencies within the party in the Southwest,’ June 6, 1950, Deng Xiaoping wenxuan, pp. 1:152-61.
375 Ibid., pp. 1:172-6.
elected a member of the PBSC at the 8th CCP Congress in 1956. As Mao’s special reward to Deng, the Secretariat was established as the central executive institution, and Deng was appointed as the General Secretary, a much more senior position of leadership.  

For Deng, the 8th Congress represented the completion of a sequence of ascending steps from a regional cadre to one of the supreme leaders. The PBSC represented the apex; there Deng was formerly ranked sixth, still junior to Mao, Liu, Zhou, Zhu, and Chen Yun, who took over Ren Bishi position when he died in 1950. However, Deng’s actual power was second only to Mao’s and equal to, if not greater than, that of Liu and Zhou, both of whom Mao had recently criticized, and neither Chen nor Zhu was a power-minded person. To put it more bluntly, one might say that Mao had entrusted Deng to assume responsibility for the party and government in general as well as to check Liu and Zhou in the central hierarchy in particular.  

At this stage, Mao’s view of Deng was quite positive, compared with what he said later in the ‘Circular No. 4 (1976)’ as discussed in Chapter 1. When proposing Deng’s appointment as General Secretary of the CCP in September 1956, Mao had praised Deng’s ‘rectitude, reliability and far-sightedness in dealing with problems’. According to Mao, ‘Deng Xiaoping is like me – it’s not that he doesn’t have defects but he is comparatively fair and just. He is comparatively able and manages things well. Do you think he can do everything well? No. He is like me. There are things he’s handled poorly and there things he’s said which were wrong. But comparatively speaking he is able. He’s comparatively thoughtful and considerate, fair and just, honest and kind, and doesn’t frighten people. Moreover, I’ll see when he says something wrong. There are of course others if he isn’t acceptable, but the others aren’t acceptable to me. However, everyone says he takes a balanced and well-rounded view of things, that he’s conscientious, and he handles problems properly, even accepting strict discipline for himself if he makes mistakes.’

Later, Mao even confided to Khrushchev his frank evaluation of his colleagues in 1957 when he led the CCP delegation to Moscow, including Deng. Mao indicated that he had nothing good to say about Liu, Zhou, or Zhu, while Deng seemed to be the only one worth a few complimentary words. At one of the informal gatherings, Mao pointed to Deng from afar and quipped to Khrushchev, ‘Look at that little guy over there. He is highly intelligent and has a great future ahead of him.’

Ironically, it was this period Deng started to show more independence in his ideological and political thinking. He began to diverge from Mao. As discussed in Chapter 2, Mao had dramatically changed his view of socialist transformation in early 1950s and began pursuing his radical agenda that led to series of theoretical and practical errors. To be sure, Deng had always

577 Ibid.
been very loyal to Mao, and had enormously respected both Mao’s authority and political line. Partly because of age, as Deng is eleven years Mao’s junior, the relationship between Mao and Deng was never regarded by either of them as an equal one; Mao was the leader and Deng the loyal subordinate. Deng was dependent on Mao for his rise and undoubtedly manifested great admiration in their exchanges, perhaps even along the teacher-student lines that are so significant in Chinese culture.380

But, Deng’s promotions put him now at the very heart of the CCP’s leadership, he could not be unaware of remarkable changes in Mao’s political views as well as his work-style. Deng might still respect Mao as an unshakable authority – perhaps even more than before, but he no longer blindly followed him so much as an impeccable policy maker.381

Deng was more concerned about maintaining Party’s unity, discipline and inner-party democracy. In his major speech on the revision of the Constitution to the 8th CCP Congress, Deng dwelt at some length on the correct procedures for inner-party debate, the requirement of collective leadership and the importance of democratic centralism. He emphasized that open debate within the Party was necessary if correct solution were to be found to problems.382

In those debated individuals should be free to articulate their views. Minority views should be respected even when wrong and inner-party struggle should not lead to ‘a policy of excessively harsh struggle and wanton punishment’ (as Deng himself had once experienced). Criticism and collective leadership were necessary supports for inner-party debate. Without criticism, individuals, including leaders, could not improve their work-style and ideas. Without collective leadership politics would become personalized. Party rules were to apply impartially, there should be no ‘deification of the individual’ and individual leaders should not abuse their positions in dealing with either their subordinates or each other. Those remarks might have been interpreted as being directed at Mao, particularly later. It seems likely that Deng was worried in some cases that Mao’s status was leading to a growing personalization of China’s politics, and not just on Mao’s side, but the budding personality cult in the Party as well, which in turn was posing a threat to party leadership.383

Also, the relationship between Deng and Mao started to change, particularly after 1959 when Liu Shaoqi became President of the PRC as Mao withdrew to the ‘second line’ and left routine matters to the leadership of Liu and Deng for state and party affairs. This put Deng in a difficult position. To meet protocol any leadership communication with Mao would now have to be routed through Liu. Deng had an obvious dilemma: to respond directly to Mao would cause friction with Liu, but not to deal directly with Mao when requested would run risk of incurring the Chairman’s wrath. Certainly, Deng was aware of the differences between Mao and Liu in

381 Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, p. 146.
382 Ibid.
their policy priority and orientation. The most dramatic concerned the rural Socialist Education Movement (SEM) of 1962-66, which was aimed at ideological reinvigorating village cadres and combating corruption and other backward phenomena. Mao openly and sharply criticized Liu and Deng’s approach to the SEM, pointing out that it involved the two class and two road struggle, not just only anti-corruption.384

At the Party Central Conference on January 12, 1965, Mao declared that the SEM was a matter of socialism versus capitalism, not a matter of ‘four cleans’ versus ‘four unclean’, referring to anti-corruption policy of ‘four cleans’ of account books, granary stocks, fiscal files, and work records. Liu did not mean to challenge Mao’s views in general, but argued that issues of personal life and work style and economic perspectives should not be overlooked. So, at one meeting when Liu tried to interrupt with some explanation, Mao flared up: ‘Here are two books in my hand: one is the state constitution and the other the party constitution. Both as a citizen of the state and as member of the party, I have my right to speak. Now one of you does not want me to come to this conference, and another does not allow me to speak. Do you guys dare to deprive me of my constitutional right to come and speak?’385

In retrospect, this is the typical example of how Mao, in his later years, deliberately exaggerated the situation and then abused his power to attack his opponents, just as he did to Peng Dehuai at the Lushan Conference of 1959. In this case, as the matter of fact, Deng was General Secretary of the Party and required to organize the Conference. Recognizing Mao’s anger at Liu and himself, Deng attempted to dissuade Mao from attending in person, so he could report to him later in private, but Mao refused. In fact, Mao usually would not bother attending this sort of meeting. And it is not uncommon that when he is talking, other leaders such as Zhou, Liu and Deng, would butt in, explaining or adding something, thus re-enacting the Yan’an Round-Table tradition. Apparently, this time Mao was prepared to dramatize his argument to discredit his opponents. As one could imagine, Mao’s wrath directed primarily toward Liu, but it was partly directed toward Deng as well. Underlying Mao’s argument regarding the nature of the SEM lay his resentment of Liu’s encroachment of his political authority and of Deng’s betrayal of his personal confidence. It was also at this juncture in early 1965 that Mao reached the final determination to remove Liu from the central leadership, as he later revealed to Edgar Snow.386

A few years later, Mao recalled a change in his relationship with Deng in the early 1960s: ‘From 1959 up to the present time, Deng has never come to see me about anything. Deng is a deaf mute, but whenever he was at a conference, he always chose to sit in a spot far from me.

He respected me but kept away from me, treating me like a dead ancestor.'

Mao must have been right in this regard. Deng still respected Mao for his awesome authority but no longer for his correct leadership. Indeed, Mao was no longer a wise leader. Deng had tried hard to follow Mao’s policies in the years 1956-9, only to find that the whole nation had fallen into an inexcusable disastrous condition and that he himself had fallen into an embarrassing position of isolation among Party’s senior colleagues.

No wonder, when Mao got his way and launched the CR in 1966, Liu and Deng became his chief targets, as they had been labeled as No.1 and No.2 Capitalist Roaders’ in the CCP, implementing ‘counter-revolutionary revisionist line’ in China. Both of them were dismissed and subjected to vicious attacks and persecutions. Consequently, Liu died in disgrace in 1969. Fortunately, Deng survived the turmoil of the early years of the CR. And, ironically, after Lin Biao’s demise, Deng was recalled by Mao to help clean up the mess as a result of the CR, which was initiated and led by Mao himself.

Mao now changed his tune again, saying, ‘Deng is a man of rare talent. He has a strong sense of politics.’ Also, ‘Deng is pretty resolute in tacking problems,’ and ‘Deng is a man of “softness melted with toughness,” just like “a needle wrapped in cotton”.’ Deng was soon included as a full member of both the Politburo and the Central Military Council.

In January 1975, with both Zhou and Mao basically bedridden, Deng assumed the overall leadership of party, government and army. As recommended by Zhou and approved by Mao, he was appointed concurrently to the posts of deputy chairman of the CCP Central Committee, first deputy premier of the State Council, deputy chairman of the Military Council, and chief of staff of the PLA.

Only at that stage when Deng was in charge of day-to-day of state’s affairs, did he start to challenge the whole notion of the CR. He had come to realize that China’s was heading in wrong direction under Mao’s radical policies. Simply put, Deng thought that things had gone topsy-turvy in China and that people had lost sight of what they were supposed to be doing. He made it quite clear that the country was in a mess because it was suffering from too much empty politics, too much emphasis on ‘class struggle’ and too much dictatorship. ‘People are obliged to talk about class struggle every month and every day and the class struggle cannot be relaxed even for an hour.’

Excessive emphasis on politics was damaging the economy, Deng declared. He and his followers wanted to ‘liberate the productive forces’ – to do what was necessary to encourage people to produce more. Deng quoted Lenin’s view that the only way to judge whether political education had been effective was to see if production had increased. Politics divorced from

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387 Cited in Benjamin Yang, Deng: A Political Biography, p. 150.
388 Ibid.
389 Ibid.
391 This and other quotations that follow are excerpts from speeches which Deng made in 1975, cited in Roger Garside, Coming Alive: China after Mao, pp. 65-72.
economics were hollow. Deng believed that one reason for the bad performance of the economy was that leftist ideologues had pushed aside and cowed people with technical competence, and that they lacked the expertise to do anything with the power they had acquired.392

Deng spoke up for the intellectuals whom Mao had so distrusted. He was particularly dismayed by the low morale of China’s scientists, because he saw science and technology as the key of modernization. And he pointed out that the revolution in education had resulted in a lower quality of students and created a crisis. Deng was scathing about the state of the arts, for which Jiang Qing had special responsibility. He regretted the suppression of traditional operas, which had been a truly popular art form. He had no liking for the eight model revolutionary operas and ballets Jiang had put in their place. ‘Cultural life is monotonous,’ he said, ‘how could eight shows satisfy an audience of eight hundred million people?’ The press talked of a Hundred Flowers being in bloom but Deng remarked that the model operas were example of one flower blossoming. That flower was obviously Jiang Qing, Madame Mao. More to the point, Deng thought those model operas ‘are no more than a gong-and-drum show. Go to theatre and you find yourself on a battlefield.’ No trace of art. No sense in bragging about them. He concluded.393

Deng lost no time and promptly set to work. The year 1975 turned out to be an extremely hectic one for the seventy-year-old Deng, who worked with a vengeance as well as urgency. Under the general slogan ‘rectification’ (zheng dun), Deng energetically and resolutely tackled all kinds of problems: domestic and foreign affairs; party, government and army issues; industrial and agricultural matters. Under Deng’s personal guidance, in the following ten months that year, three policy documents were drafted under the titles: ‘Outline Report on the Work of the Academy of Sciences’; ‘On the Accelerated Development of Industry’; and ‘On the General Program for All Work of the Party and Country.’

The paper on the Academy of Sciences was really a policy for the whole field of science. It called for a restoration of a balance in the relations between politics and professionalism, production and scientific experimentation, and technically qualified people and the masses. It sought to restore respect for professional competence, research, work on basic theory, and debate and discussion of different scholastic viewpoints. The paper on industry opened with blunt statement on the conditions prevailing in the sector, declaring ‘enterprise management is in chaos; work productivity is low, costs are high, and breakdowns are frequent.’ The paper went on to prescribe remedies that would become a blueprint for China’s economic reforms in the late 1970s. It emphasizes that there should be a proper system of post responsibility (the responsibilities of every job should be clearly defined); there should be a hierarchy of authority and the right kind of discipline; each ministry and enterprise must be familiar with the standards

in its field in industrially developed countries and must establish plan and procedures to catch up and surpass them.\textsuperscript{394}

While the paper on science and industry called for important changes, the third paper was political dynamite. The title announced a document of broad scope but gave no hint of the challenge it presented. The text itself bore a thick cosmetic coating of the orthodoxy of the day. Full honor was paid to Chairman Mao, his directives, his teachings, and his revolutionary line. But underneath one could see Deng’s pragmatic manifesto. It was a clear signal that Deng was preparing an assault on the legion of left-wing dogmatists who had prospered because of the CR, including those later to be known as the Gang of Four. The document launched into a description of its targets: ‘sham-Marxist political swindlers’ who disguised themselves as true revolutionaries, making use of revolutionary slogans but distorting their meaning and sowing ideological confusion.\textsuperscript{395}

Once again, Deng returned to his constant preoccupations with party leadership and party discipline, which he described as having been threatened and destroyed by the CR. Under cover of attacking Lin Biao, Deng in affect criticized the dependence on the power of Mao Zedong’s wards that the CR had created. His argument was essentially that Mao Zedong Thought could not be reduced to just few quotations, and that he disapproved of Lin’s vulgarization of Mao’s thought. This was simply the ‘fragmentation of Mao Zedong Thought’ which resulted in what the Party has been becoming ‘divorced from reality and the masses’. In his view Mao Zedong Thought had to be constantly tested in practice, though he did not yet, as he was to do in 1978, refer back to Mao’ much earlier comment on the need to ‘seek truth from facts’.\textsuperscript{396}

Also, Deng emphasized again in the document as he did in his speech to the 8th Congress in 1956 one of the CCP organizational principles: ‘No person or organization is allowed to stand above the Party’. This certainly would remind the Party of its supreme leader. How could they not remember that in recent years the way Mao had overridden his colleagues to launch the land collectivization and the GLF? When they read ‘All Party members and cadres – old and new – must . . . take unity as the life of the Party, say and do things that will promote unity, and don’t say or do things that will harm unity,’ how could they not think of how Mao had split the Party in the CR? Thus, persisting in putting forward explosive statements in a calm, low-key language, the document called for rectification in every area of life in China, spelling out each field of activity by name least there be any misunderstanding. To the Party, \textit{rectification} means making changes in the leadership as well as in policies. There is no doubt that Deng’s rectification campaign in 1975 projected himself as a new leadership of the Party.\textsuperscript{397}

It should be noted that Premier Zhou had played a decisive role for Deng’s recall to office and

\textsuperscript{394} Ibid., pp. 72-5.
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{397} Hu sheng, ed., \textit{Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian} (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 404-8; also see David Goodman, \textit{Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography}, p. 82.
then his promotion to the leadership position of the ‘front line’. Mao did endorse Deng as a
deputy Chairman of the Party, but Zhou made Deng the first deputy Premier, unequivocally,
becoming his heir apparent. More significantly, Zhou provided a moral as well as political
support all along for Deng’s rectification campaign, which afforded somehow legitimacy, not
just for Deng’s leadership of the time, but also for Deng’s ascendancy to be the paramount
leader later. Zhou supported Deng right to the last moment of his life. On September 20, 1975,
right outside the operating room where the final and ultimately ineffective operation on Zhou’s
stomach cancer was about to be performed, the Premier asked Deng to stand his stretcher, and
then declared loudly, in front of all of his senior colleagues, while grasping Deng’s hand in his
own, saying that ‘you have done a good job this year – far better than I could have done
myself’.

Indeed, Deng had done and said many things – things that Zhou himself might have wanted to
do and say but could not or would not. Deng was not like Zhou. Deng was resolute in tackling
problems, which was a trait that Mao originally found appealing, but he would later regret the
same trait. Mao did initially agree with Deng, and even tried to control his wife for Deng’s sake
in the early months of 1975. But, as discussed above, Mao would not tolerate Deng’s criticism
of the CR, and soon launched his final political movement to ‘criticize Deng and counter the
Right deviationist trend to reverse correct verdicts’, and thus withdrew his endorsement of
Deng.

Ironically, Deng’s eventual triumph was due in large part to Mao’s own actions. If Mao had
not recalled Deng to office as Zhou sickened, Deng could not have become the obvious man to
run China in absence of the premier. If Mao had not purged him again after Zhou’s death, Deng
would not have been regarded as the symbol of a new political order to replace that of the CR,
and he would not then have emerged later as the new paramount leader.

3.5 The Chief Architect of Reform and Opening-up

Professor Teiwes has argued that Deng’s rise to paramount status has not been sufficiently
understood. Deng’s rise was no accident, and it was not merely the result of power struggle
with Hua Guofeng. In fact, the process is better understood as power gravitating to, rather than
seized by, Deng due to his revolutionary status, his courage to defy the Gang of Four and
criticize the CR. He looked like a leader called upon to save the day. Particularly, his political

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398 An Jianshe, ed., Zhou Enlai de zuihou suiyue (The Last Years of Zhou Enlai), Beijing: Central Documentary Press,
399 Ibid.
401 Frederick Teiwes, ‘Politics at the “Core”: the Political Circumstances of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang
and military credentials were vital to the support of an elite that had come to power through armed struggle. More than the force of his personality and clever tactics were responsible for Deng’s political success. He had the backing of most senior Party leaders, many of them longtime associates. Deng’s belief that the Communist Party should adhere strictly to its Leninist principles and that political promotions should take place in orderly fashion appealed to both the ideals and the self-interest of veteran Party and PLA leaders. 402

After the turmoil of the CR and its aftermath, the promise of bureaucratic regularity and social stability was enormously attractive to senior officials, both civilian and military, and increasingly they looked upon Deng as their natural leader. In addition high-level bureaucrats, old cadres, Deng could attract most intellectuals to his list of supporters. He had championed the social interests of intellectuals since the 8th Congress of 1956; and in his 1975 policy documents, Deng had offered them a prominent and lucrative role in bringing about the Four Modernizations, promising them higher status and greater professional autonomy. Consequently, most intellectuals saw Deng as the legitimate successor to the venerated Zhou Enlai. 403

Deng’s position, despite being formally outside the leadership, was almost impregnable. From the moment Mao died Deng was considered the leader in exile, and from the moment the Gang of Four was arrested, Deng was the leader in waiting. 404

More importantly, Deng came to power as the leader with a mission. He viewed the death of Mao and the downfall of the Gang of Four not only as an occasion to return the plans for modernization which had been thrashed out in 1975, but also the opportunity for more drastic changes policy, leading China to the right direction. More than anyone in the Party’s leadership, Deng deeply appreciated the urgent need of reforms, ideologically, politically and economically. As discussed above, Deng was the first Party leader who criticized openly of Mao’s radicalism, even when Mao was still alive, and rejected Hua’s ‘two whatevers’ doctrine in the post-Mao era. And it was Deng who played a decisive role in the campaign of the emancipation of mind and intensive debates on the ‘criterion for truth’. This was the first major attempt to develop an autonomous, post-Mao standpoint which could justify flexibility and reorientation of ideology to the demands of modernization. 405

It was one of the courageous steps taken to undercut ‘religious’ attitudes toward Mao and his ideas, and thus provided strong ideological support for the innovative policies of the pragmatic leaders and showed up the theoretical hollowness and practical absurdity of the position of ‘whatever faction.’ Furthermore, it led to the redefinition of the fundamental principles of MLM and laid down a theoretical ground for some profound ideological changes of the CCP regarding the relationship of revolution and production, class and class struggle, and notions of historical

materialism and scientific socialism. Politically, the Party decisively changed its direction of socioeconomic development with the shift from ‘class struggle’ to ‘modernization’. The Third Plenum of 1978 stated that ‘the large-scale turbulent class struggle of mass character have in the main come to an end’ and decreed that the Party and people should shift their prime attention to socialist modernization, which is now regarded as ‘a profound and extensive revolution.’

Were it not for the political impact of the Truth debate, as Schram observed, ‘the fundamental change, not only in the balance of forces within the top leadership, but in the Party’s line and in the whole intellectual climate prevailing in China, would not have been possible.’

In the political realm, Deng challenged the radical aspect of Mao’s legacy, repudiating the CR and rehabilitating its victims. During the 1980s, nearly 5 million people wrongfully accused and persecuted since the founding of the PRC, including 1.6 million intellectuals, were politically exonerated. The term ‘political reform’ was formally introduced into the modern lexicon of the CCP in Deng’s 1980 speech called ‘On the reform of the system of party and state leadership’. This was the most thorough statement of his views on political reform. He stressed the need for the routinization of government, for the rejuvenation of the leadership, for the re-establishment of party democracy and the maintenance of party-led democracy. These became common themes in Deng’s politics throughout the 1980s and indeed have strong resonances back to the early 1940s in the Taihang Region and his speech to the 8th Congress of 1956.

In Deng’s view the routinization of government was necessary in order to encourage both economic modernization and good relations between party and people. He wanted an efficient separation of the functions of party and government. Individuals had to be more restricted in their spheres of influence and an administrative order had to be created. The personalized and dogmatic politics of the CR were to be replaced by a system based on collective leadership, discussion and debate. In his views disciplinary problems should be handled within the Party and to this end at the Third Plenum of 1978 the Central Discipline Inspection Commission was established. The rules for individuals party members and for political behaviour within the CCP were set out in the ‘Guiding Principles for Inner-Party Life’ adopted in 1980.

Perhaps the most far-reaching significance of the political reform was Deng’s call for the rejuvenation of the CCP and the institutionalization of Party top leaders’ succession. In his speech of 1980 he pointed out that too many of the leaders of the CCP were too old, too ill or too inexperienced to carry the tasks of economic modernization. To reinvigorate the ranks of the Party, between 1982 and 1992, Deng set up the Central Advisory Commission (CAC) that had

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409 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 93.
410 Beijing Review, 7 April, 1980, p. 3.
little real power, but it showed deference to elderly senior leaders who were asked to step aside for the younger generation. He also launched a program of fast-tracking promising young cadres who had college education and good administrative skills. The objective was to upgrade the quality of the cadre corps by making them ‘revolutionized, better educated, professionally competent and younger in age’. The ‘Four Transformations’ were to underwrite the ‘Four Modernizations.’

Furthermore, Deng was also concerned with the longer-term prospects of succession. He wanted to ensure that in future there would be more orderly generational change. To this end he proposed that the CCP should have a special training program in which it identified likely future leaders and abolished the system of life-long tenure for cadres. Among the beneficiaries of this program were an obscure foreign trade official named Jiang Zemin, who was promoted to vice minister of electronic industry and a Central Committee member in 1982, and an engineer working in the hinterlands, Hu Jintao, who was made second secretary of the Communist Youth League and an alternate member of the Central Committee the same year. These two would go on to become successors to Deng as top leaders of China.

With the ideological and political obstacles cleared, Deng led China upon a new era of ‘reform of the economy and opening to the world’ in the early 1980s. In essence, this boiled down to increasing the role of market forces while reducing government planning in the economy and inserting China more fully in the global economy. This was conceived of, not as abandonment of socialism, but as a better path toward achieving it. The Party declared that China was in the primary stage of socialism under which a flourishing market economy was a prerequisite for a latter move to total state ownership. Mao was said to have tried to skip or compress this inevitable stage of historical development by jumping too quickly to the collectivization of agriculture and the nationalization of industry. Deng’s strategy, by comparison, might be characterized in terms of ‘back to the future’, as many of the policies and the ideological justification for them were reminiscent of the ‘New Democracy’ period that immediately followed ‘Liberation’ in 1949 and early 1960s period of readjustment which saw the first reference to the ‘four modernizations’ just before the advent of the CR. Deng drew on policies that he had practiced in the wartime conditions in the Taihang Region of 1940s.

The people’s communes were dismantled and replaced with a household-based farming responsibility system, promoting industrialization, commercialization, specialization, and marketization of the rural economy.

A second feature of the early reforms was the restructuring of the urban economy, particularly of China’s state-owned enterprises (SOEs). In 1984, the Party adopted ‘Decision on Reform of

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411 Hu sheng, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang de qishi nian (Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 431-2.  
413 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 93.  
the Economic Structure’, which sought to bring the kinds of incentives and use of market forces that had proved successful in rural areas and pulled together the piecemeal experiments into a more thoroughgoing reform blueprint. The key was seen as making enterprises more economically responsible and ‘smashing the iron rice bowl’, so to discipline a lackadaisical work force and increase labour productivity.415

Deng’s other initiatives of reform include rule of law, democratization (particularly inner-party democracy) and open-door policy, which we shall discuss later. All these reform agendas initiated and carried forward by him have had a profound impact on nearly every aspect of social life in China since 1978. Deng thus has been justifiably regarded as the chief architect of reform and opening-up in China. it should be noted that some of Deng’s policies were reinstated of those measures of ‘rectification campaign’ he advocated in 1975; others were restored of those correct and effective policies the Party adopted and implemented in the 1950s and 1960s before they were discarded by radical Maoism. Thus, ‘Maoist utopianism’ had been now displaced by ‘Dengist pragmatism’.416

Moreover, many were new initiatives, introduced and developed in the post-Mao era for China’s drive of modernization. Based on these wide and comprehensive practices and experiments, Deng had made his ideological contribution to the Party, officially called Deng Xiaoping Theory, the core content of which was ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.’

3.6 Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

The concept of ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ was first advanced by Deng in his speech to the 12th Congress of the CCP in 1982. He declared, that ‘In carrying out our modernization program we must proceed from Chinese realities. We must integrate the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete realities of China, blaze a path of our own and build socialism with Chinese characteristics.’417

It symbolizes Deng’s decisive shift in his ideological development from its recent past to its future hopes, displacing – although not eliminating – the ‘readjustment’ emphasis of the early 1960s and the ‘four modernizations’ slogan of the later 1970s. It also suggested a growing confidence that the Party had carved out a different developmental model that deserved a

415 Ibid.
417 David Goodman, Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: a political biography, p. 93.
418 Gu Anlin, ed., Zhongguo gongchandang lishi ershiba jiang (Twenty-eight Lectures on the History of the Chinese
different label. Deng later made another important speech on the subject that certainly reflected new thinking to deal with China’s new conditions:

What is socialism, what is Marxism? Our understanding of these has not been entirely clear in the past. Marxism places highest priority on the development of production forces. We believe in communism but what does communism mean? It means a high level of production forces and enormous abundance of material wealth in society. Hence the most basic task of the socialist stage is to develop production forces. The superiority of socialism lies in its higher and more rapid development of production forces than capitalism . . . Poverty is not socialism, even less communism. 418

Thus, the CCP leaders and their theorists have now placed special emphasis on the Marxist thesis that socialism presupposed capitalism, the belief that distinguished original Marxism from other nineteenth-century socialist theories. A truly socialist society, Marx had argued, could be constructed only on the material and social foundations of capitalism, only where there had existed large-scale industry and, correspondingly, a mature urban proletariat, the indispensable social agent of the socialist future. Therefore, capitalism, however socially destructive and inhumane, was a necessary and progressive stage in history, Marx taught, or, from the viewpoint of historic materialism. 419

Indeed, many of the classic Marxian texts, not excluding the Communist Manifesto, could be interpreted (and were in fact now interpreted in China) as significant of the extraordinary productive powers of capitalism. Thus the CCP reformers invoked the authority of Marx to support the capitalist methods they favored; and the use of market means to obtain future socialist ends was ideologically sanctioned by more orthodox interpretation of Marxist theory than had been fashionable in the Mao period. They also frequently quoted Lenin, especially such well-known statements as, ‘the only socialism we can imagine is one based on all the lessons learnt through large-scale capitalist culture.’ 420

Meanwhile, the CCP had significantly redefined and revised the notion of socialism. The Party leader Zhao Ziyang, backed by Deng and assisted by his think tanks, put forward a new orthodoxy called the theory of ‘the primary stage of socialism’ (PSS) at the Party’s 13th Congress in 1987. Zhao declared that ‘socialism in China is still in its primary stage,’ and ‘we must proceed from this reality and not jump over this stage.’ Thus, ‘during this primary stage, we must put the expansion of the productive forces at the centre of all our work. Helping to expand the productive forces should become the point of start in our consideration of all problems, and basic criterion for judging our work should be whether it serves that end.’ 421

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418 Deng Xiaoping, Jianshe you zhongguo teshe de shehuizhuyi (Building socialism with Chinese characteristics), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984, p. 52.
420 Ibid.
421 Zhao Ziyang, Documents of the Thirteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing: Foreign
Also, Zhao explained that China’s objective conditions determine that it has not entered the socialist stage as defined by Marx and Lenin; it is, at most, socialist in a rudimentary sense. One must not apply strictly socialist standards to judge things. For many decades to come, socialism in China will be mixed with capitalism. Therefore, ‘development of different types of ownership’ is both necessary and desirable, as is the ‘opening of labour and capital markets’, because they are good for ‘the expansion of the productive forces.’

Theoretically, Zhao’s views had been based on the principle of historical materialism that history inevitably passes through a sequence of stages of development, and the PSS is that which follows immediately after the political overthrow of the capitalist system. For some period of time, it would be unavoidable, in fact, absolutely necessary, to use many aspects of capitalism while building socialism. Socialism is now regarded as a separate ‘mode of production,’ which is characterized by three factors: public ownership of the means of production, distribution according to labour, and regulation of production primarily by the law of value.

From capitalism to communism there are three stages: first, a transitional stage from capitalism to socialism (which is in turn divided into two sub-stages); then a ‘developed’ socialist stage, and finally the communist stage. The official time-table for socialism in China now sees the initial stage lasting at least until the middle of the twenty-first century, ending with the ‘basic realization of socialist modernization’. Thus the Party leaders claimed that China would not become a capitalist country but was only utilizing capitalist mechanisms in order to arrive at communism. In other words, capitalism was simply a means to communist ends. Here again, the CCP leaders and theorists have distinctively developed Marxism as they argued that ‘Chinese characteristics’ meant China should not be ‘obsessed’ with a ‘pure and perfect’ socialism based on the ‘general laws’ described by the founding fathers of Marxism. Similarly, there should be no standardized or immutable model in building socialism.

Therefore, the theory of the PSS maintains that China, in terms of political arrangement and economic interpretation, has established a socialist society, which must be preserved. However, it should be noted that, on the other hand, China is said to have socialist economic system, which is based on public ownership of the means of production; that, in turn, is said to mean that exploitation and exploiting classes have been eliminated. China also has a socialist ideological and political system. But on the other hand, China’s current socialism is basically in the early or primary stage only. This means that the socialist system has been limited by China’s poverty and backwardness. Scientific and technological level remain low, much of the population is culturally deprived or lacks education. Also, the pernicious influences of feudal

422 Ibid., p. 31.
424 Ibid.

In the primary stage, therefore, it is necessary to bring about industrialization, economic development and modernization drive. The central task of the primary stage of socialism is defined as socialist modernization, thus necessitating some measures that are not consistent with ideological orthodoxy. In other words, the CCP has to achieve this intermediate goal before it can proceed to the next stage, just as Marx himself prophesied that capitalism was the necessary penultimate stage of development because it created the material abundance necessary for the realization of communist principles of distribution (‘from each according to his work to each according to his need’). This theory is certainly useful in officially justifying both present and future policies, especially in programs of economic reforms.\footnote{Ibid.}

Perhaps the boldest step Deng took in the modernization drive and reforms was the establishment in 1980 of four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the Southern coastal provinces, near Hong Kong, Macau and opposite Taiwan. The location of the zones, their export-oriented nature as well as the enjoyment of legislative power all point to the fact that an unprecedented experiment has been endeavoured in these enclaves. Deng described the SEZs as ‘windows for technology, management, knowledge and foreign policy to better serve China’s modernization program’. The SEZs were expected to help improve the quality and quantity of manufacturing and service industries, acting as a channel for the transfer of accumulated knowledge and experience to the inland industries.\footnote{Roger Chan, ‘The Prospect of the Special Economic Zones Policy’, in J. Cheng, ed., \textit{China in the Post-Deng Era}, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998, pp. 425-7.}

The reformers argued that the SEZs were not concessions because they were not subjected to the extraterritorial rights enjoyed by foreign nationals in pre-1949 days. Foreign businessmen must operate under Chinese law. Preferential treatment extended to foreign investors was mutually beneficial, and therefore the SEZs would not be transformed into ‘colonies’. Lenin’s New Economic Policy was cited in support of the strategy as reformers claimed that Lenin endorsed the idea of socialist countries making use of state capitalism and foreign capital for promoting their economic development without abandoning their sovereignty.\footnote{Gu Anlin, \textit{Zhongguo gongchandang lishi ershiba jiang} (Twenty-eight Lectures on the History of the Chinese Communist Party), pp. 380-3.}

Chinese Marxists admitted that some exploitation did exist in the zones. But this was a kind of ‘buying out policy’ similar to the method used against the national capitalists in the early 1950s and justified by Lenin’s New Economic Policy. The SEZs has proved to be a successful strategy as they have turned out to be sources of foreign exchange earnings, devices for technology transfer and managerial skills transfer and laboratories for economic reform. Deng’s ‘open door’ policy facilitated the subsequent opening of the Chinese-Pacific Coastal Cities and regions after
1984. The years following the introduction of the SEZs policy witness the most rapid and drastic economic growth in modern China. As China began to participate in global division of labour, it benefited from the move to set up the SEZs which has become the cornerstone of the much prided notion of ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’. 429

3.7 The Four Cardinal Principles

Conventional views that China reformed its economy first and its political system second are mistaken. Indeed, in many ways political changes proceeded and were the necessary condition for important economic ones, as mentioned above. However, from very beginning, Deng was careful to make sure that there were limits to political reform. In response to the 1979 Democracy Wall protests, Deng had articulated something he called the ‘Four Cardinal Principles’, requiring commitment to socialism, to the dictatorship of the proletariat, to CCP leadership, and to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. The phrase ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ came from Deng’s speech at the Theory Conference of 1979. In its context, ‘cardinal’ means essential or fundamental. In retrospect, the speech was one of the most important Deng ever gave, and the ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ are as essential as ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ for understanding Deng Xiaoping Theory. As Deng insisted that anything which challenged any of these Four Cardinal Principles would be regarded as beyond the boundaries of the permissible, for the Four Cardinal Principles were ‘the basic prerequisite for achieving the Four Modernizations’. 430

But Deng’s Four Cardinal Principles were controversial at the time and have been regarded so ever since. As discussed in Chapter 1, the 1979 Theory Conference is one of the most important events in the post-Mao era. It was at this conference CCP theorists first openly criticizing Mao’s radicalism, denouncing the CR, and further rejecting ‘two whatever’ policies. Moreover, some liberal-minded intellectuals did not stop there. For examples, in his speech, Wang Ruoshui, a deputy editor-in-chief of the People’s Daily, argued that Mao had made the CR out of an evil desire – to purge his ‘revisionist’ colleagues from the party-state leadership. And Mao’s theory of class struggle was only an excuse to mistreat those who disagreed with him. In short, Wang regarded Mao as an ‘immoral man’, thus he challenged the current official assessment of Mao. 431

Yu Guangyuan, a leading CCP theorist questioned the notion of ‘proletariat dictatorship’, as he argued that in most case, it was the ‘party dictatorship’, and a ‘dictatorship by minority,’ instead

429 Ibid.
of a ‘rule of majority.’ Citing Soviet and Chinese lessons, Yu underlined that the party dictatorship is extremely prone to neglect the working people’s will and interests, the total bureaucratization of the party, and the conversion of state officials from ‘servants of the people’ to ‘rulers of the people’. Through these obscure, philosophical terms, Yu put forward a simple reasoning: the Communist Leviathan must be crippled; power must be distributed more widely among a variety of representative bodies; the decision-making process must be opened to people outside the party.432

Perhaps the most controversial came from Guo Luoji, an influential scholar from Beida. In his speech, Guo strongly called for genuine freedom of expression: people should not be punished for what they think and speak; China should not have prisoners of conscience. He concluded: ‘If it is a democratic polity, people will be permitted to talk about it; if people are not permitted to do so, it must be a despotist polity.’433

While the Conference had become overwhelmingly critical, too hot for CCP leaders’ comfort, the Democracy movement spread and increased in strength as more and more posters appeared on the Democracy Wall in Beijing. People started to call it ‘the spring in winter.’ Meetings were held; organizations and circles were formed; a number of unofficial, or underground, publications emerged. They called for a new evaluation of Mao and his ‘mistakes and crimes.’ One of prominent figures of the movement, Wei Jingsheng, soon began advocating the democratization of China’s political system as a necessary ‘fifth modernization’, without which the other four could not be achieved. He even criticized Marxism directly:

Thus, a hundred years later, we can see that Marxist economics – ‘scientific socialism’ – has led to nothing! All the social system set up according to Marxist principles – i.e., the present communist countries – almost without exception neither acknowledge nor protect human rights of all members of their societies. Even if these countries repeatedly and smugly proclaim themselves to be ‘truly democratic’ societies. On what basis can they say that the people are their own masters if universal equal rights are absent? The living reality is that the basis of these ‘true democracies’ is the ‘proletariat,’ that is the vanguard of the proletariat, the communist parties, party’s monolithic leadership. To put it simply, we are talking about dictatorship. What an absurd ‘truth’ this is!434

It was against this background and in response to these challenges, Deng, on behalf of the CCP’s Central Committee, delivered his speech, entitled ‘Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles’ on March 30, 1979. Deng didn’t mince his words as he declared that the Party had no choice but must take firm action in the light of current developments:

432 Ibid.
433 Ibid.
In the recent period a small number of persons have provoked incidents in some places. Certain bad elements have raised sundry demands that could not be met at present or are altogether unreasonable. They have provoked and tricked some of the masses into raiding Party and government organizations, occupying offices, holding sit-down and hunger strikes and obstructing traffic, thereby seriously disrupting production, other work and public order. Moreover, they have raised such sensational slogans as ‘Oppose hunger’ and ‘Give us human rights’, inciting people to hold demonstrations and deliberately trying to get foreigners to give worldwide publicity to their words and deeds. There is a so-called China Human Rights Group which has gone so far as to put up big-character posters requesting the President of the United States to ‘show concern’ for human rights in China. Can we permit such an open call for intervention in China’s internal affairs? There is also a so-called Thaw Society which has issued a declaration openly opposing the dictatorship of the proletariat on the ground that it ‘divides mankind’. Can we tolerate this kind of freedom of speech which flagrantly contravenes the principles of our Constitution? 435

In this speech, Deng went into great detail about the meaning and importance of each of the four principles. First, Deng believed that only socialism can save China, because its large population, its backwardness and poverty. ‘The socialist revolution has greatly narrowed the gap in economic development between China and the advanced capitalist countries’ in the past thirty years. He emphasized that what China has been pursuing now is ‘scientific socialism,’ as distinguished from past ‘false and ultra-Left socialism.’

Second, Deng considered the dictatorship of the proletariat as indispensable to defend socialism at home and safeguard China’s sovereignty against ‘imperialism and hegemonism.’ In the line with Leninism, Deng described the dictatorship of the proletariat as a state machinery to be deployed against hostile forces to socialism while serving to protect ‘people’s democracy.’ Deng condemned the practice of the state machinery during the CR as fascist but concluded that the present conditions in China still required the state’s dictatorial function, not only aimed at suppressing criminal activities but also pro-Western political dissidents.436

Third, he argued for the necessity of the leading role of the Party in Lenin’s theory. Indeed, it is the Party that will keep China on the socialist road; it is the Party that enforces the dictatorship of the proletariat; and it is the Party that interprets the current meaning of MLM. Deng declared that in the China of today, ‘we can never dispense with leadership of the Party and extol the spontaneity of the masses.’ For Deng, abandoning Party leadership would be tantamount to anarchism.

Fourth, on MLM, Deng held China, with her size and population, needed a unifying ideology to get people united and make the country strong. Aware that the old orthodox doctrine was losing its appeal, Deng hoped to revive what he believed was useful from Marxism, of those

436 Ibid., pp. 171-180.
fundamental principles and methods of analysis in Marx and Mao, and the scientific system formed by their tenets, as examined in Chapter 1.\textsuperscript{437}

Deng’s Four Cardinal Principles may have caused much ideological and political confusion in the course of reform as shown in various campaigns. Partly because they are very similar to the ‘six criteria’ that Mao laid out during the Hundred Flowers movement in 1957. In emphasizing the CCP’s continuing adherence to the socialist road, the proletariat dictatorship, Party leadership and MLM, the reformers have demonstrated their determination to locate themselves in the mainstream of the Communist Revolution, including its Maoist component, and excluded only those aspects of Maoism now regarded as serious errors.

Some Party theorists, such as Liao Gailong have argued that proclamation of the Four Cardinal Principles had been necessary not only because some elements among the people had abused the call for the liberation of thought to attack Marxism and socialist system, but because ‘those comrades whose thinking is ossified . . . and who obstinately support the erroneous line of the “two whatevers” took advantage of the opportunity to attack the correct line of the Third Plenum . . . saying that the decisions of the Third Plenum had brought about a mad attack by the bourgeois rightists, and even that the party and the state were once again in the same situation as in the summer of 1957.’\textsuperscript{438}

In other words, it had been necessary to throw the young hotheads of the Democracy Wall movement to the wolves, in order to preserve the course of reform as spelled out the Third Plenum of 1978. Indeed, shortly after Deng’s speech, several dissident leaders, including Wei Jingsheng, were arrested, and the Democracy Wall near Tiananmen was soon outlawed.\textsuperscript{439}

A more serious critique is the promulgation of the Four Cardinal Principles meant that ‘practice’ itself was not the ‘only criterion for testing truth’; rather, ‘truth’ must be evaluated by ideological criteria.\textsuperscript{440}

However, for the CCP, as China’s current leader, Hu Jintao, succinctly put it in his political report to the 17th Party Congress in 2007, ‘The Four Cardinal Principles are the very foundation for building our country and the political cornerstone for survival and development of the Party and the nation.’

### 3.8 Promoting the Party’s New Doctrine

\textsuperscript{437} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{439} Ibid.
Ever since the reform in 1978, China has undergone a dramatic process of socio-economic transformation, during which the country has experienced an outpouring of competing ideologies aimed at inducing, justifying or resisting economic and social changes. Different political actors have articulated their diverse beliefs, goals and means to influence policy options. Consequently, there has been a dynamic process of political debates and ideology-policy interactions, which reflected ideological differences between pro-market reformers and more conservative central planners. The former have tended to be more liberal politically while the latter generally endorsed greater ideological control.

As China’s paramount leader, Deng plays the role of the arbitrator; however, he demonstrated a clear preference for controlled political reform and market-oriented economy. Deng tried to create a new unifying theory based on generally accepted ‘truth criterion’. Rejecting Mao’s radical ideals he deliberately applied what he called Marxist methodology: historical materialism, which stresses economics over politics; and dialectic materialism, supporting the balancing of Right and Left, the elite and the masses, tactics and strategies, and short-term goals and long-term objectives, seeking ideological justification and legitimation.441

Deng’s theory was gradually incorporated into the Party’s official doctrine. At the 13th Party Congress of 1987, Deng’s theory was summarized as the ‘one center, two basic points” (yige zhongxin, liangge jibendian), which appeared in Zhao Ziyang’s political report, meaning: ‘The one central task is to develop the productive forces and the basic points are to uphold the Four Cardinal Principles as well as reform and open-door policy.’ At the close of his report, Zhao reiterated the need to uphold the ideological system on which China has been based: ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the product of the integration of the fundamental tenets of Marxism with the modernization drive in China and it is scientific socialism rooted in the realities of present-day China. It provides the ideological basis that serves to unite all the party comrades and all the people in their thinking and their action. It is the great banner guiding our cause forward.’442

During the political turmoil of the Tiananmen Incident, Deng was firm in promoting his theory and declared that the Party’s basic policies and the 13th Congress line are correct and should not be changed. In his speech to his officers in Beijing on June 9, 1989, Deng explained that ‘this disturbance would eventually have come in any event. Dictated by both the international climate and domestic climate in China, it was destined to come, and the outbreak of the disturbance was independent of man’s will . . . They (the demonstrators) had two key goals: one was to overthrow the Communist Party, the other was to topple the socialist system. Their aim was to establish a bourgeois republic totally dependent on the West.’

Therefore, he concluded that ‘It is not wrong to keep the Four Cardinal Principles. If we have

made a mistake, it is that we have not kept to them consistently enough and included them as basic ideas in the people, the students and all cadres and Party members . . . True, we have talked about keeping to those principles, conducting ideological and political work and combating bourgeois liberalization and mental pollution. But we have not talked those things consistently . . . The mistake was not in the principles themselves, but in the failure to keep to them consistently enough and to a good job in education and in ideological and political work."  

Deng had further developed his theory in his well-publicized southern tour (nanxun) in early 1992. During this tour, he gave a series of speeches with ringing endorsements of the bold and successful economic reforms in the areas he visited, including, most strikingly, his open adoption of the concept of socialist market economy that concluded a fluctuating development process for more than a decade. At the 12th Party Congress in 1982, the policy line had been defined as ‘economic planning as the mainstay, market as the supplement.’ Later, the concept of ‘planned commodity economy on the basis of public ownership’ had been raised. At the 13th Party Congress in 1987, the planned commodity economy was depicted as ‘a structure in which planning and market are unified internally.’ After that, the term ‘economic structure integrating economic planning and market’ had been commonly used. Then, in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident, a major controversy that hit theoretical and press circles was whether the country should differentiate the ‘surnames’ or orientation of a particular policy. Leftists insisted that a ‘capitalist’ reform policy should be jettisoned no matter how promising it may be for economic progress.  

Now Deng argued the Party should adopt any economic policy and measure that promoted productivity or generated wealth. He indicated that it was too simplistic to equate market mechanisms with capitalism – and thus bar them from the socialist economy. ‘Some comrades have equated a planned economy with socialism and market economics with capitalism,’ Deng said, adding that both socialist and capitalist systems had elements of planning and marketing. He further argued that planning and market mechanisms were only means to control resources, not a yardstick for telling the essential difference between socialism from capitalism. Thus Deng severely criticized the controversies regarding the distinction between socialism and capitalism. Moreover, he presented the following three pragmatic criteria by which to determine the existence of socialism: beneficial for the development of productivity, beneficial for raising of the people's living standards, and beneficial for the growth of comprehensive national power. To Deng’s credit, the concept of a ‘socialist market economy’ finally secured official recognition at the 14th Party Congress in 1992.  

443 See Deng’s speech, ‘Deng Xiaoping tongzhi zai jiejian shoudu jieyan budui shide jianghua’ (Comrade Deng Xiaoping’s speech to capital martial law troops), Xuanchuan Dongtai (Propaganda Trends), No. 20, June 14, 1989.  
444 Li Shixin, Zhongguo gongchandang zexue sixiangshi (The History of the CCP’s Philosophical Ideology), pp. 499-505.  
445 Ibid.
However, Deng’s statement of three criteria for defining socialism attracted controversy itself. Some critics quickly dubbed it ‘the theory of the New Cats’, or the new version of Deng’s pragmatism that fails to inquire about the nature of ‘ideological orientation’. Apparently economic policy would only be pursued if it enhanced productivity. It is, in essence, the updated version of Deng’s ‘cat theory,’ first expounded in 1962 when he said: ‘It doesn’t matter if a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice’ as a way of advocating the use of any kind of economic policy in order to restore agricultural production after the disaster of the GLF. That theory got Deng into big political trouble with Mao and Deng was consequently branded as a capitalist roader during the CR.

But Deng now was adamant that China would not become capitalist even if it used many aspects of a capitalist market economy to promote development. Rather, he insisted that ‘we can develop a market economy under socialism . . . Developing a market economy does not mean practicing capitalism.’ And he argued that the critical difference between a socialist market economy and capitalist economy seems largely to be a matter of who has political power in the country. In Deng’s view, in a capitalist country, the wealthy capitalist (owners of private property) dominate both the political and economic systems. In a socialist system, political power is in the hands of the vanguard communist party that represents the interests of the ‘people’. It is the party that will make sure that the socialist market economy does not lead to the kind of exploitation and inequalities that mar a truly capitalist system and that the market part of the economy ultimately serves the goal of building socialism and achieving communism.446 This argument has been widely adopted among Chinese scholars and theorists, and reflected in most textbooks in China.447

Deng’s theory was finally codified at the Party’s 14th Congress in 1992, and its theoretical authority was thus established just as in 1945 in Yan’an Mao Zedong Thought was established as the supreme authority in China’s socialist revolution and construction. The Four Cardinal Principles were written into the CCP constitution in 1992 at the same time ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ was added, which was a prelude to the formal inclusion of Deng’s Theory as part of CCP’s doctrine. After Deng’s death, at the 15th Party Congress in 1997, Deng Xiaoping Theory was written into the Party’s constitution, along with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, as the CCP’s guiding ideology.

In his political report to the 14th Congress, Jiang Zemin gave an official interpretation of Deng’s Theory that contained nine major themes that for the sake of analysis must be repeated here at length: (1) on the developmental path of socialism, Deng stresses the concept of seeking truth from facts and building Chinese-style socialism, rather than coping foreign experience; (2) on the developmental stage of socialism, Deng emphasizes China’s reality and outlines a period

of the primary stage of socialism which would last at least one hundred years; (3) on the fundamental task of socialism, Deng claims, in addition to the three criteria, that it is ‘to liberate and develop the productive forces, to eliminate exploitation and polarization and ultimately to realize common prosperity’; (4) on the driving force of socialism, Deng advocates market-oriented economic reforms and prudent political reforms, and science and technology are regarded as ‘the first productive force’; (5) on the external affairs, Deng stands for an independent foreign policy and opening China to the outside world for information, capital and technology; (6) on the political guarantee of socialism, Deng emphasizes the Four Cardinal Principles and combating bourgeois liberalization; (7) on the strategies of socialist construction, Deng encourages some people and some regions to get rich first and outline three-phase developmental plan to enable China to reach the level of the developed countries by the mid-21st century; (8) on the leading force of socialism, Deng stresses the leadership of the Party and the widest possible united front composed of all patriots; and (9) on the unification of the country, Deng puts forward the concept of ‘one country, two systems’.

Above all, Jiang highlighted the two most important concepts in Deng’s Theory: one is what has been conceptualized as ‘socialist market economy,’ and the other is Deng’s redefinition of socialism.448

After the 14th Party congress, the CCP began promoting Deng Xiaoping Theory in a rather systematic and comprehensive way. At a national meeting of propaganda officials in January 1993, the Politburo member and Director of CPD Ding Guangen gave a formal call to ‘use Deng theories to arm the entire Party’. During a talk to cadres attending the Central Party School four months later, the PBSC member and President of the CPS Qiao Shi repeated the message about ‘arming’ the entire CCP with Deng’s Theory as he declared that reform and opening-up theories ‘constituted Marxism that has been carried forward and developed by comrade Xiaoping with a new approach after he summed up the positive and negative experiences of a long period of Chinese history and integrated the fundamental tenets of Marxism with contemporary China’s reality.’449

The most important of the Deng seminars was held in Shanghai in mid-1993 under auspices of the CPD and the Shanghai Party committee, Politburo member and Shanghai Party boss Wu Bangguo (now No. 2 figure in the Party) pointed out that ‘to study, propagate and do research on Deng’s theories is an urgent and long-term strategic task for the theorists and the party as a whole.’ And he added, ‘Deng is an outstanding representative and brilliant model of safeguarding, adhering to and developing Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.’ Then scores of books on the paramount leader had been published. By late 1992, more than 100 million copies of works by or about Deng were in print, meaning Deng related publications now

rivalled Mao’s ‘little red book’. In terms of variety, books promoting the New Helmsman had outstripped those about the Great Helmsman.450

Most significantly, in 1997, at the 15th Party Congress, heaping praise upon Deng’s theory of ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,’ Jiang Zemin apotheosized Deng’s theoretical contributions to China’s reform and opening up, elevating them to status hitherto reserved exclusively for Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. Thus, Deng Xiaoping Theory, ‘the soul of the Congress,’ has been formally accepted as a guiding ideology for the first time in the Party’s history. This historical move indicates, as Party leaders and theorists had pointed out, that the party upholds a living Marxism, a scientific socialism that can guide China’s practice and help resolve the country’s problems. This also directs the CCP away from dogmatism and the worship of out-dated doctrines. They will alternatively uphold the principle of seeking truth from facts, abandoning specific conclusions set by Marxism and Maoism that are not reflected in the reality of today’s China.451

On the other hand, it should be noted that, despite such ideological campaigns to promote Deng’s doctrines, there have been quite a few CCP senior leaders and theorists who questioned and criticised Deng’s theoretical framework. For example, in August 1994, some leading leftists convened a meeting in Beijing. Attended by such people as Deng Liqun, Wang Renzhi, He Jingzhi, Gao Di and Yuan Mu, the meeting reportedly declared that the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was due to ‘revisionism,’ the old Maoist term for heterodox understandings of Marxism-Leninism. Deng Liqun allegedly went so far as to suggest that Deng’s views were themselves revisionist: ‘Deng Xiaoping’s theories must be tested in practice to show whether they are correct or wrong. Any attempt to replace Marxism as the guiding principle for revolution and construction in China is idealist and goes against the Communist Manifesto. No doctrine or theory, now or in the future, can replace Marxist truth and science.’452

450 Ibid.
Chapter 4

Ideological Innovation: Jiang’s Three Represents

4.1 Overview

Jiang Zemin emerged as the CCP’s new leader in the wake of the Tiananmen crisis of 1989. But he came to leadership as neither a founder of the country nor a military hero like Mao and Deng, rather, as Professor Teiwes said, a ‘chief engineer’, a term reflecting both his professional training and the manifold prosaic tasks facing him and his colleagues in building on the reborn edifice Deng and his generation had created. The full complexity of Jiang’s role, however, is better captured by the Western business term, ‘CEO’ - the Chief Executive Officer, that is the manager with overall responsibility for a vast enterprise, which is to maintain the Party’s dominance in China.\(^{453}\)

Besides political calculations of the time, however, Jiang possessed a desirable set of qualities. He fit the profile for future generations of leaders that had been repeatedly employed throughout the 1980s – younger in age, tertiary-educated, professionally competent and politically reliable. Jiang’s professional qualifications had been adapted to a career as a political leader at both the centre and in the localities, as he had been Minister of the Electronics Industry, and Mayor and Party Secretary of Shanghai. In 1987, he was elevated to membership in the Politburo, the apex of the Party’s decision-making hierarchy.\(^{454}\)

Jiang was obviously the personal choice of Deng Xiaoping when he was selected to succeed the deposed Zhao Ziyang as Party’s new General Secretary in June 1989. He was soon designated by Deng Xiaoping as the ‘core’ of the Third Generation of the Party’s leadership, following the generations of Mao and Deng himself. This gave Jiang an official status that few dared challenge directly. By the spring 1993, Jiang had become not only the Party chief and the chairman of the Party’s powerful CMC, but also the president of the PRC – the first leader since Mao and Hua to control the Party, the government, and the military.\(^{455}\)

It should be noted that Jiang is a true believer and devoted communist ever since he joined the CCP in 1946. And from very early on, Jiang has been consciously upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao’s Thought and faithfully carrying forward Deng’s policies of reform and opening up.


Jiang consistently took a pro-economic reform stance, but at the same time was sensitive to challenges to the Party’s political control. Moreover, in handling situations where Party rule came under threat, Jiang demonstrated a combination of flexibility and necessary toughness that would stand Jiang well in the post-Tiananmen years. He argued that socialism was the only road for the Chinese people toward the communist future of common prosperity, and the ultimate goal of building socialism with the Chinese characteristics is to realize Communism. Jiang declared that the task of socialist construction is ‘to make persistent efforts to arm the minds of the whole party and the whole people and educate our cadres and people with Deng Xiaoping Theory; train and bring about new type of citizens with ideals, morality, culture, and discipline to meet the needs of socialist modernization construction; and promote the development of material civilization in coordination with the building of socialist spiritual civilization.’

Jiang Zemin’s important contribution to the Party’s official ideology is his theory of the Three Represents (sange daibiao). That is, as Jiang claimed, the CCP should represent most advanced productive forces, more advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the majority of the people. To most non-Chinese, Jiang’s three Represents appears as yet another communist rhetoric, more Big Brother brainwashing of the cadres. Indeed, it was quickly dismissed by most Western analysts as just propagandistic cliché. Even the designated name, Represents, sounds syntactically odd in English. Yet in Chinese it has coherence, subtlety and political dynamite. And, upon closer examination, the Three Represents indicated an important, even radical, shift in party philosophy, party organization and party orientation. What Jiang intended was to modernize Party’s ideology. He argued that Communism, in its industrial age formulation, was not viable as a contemporary economic system, but the Communist Party, by representing these three powerful principles, would be modernizing Marxism, advancing with the times, and securing its place at the vanguard of society.

So when Jiang for the first time put Three Represents at the top of his public agenda in February 2000, it immediately drew wide debates and soon became a buzzword in the Chinese media. In 2002, at the Party’s 16th National Congress, the Three Represents was enshrined in the CCP Constitution. It has been described as a continuation and development of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory, thus placing Jiang Zemin on par with Marx, Lenin, Mao and Deng. Further, the persistent implementation of the Three Represents is said to be ‘the foundation for building our Party, the cornerstone for its governance and the source of its strength.’

Ideologically, the Three Represents created an important breakthrough, since now Jiang has revised classic Marxist doctrine - the labor theory of value, reinterpreting its notion of

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‘exploitation and surplus value’. Jiang extends the Marxist phrase ‘productive forces’ in a practically ideological way, and works to elevate the status of and bring into the Party the most dynamic strata of society - managers, entrepreneurs and business owners. Jiang declared that reform had created ‘new social strata’, and that most people in the private sector are engaged in ‘honest labor and work’, obey the law, and contribute to society. These people, he asserted, are the driving force behind China’s ‘advanced productive forces’, working for building socialism with Chinese characteristics.459

He also redefined the historically loaded term ‘capitalist’ by inventing a new label as ‘private business owners’, and they are now to be known as part of the ‘new social strata’. In order to maintain the momentum of reform, he argued, these new social strata should not be banned from Party membership. More significantly, it superseded key elements of the Party’s founding theories - class struggle, the vanguard of the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat - with a concept of an all-encompassing party that brought in advanced or elite members from all sectors of society.460

However, Jiang’s ideas of the Three Represents ran into significant political opposition from Party’s conservatives who were particularly unhappy with such an open embrace of private entrepreneurs (they are never officially referred to as ‘capitalists’) by the Party. Those orthodox leftists used a series of open letters to rebuke Jiang’s proposal to admit capitalists into the Party. Not only did they challenge the ideological propriety of admitting them into a communist party, but also they compared him to Mikhail Gorbachev and Lee Teng-hui, leaders who are widely criticized in China for betraying their parties’ interests. They argued that the ‘admission of capitalists to membership of a Communist Party is unheard of in Marxist theory or practice that has emerged since the Communist Manifesto was first published.’ And ‘this in no way constitutes a “creative renewal” of Marxism, but rather, an outright negation of its basic principles.’461

Some critics also argued that the Three Represents had brought about an ‘erroneous situation’, which resulted from confusing production relations with essential factors of production and extrapolating an erroneous understanding that the ‘current capitalists are labourers’. They thought that if the Party allows capitalists in, it will create serious conceptual chaos within the Party, and destroy the unified foundation of political thought of the Party that is now united, and break through the baseline of what the Party is able to accommodate in terms of its advanced class nature. And they believed that the Three Represents, with their new definition of ‘common interests’ as advocated by Jiang, had crossed the boundaries of ‘proper’ ideological discourse thus endangering the political legitimacy of CCP rule.462 The neo-Maoist Deng Liqun critically

459 Ibid.
461 Ibid.
462 Heike Holbig, ‘Ideological reform and political legitimacy in China,’ in Thomas Heberer and Gunter Schubert,
pointed out that the theory of the Three of Represents is ‘more a slogan for a social democratic party than a communist party’.

But the Party theorists argued that co-option of entrepreneurs and other new social strata into the Party was designed not only to benefit the Party by tapping new sources of support, but also to pre-empt a potential source of opposition, maintaining political stability and Party leadership. It was also a theoretical attempt to come to grips with three phenomena that were affecting China and the Party: globalization and the advance of science and technology; the diversification of Chinese society, social organizations, and lifestyles; and the need to rebuild the Party and improve its rank and file. Thus, they could be taken as a new framework to reconstruct the CCP’s legitimacy as ruling party capable of ideological and institutional innovation.

Jiang’s biographer, Dr Kuhn observed that Jiang Zemin was never an ideologue. He was an engineer who spent twenty-five years solving on-the-job technical problems before becoming a political leader. Jiang’s model of today’s Communist Party is dynamic, action-oriented vanguard institution, motivated by ideological vision but not bound by ideological dogma.

Following the tragedy of 1989, when he became General Secretary, China was politically fractured, socially tense, economically stagnant, spiritually sullen, and internationally shunned. Jiang faced intractable problems as he traversed the political corridors of inner-sanctum Beijing, in which he could at no time escape ideological assault from both Left and Right. Yet Jiang persevered and in the end brought stability to society, freed and accelerated the economy, greatly increased standards of living, and encouraged social freedom. The China he is leaving as his legacy is a far better place than the one in which he spent his life. Future historians may well conclude that it was during the period of Jiang’s leadership that the country set into motion fundamental, irreversible transformation, and that it was this habitually underestimated leader who had the consistency of vision and subtlety of action to bring it all about.

Indeed, as some scholars pointed out that China watchers in the West have consistently underestimated Jiang and regarded him as cast in a similar role to that of Hua Guofeng, rather than as a long-term successor. To the surprise of the outsiders, the seemingly unimpressive Jiang emerged as the winner, time and again, after each round of intraparty power struggles.

Dr. Henry Kissinger commented, ‘I’ve seen President Jiang every year since 1989. He has grown in confidence and stature. By the late 1990s it was clear that he was expressing his own views and the government was reflecting those views, whereas in the early 1990s it was just as

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466 Ibid.
clear that he was more a spokesman for the consensus. Jiang, himself, always stressed that he was not governing by personal rule, but rather by representing China’s collective leadership.468

According to a Party writer, ‘the three generations of collective leadership at the three historical junctures created the three exhortations.’ Mao made ‘China stand on its own feet’ as an independent country; Deng ‘liberated and unleashed productivity of Chinese society’; and Jiang ‘greatly rejuvenated the Chinese nation’ and reached ‘a new milestone in China’s development.’ The relationship between Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and Jiang’s Three Represents was said to form ‘a continuous line of inheritance,’ even though parts of the later two negated parts of the first. This is because, according to Deng, the true spirit of Marxism is to ‘seek truth from facts.’ And Jiang added, ‘advancing with the times.’469

This chapter first looks at how Jiang became the ‘core’ of the third generation leadership, and the chief engineer of reform, and then focuses on the contents of the Three Represents and its significance for rebuilding of the CCP, and how the Party embraces nationalism and globalization, integrating China into the international community as a global power.

4. 2 The ‘Core’ of the Third Generation Leaders

During the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, the choice of Jiang Zemin for the new Party leader surprised insiders and outsiders alike, not to mention even Jiang, himself. When Deng Xiaoping offered him the post of General Secretary, Jiang was dumbfounded. He expressed profound appreciation to Deng, pledged his loyalty to the Party, and affirmed that he would do whatever the Party requested. But he honestly said, ‘I am afraid I am not worthy of the great duty entrusted by the Party.’470

However, the decision had been highly politically calculated that led Deng and the Party elders he consulted to raise Jiang above his status as an ordinary Politburo member to the top job. First, at the time of crisis, there were five members of the Politburo Standing Committee, and the leadership was divided. Two of these, Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili, were disqualified because they had been too tolerant toward the demonstrations. Indeed, Zhao as the leader was soon criticized for ‘grave errors and mistakes’, including ‘splitting the Party’, and dismissed. Li Peng and Yao Yilin, as Deng scornfully noted, were too conservative to satisfy him. As the other one, Qiao Shi seemed not to have been power player that his background in intelligence led many to believe he was, and in any case he was too close to Zhao to satisfy conservatives.471

Thus Deng cast his eye toward other members of the Politburo. Among them, Jiang’s

471 Ibid.
revolutionary background, professional career, and political skills were most impressive. Second, Jiang seemed to be an ‘outsider’, not involved at the time of the turmoil in Beijing that would make it easy for him to clean up after the crackdown. Third, chiefly Deng needed to reshuffle the leadership. In explaining the decision, Deng emphasized, ‘the people see reality. If we put up a front so that the people feel that it is a mediocre leadership that cannot reflect the future of China, then there will be constant trouble and there will never be a peaceful day.’

It seems, in retrospect, the single most important reason for Jiang’s promotion at that critical time was his decision in May to close down the reform-minded newsweekly *Shijie jingji daobao* (*World Economic Herald*). Although the city government sponsored the paper, it enjoyed an unusual degree of editorial independence. Under the implicit protection of Hu Yaobang and then Zhao Ziyang, the paper had become the vanguard of the media, reporting on reform in the Party and entertaining new ideas in politics. With a circulation of 30,000 largely upscale readers, the paper was influential in setting the tone for national debate. Four days after Hu’s death on April 15, 1989, the paper held a symposium titled ‘Comrade Yaobang Lives With us Forever’ at the Ministry of Culture in Beijing. Determined to challenge the official view of Hu’s record, they invited a number of prominent intellectuals to speak, including Shu Shaozhi, Yan Jiaqi, and Chen Ziming. They called for ‘reversing the verdict’ on Hu Yaobang as well as negating the 1983 campaign against ‘spiritual pollution’ and the 1987 campaign against ‘bourgeois liberalization.’

These speeches were printed in an issue of the paper that was to go to press on April 25. By this time, there were deepening debates within the Party leadership about how to respond to the student demonstrations, which had started eight days earlier on April 16, the day following Hu’s death. And on April 24, Deng would endorse a hard-line approach by saying that the demonstrations were aimed at ‘fundamentally negating the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and at negating the socialist system.’ It was that judgment, written into a *People’s Daily* editorial the next day that inflamed student opinion and brought the student movement to a new crisis point.

Aware of the controversies raging within the Party, Jiang was upset when he read galley proofs of the forthcoming issue of the paper, fearing that it would give new stimulus to the demonstrations. Thus, Jiang called the editor of the *World Economic Herald*, and told him to delete sensitive paragraphs from the offending issue. When, despite Jiang’s order, part of the issue was printed and distributed, Jiang immediately ordered the presses stopped and Qin Benli removed from his post. The paper had been one of the icons of liberal reformers in the 1980s and a beacon of expanding press freedom, so the removal of the respected chief editor and the paper’s closure prompted an immediate outcry among press circles. To liberal-minded people,

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the paper editors had become heroes, while Jiang was cast as villain. For the first time since the demonstrations had stated, journalists took to the streets, joining the movement.\footnote{Robert L. Kuhn, \textit{The Man Who Changed China: the Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin}, p. 157.}

At the same time, Zhao Ziyang tried to change the Party’s attitude toward the demonstrations. Zhao blamed Jiang for the uproar, claiming that he had mishandled the volatile situation. ‘The Shanghai Party (Jiang) was hasty and careless in dealing with the \textit{Herald}; it painted itself into a corner and turned a simple issue into a mess.’ But Jiang remained calm as he told the Politburo, ‘We followed Party principles scrupulously in the \textit{Herald} matter. We focused on the big picture and drew a clear distinction between Party members and the general public. Qin Benli tried to deceive the Party by feigning compliance. He violated the most fundamental Party regulations and deserved his punishment. The problem was that the press blew everything out of proportion. The Party’s position on the student movement has been absolute clear: We will never allow protests to disrupt Shanghai’s production routine or social order . . . In particular, we will strive to win over the masses in the middle, to defuse confrontations, and to get things settled down as quickly as possible.’\footnote{Ibid.}

Apparently, Jiang’s handling of the paper, and opposing Zhao in the process, was positioning himself to advantage as it turned out his actions were considered decisive by Party elders at a time when being decisive was exactly what China’s leaders determined they needed. Thus, Jiang emerged looking both decisive in opposing ‘bourgeois liberalization’ and capable in handling the local situation; unlike Beijing, Shanghai was under control. This also suggested some steel in Jiang’s make-up that could have only impressed Deng and the ‘second generation.’\footnote{Andrew Nathan and Perry Link, eds., \textit{The Tiananmen Paper: The Chinese leadership's decision to Use Force against Their Own People – In Their Own words}, New York: Public Affairs, 2001, p. 261; also see Teiwes, F. ‘Politics at the “Core”: the Political Circumstances of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin’, \textit{China Information}, Vol. XV, No.1, 2001, p. 48.}

If Jiang’s broad profile fit the time, his greatest asset was Deng’s strong support. When a decision was made that Jiang would be the new leader, it was Deng who told the Party:

A collective leadership must have a core; without a core, no leadership can be strong enough. The core of the first generation of collective leadership was Chairman Mao. Because of that core, the Cultural Revolution did not bring the Communist Party down. Actually, I am the core of the second generation. Because of this core, even though we changed two of our leaders, the Party’s exercise of leadership was not affected but always remained stable. The third generation of collective leadership must have a core, too; all you comrades present here should be keenly aware of that necessity and act accordingly. You should make an effort to maintain the core – Comrade Jiang Zemin, as you have agreed. From the very the first day it starts to work, the new (Politburo) Standing Committee should make a point of establishing and maintaining this collective leadership and its core.\footnote{See People’s Daily, ‘Urgent Tasks of China’s Third Generation of Collective Leadership,’ June 6, 1989, People’s Daily website: \texttt{http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/d1010.html}.}
The term ‘core’ can perhaps best be understood as that combination of informal and formal authority that makes a leader the final arbiter of Party issues – the power and ability, as the Chinese put it, to ‘strike the table’ (pai ban) and end discussions. Professor Teiwes observed, ‘While paling in comparison to such terms as “great helmsman” and “paramount leader” that reflected the charisma and clout of Mao and Deng respectively, the term “core” was clearly designed to bolster the position of Jiang Zemin, newly installed against all expectations.’ And the notion of ‘core’ was firmly tied to that of the collective leadership of different generations in an effort to balance the need of an authoritative leader with the need to prohibit the type of destructive one-man rule that Mao had exercised in his ‘later years.’ While no one could take the analogy of Jiang to Mao and Deng seriously, ‘core’ status linked Jiang symbolically to the stability of the system, thus providing a basis for the amassing of additional institutional powers.479

In a sense, Jiang’s ascent is the result of CCP’s reform of political succession in the post-Mao era. Deng recognized from the start that lack of institutionalized succession is a dangerous flaw in the Chinese political system, and he gave considerable priority to remedying the problem. Jiang benefited from a broader effort by Deng to institutionalize politics after the tumultuous decades of ‘revolutionary’ politics under Mao. This effort, aimed at making China’s political system better able to guide a rapidly modernizing economy and society, has encompassed all of the processes and procedures of the party and government structures. On the whole, it has made China’s politics far more predictable and orderly. One major aspect of this effort has been to establish routine processes of leadership transition, both for retirement of aging veteran leaders and for the succession of younger ones.480

Deng engineered a massive turnover in leadership generation, which subsequently established important precedents for leadership succession. Overall, these changes fulfilled Deng’s goals, and they stand as an extraordinary departure from the broader failures of communist system in managing orderly leadership transition. They facilitated a wholesale turnover in leadership generations, replacing the generation of veteran revolutionaries with a generation of professionally educated leaders who had risen to power through the bureaucratic hierarchies of the PRC itself. Jiang was certainly one of this new generation of the CCP leadership who rose through the ranks on this new basis.481

Personally, Deng promised when he offered Jiang the job that ‘We all support you. We will help you whatever the difficulty; you do not have to worry.’ To help boost Jiang’s image and authority, Deng publicly suggested that the new leadership should be firmly supported and defended against any doubts in this regard. He bluntly admonished a group of Party officials and

481 Ibid.
army officers, ‘Don’t crab about the Jiang center, don’t be snobbish, don’t be unconvinced, and
don’t attempt to deny the Jiang center. The current leadership headed by Jiang will not be
altered for at least ten more years.’

Most significantly, shortly after Jiang was elected as General Secretary at the Fourth Plenary
Session of the 13th Party Congress on June 24, 1989, Deng formally retired in November that
year, giving his last post as CMC Chair to Jiang, while telling the military that tradition
notwithstanding, holding the top civilian post as CCP General Secretary was sufficient for
leadership over the army. This is one of several efforts on Deng’s part to bolster Jiang’s
authority.

Another effort was his promise not to interfere in the affairs of the ‘first front,’ a stance meant
to apply to other Party elders as well. Deng also tried his best to shore up Jiang’s leadership and
furthered the consolidation process. This was crucially the case later in 1992 in the lead-up to
the 14th Congress when Jiang faced the most serious challenge during his period as leader from
the Yang brothers, Yang Shangkun and his half brother, army political department head Yang
Baibing. They attempted to freeze Jiang out of military affairs on the grounds he was a novice
without battlefield experience. When Jiang appealed to Deng on the basis that he could not
function in his position as CMC Chair under such circumstances, Deng intervened decisively on
his behalf. The affair was settled by Yang Baibing’s dismissal from his army post, and Yang
Shangkun’s retirement with less influence that a long time supporter of Deng could have
anticipated.

Eventually, consolidating Jiang’s prestige as ‘core’ took a number of years. The key steps were
his reelection as General Secretary at the 14th Congress in 1992, taking over the PRC
Presidency in 1993, the effective passing of power from Deng about the end of 1994 due to
declaying health, the expansion of his authority into the economic realm in 1995, and again
being elected General Secretary at the 15th Congress following Deng’s passing in 1997, thus
ushered in completely Jiang’s era.

4.3 The Chief Engineer

It has often been said in China that Deng is the chief architect of reforms and Jiang, the chief
engineer of modernization drive, who leads the Party to turn its blueprints into concrete designs

482 Li Hongfeng, *Deng Xiaoping xinshiji zhongyao huodong jiyao* (Deng Xiaoping’s Important Activities in the New
483 Ibid.
484 Frederick Teiwes, ‘Politics at the “Core”: the Political Circumstances of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang
485 Ibid.
of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Literally, the term of ‘chief engineer’ reflects Jiang’s family background, his education and professional experiences.

Jiang was born in 1926 in the ancient city of Yangzhou on the banks of the Grand Canal in Jiangsu province, 150 miles northwest of Shanghai. With a history stretching back some 2500 years, Yangzhou was a center of culture and commerce. In his Travels, Marco Polo wrote that when he arrived in Yangzhou, he felt as if he had ventured into a wonderland, and there were those who believed that the city produced the most beautiful women in the country. Even discounting the legends, Yangzhou has a rich and storied past. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was as favorite destination of wealthy businessmen and high officials, many of whom had homes there. During the Qing dynasty a creative and intellectual movement known as the Yangzhou School flourished in the city. It was also an era of the Eight Eccentrics, a group of innovative Yangzhou artists who, using various forms of expression, from drawings and paintings to poems and essays, established subtle links between art and politics and railed against social evils and imperial control, becoming forerunners of modern Chinese culture. Jiang has always been proud of his origins and continues to speak with a noticeable Yangzhou accent.486

Jiang’s family lived in a spacious home in the city’s exclusive Dongquan district. Built in the classical Chinese design around an inner courtyard, the gray-brick house featured doorframes with intricate stone carvings and lined with books and works of art. It was a home befitting Jiang Zemin’s grandfather, a scholar and businessman. His father was also a scholar, and one of his uncles later became a professor of literature. Jiang started his school at the prestigious Xionghua Guan Primary School, and then Yangzhou Middle School. Its curriculum combined modern and traditional elements. The traditional program was constructed around four arts – literature, music, calligraphy, and Chinese chess – subjects Jiang would enjoy throughout his life.487

The Chinese classics formed the core of Jiang’s early education. In school Jiang memorized numerous classical Chinese poems, many of which he could recite by heart into old age. One favorite was ‘My Cottage Unroofed by an Autumn Gale’ by the Tang dynasty poet Du Fu. Jiang has always loved patriotic poems. On public occasions and in private meetings he would refer to the Ming dynasty poet Gu Yanwu, who said, ‘Every man has a share of responsibility for the fate of his country.’ He often recounted the story of the Song dynasty prime minister Wen Tianxiang, who refused to surrender to his country’s enemy and wrote the famous lines: ‘Since olden days there is no man but suffers death; let me but leave a loyal heart shining in the pages of history.’488

488 Ibid.
Jiang also grew to love Russian and Western literature. He read many works that had been translated into Chinese, including *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Les Miserables*. He learned the speeches of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, and to this day he can recite the *Gettysburg Address*. ‘I had three kinds of education,’ Jiang reflected. ‘The first was Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucius and Mencius; from elementary school on I began to recite the three-character scriptures. My second kind was bourgeois education, especially Western science. My third was Marxist education.’

In an interview with Robert Kuhn, Jiang’s biographer, Jiang Zehui, the president’s sister and a scholar herself, pointed out, ‘One cannot understand President Jiang without understanding three things about him: his family heritage, his cultural roots, and his revolutionary background.’ By tradition, Jiang’s lived together as a big family: ‘All of us – grandparents, their four sons and a daughter, with all their spouses and grandchildren – lived together. None had separate households.’ And for the ‘revolutionary background,’ she emphasized how Jiang’s uncle, Jiang Shangqing, a revolutionary martyr, had enormous influence on his up-bringing and political career.

In 1928, at the age of seventeen, Jiang Shangqing had secretly joined the Communist Youth. He studied literature at Shanghai Arts University and took up his pen as if it were a gun, writing widely to criticize the corrupt government and spread revolutionary fire. In 1937, the conflict with Japan escalated into full-scale war, and the course of Jiang Shangqing’s life changed forever. Like many young patriots, he joined the communist army. At first his duties were centered on journalism and education – areas of his experience. Then in 1938, he was operating undercover as the special Party secretary in northeast Anhui. Later, he became vice principle of the Anhui Anti-Japanese Military Academy; and he started a daily newspaper, which soon became the mouthpiece for anti-Japanese activities. Battlefield news was reported, and articles and speeches of Communist leaders were published, including Mao’s essay ‘Persistent War.’

He was also instrumental in helping to plant the seeds for an eventual Communist takeover. Unfortunately, this brilliant Communist leader was killed in 1939 in an ambush by rival forces, a martyr at the age of twenty-eight. At the large memorial service, Zhang Aiping, a Communist army commander at the time, who would later become China’s minister of defense, mourned the ‘loss of a great friend and comrade-in-arms’ who ‘sacrificed his life for our country.’ ‘Our revolutionary mansion lost a major pillar,’ he said. Buried locally, Jiang Shangqing’s body was moved to the Martyrs’ Graveyard in the early 1950s after the Communists came to power.

For the family, as he had left two young daughters but no son, his older brother, Jiang Zemin’s father, who had three sons and two daughters, decided to offer his youngest son, Zemin, to be adopted by traditional Chinese custom as a male heir for Jiang Shangqing’s family. The boy

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491 Ibid.
492 Ibid., p. 30.
was thirteen. In a practical sense, the adoption hardly changed Jiang Zemin’s life. Though the family had fled to the countryside because of the war, and now lived in poverty, they still maintained one household and the culture of the big family. In another sense, Jiang’s life changed significantly. With the formal ceremony that marked his adoption, he became the legal son of a Communist hero and martyr. Though he could not know it then, the death of his adoptive father would one day become an immortal story of the Communist revolution. Later on this would give Jiang a ‘revolutionary family background’ that strengthened his Party credentials and energized his political career, helping set in motion a chain of events that would one day lead him to CCP’s leadership. Jiang Shangqing soon became symbol of the family.⁴⁹³

‘My family was all revolutionaries,’ Jiang Zehui noted. ‘My father, uncles, and even Jiang Zejun, who was Jiang Zemin’s older brother, all went out to join the revolution, fighting both the Japanese invaders and the Chinese Nationalists.’ In April 1946, four months shy of his twentieth birthday, Jiang Zemin joined the Communist Party. He believed that the only hope for his country was a Communist revolution. To many Chinese, Communism has been less about economic systems than about liberty, unity, equality and social progress. For Jiang Zemin, Communism had even greater appeal.⁴⁹⁴

It should be noted that in Jiang’s early life, while influences of his cultural roots and family backgrounds are palpable, he had also developed a unique personality based on his passion for scientific knowledge, which eventually led him to become a technocrat in the new generation of the CCP leadership. Jiang was a promising student in his middle school, getting excellent scores in almost every subject, his favorite being science. In 1943, Jiang graduated from Yangzhou Middle School and prepared to leave his family. A place was waiting for him at Nanjing Central University, the most prestigious institute of higher learning in Jiangsu province. He was one of eight students admitted into Nanjing central University’s machinery and electronics department.⁴⁹⁵

Jiang took to university life with enthusiasm. The math, science, and engineering courses in the first and second years made for a rigorous course load. Jiang studied hard, often deciphering by himself what had been taught in class, then helping his classmates understand the material. In the fall of 1946, Jiang and his classmates were allowed to enter Shanghai Jiaotong University officially, matriculating as fourth-year engineering students when Nanjing Central University closed and combined with the Shanghai Jiaotong University which was said to have the best engineering education in China. Jiang continued to excel in his studies, and he specialized in power generation and transportation. It was a rigorous academic program. Not only did students have to take almost forty hours of coursework each week, they also had to complete numerous

⁴⁹³ Ibid.
⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 31.
⁴⁹⁵ Yang Zhongmei, Jiang Zemin Zhuan (Biography of Jiang Zemin), Taipei: Shibao wenhua, 1996, Chapter 1.
assignments and experiments every day. Each month there was an assessment test.\textsuperscript{496}

Jiang had also established good relations with his teachers. One of his professors at the Shanghai Jiaotong University was Zhu Wuhua, an electronics expert who also came from Yangzhou. Jiang would remember that even though professor Zhu was a well-established scholar, he still seized every possible moment to study, reading and writing. That Zhu had an unending love of learning and diligently sought new knowledge made him one of Jiang’s role models. Another of Jiang’s favorite professors was Gu Yuxiu, a remarkable scientist who had graduated from MIT with Ph.D. in electromechanical engineering and one of China’s most distinguished academicians. Throughout his life Jiang took the time to remember old friends and teachers. In 1997, when on a state visit to the United States, president Jiang managed to take the time from his busy schedules to see Professor Gu at his home in Philadelphia to honor his mentor. By then Gu Yuxiu was ninety-five years old. ‘We Chinese have a great tradition: No matter what your position or status, you should always respect your teachers. If all of us nationwide can maintain this wonderful tradition and appreciate knowledge and talents, our country will have a bright future.’ Jiang declared.\textsuperscript{497}

Jiang started his professional career as an engineer shortly after he graduated in 1947. He first worked for the Shanghai Haining Corporation, a Chinese-American joint venture in the food business, well-known for producing ice cream and fruit-flavored ices. Jiang was quick to learn and master new skills. He soon became the associate engineer, director of work assignment, and director of the power supply section. After the Communist takeover in 1949, his workplace was renamed Factory Number One of Shanghai Yimin Food Company under the Department of East China Industry. One day that year, a department minister and up-and-coming Party leader named Wang Daohan arrived at the factory for a formal inspection. The visit revealed a creaky but clean dairy plant, filled with the smell of fresh ice cream and something even better: a young man with potential.\textsuperscript{498}

As Wang recalled, ‘The Communists had just captured Shanghai from the Kuomintang. It was one month before the founding of the People’s Republic, and I was responsible for heavy industry under the Shanghai Military Control Commission. One of the corporations we controlled was Yimin, where Jiang was working in one of the food factories. When I met Jiang, he was only twenty-three.’ After some brief generalities about the factory, Jiang was the one who presented their new business strategy, including a detailed report about sourcing raw materials and ideas for product distribution. Then, he and several managers accompanied Wang to plant floor, where they observed Yimin’s production lines, then the best in China. ‘Jiang was enthusiastic and energetic, a hardworking professional.’ Wang concluded, ‘My impression was

\textsuperscript{496} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{497} Robert L. Kuhn, \textit{The Man Who Changed China: the Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin}, pp. 34-51; also see Yang Zhongmei, \textit{Jiang Zemin Zhuan} (Biography of Jiang Zemin), Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{498} Ibid.
that he had promised." Wang, just thirty-four, and Jiang took an instant liking to each other as they discussed new ways to distribute frozen treats to Shanghai’s war-exhausted citizens.499

Although Jiang was already on the fast track at Yimin – he was now director of technology and support and deputy general manager – the association with Wang would speed his promotion to general manager. Jiang and Wang soon discovered that they shared many things in common. Both were graduates of Shanghai Jiaotong University; both had been underground Communists; Jiang and Wang had similar skills and energy levels; and they shared a kinship to Jiang Shangqing, his foster father. Wang had been in charge of military logistics and had served under Zhang Aiping during the war years, as had Jiang Shangqing. The deepening friendship between Wang and Jiang developed into a lifelong bond that would change the lives of both men. As Wang advanced in the Party and the government, he took Jiang along with him. Wang would go on to become mayor of Shanghai; his protege, following his footsteps, would one day surpass him. The inspection of ice cream production in Shanghai would change the course of history in China.500

For Jiang Zemin and other ‘Third Generation’ leaders who would rise to prominence in the 1980s, factory work was the key to promotion. Many were technocrats who had come up through the system by managing state-owned enterprises such as factories, research institutes, or other grassroots units (jiceng danwei). This was in sharp contrast to earlier generations of leaders. In Deng Xiaoping’s ‘Second Generation,’ personal advancement had come through military hardships and battlefields, while Mao’s ‘First Generation’ had wrestled with founding ideology, a struggle that had resulted in a Chinese version of Marxism-Leninism and Communist revolution. Because of this, Jiang’s political career would develop later. Shortly after Wang’s inspection, he became Party branch secretary, his first position of formal leadership in the Communist Party. As Party chief of Yimin, Jiang effectively controlled the enterprise and would soon lead the business as well.501

Though in his mid-twenties, his leadership of the Yimin Food Factory would make him a member of Shanghai’s industrial elite, a platform that would serve him well for his rise in the Party. Meanwhile, the factory became a model of production, and soon another food plant, which produced the Meilin brand of canned food, was merged and brought under his supervision. In early 1953 Wang Daohan was promoted to vice-minister of the recently established First Ministry of Machine-Building Industry in Beijing. As the Ministry was required to set higher production levels, establish new enterprises, and organize research and development, Wang’s mandate was to centralize the best technologies for manufacturing heavy machinery and electrical equipment. Seeking to assemble the best talents for this national effort, he transferred Jiang to the ministry’s Number Two Design Institutes in Shanghai as head of a

499 Ibid.
501 Ibid.
new electrical power equipment department. This position enabled Jiang to develop his skills in a technically demanding environment. About a year later the State Council instructed the Machine-Building Ministry to draft its first five-year plan. Because of its significance, Wang recommended that Jiang be transferred to Beijing to participate in its drafting. The task gave Jiang firsthand perspective on making government policy.\(^{502}\)

The next milestone in Jiang’s life was his transference in 1955 to work for the First Automotive Works in Changchun in Jilin province, which would later develop into the country’s leading manufacturer of cars and trucks. For more than seven years the massive factory would be home to Jiang. It was there that he would further develop his managerial skills and come to understand something of strengths and weaknesses of centralized planning economy. The construction of the giant Changchun auto plant began in 1953. Designed by Soviet experts, it was to be modeled after what was then the Stalin Automobile Works near Moscow. Once again, as Wang Daohan explained, ‘We needed our best people with best training to build China’s first automotive factory.’ The Machine-Building Ministry made a plan to send more than seven hundred technicians to study in the Soviet Union. So in April 1955, Jiang and a dozen others took the trans-Siberian Railroad west on the long journey to Moscow.\(^{503}\)

Interestingly, just three decades ago, Deng and his comrades made their journey to Moscow to be trained as Communist revolutionaries. Now Jiang’s generation was going there to learn how to run socialist enterprises.

The Stalin Automobile Works was, in typical soviet fashion, a gigantic facility. Jiang’s assignment was to learn about energy resources and the management of power stations and networks. He spent most days in the central control room, sitting on a stool before a vast array of dials, gauges, panels, and instruments that monitored the plant’s massive power supplies. When he returned a year later from the Soviet Union, Jiang had already been named section chief, and later Party secretary, of the power supplies department with two laboratories and a hundred employees reporting to him. Around July 15, 1956, when the plant’s first vehicle rolled off the assembly line, Jiang was named deputy division chief, and later the general manager, a normal promotion. Jiang also learnt to speak Russian, and he got on well with his Russian supervisor; the two often sang Russian folk songs. He even managed to translate his Russian mentor’s book, *The Optimal Use of Electrical Power in Machine-Building Factories*, into Chinese. The publication of the latter was delayed until 1990 due to the deteriorating of the relations between China and the Soviet Union and the CR.\(^{504}\)

Jiang’s political career took off in the post-Mao era. After he left the Changchun Auto Works in 1962, Jiang was appointed as the first deputy director of the Shanghai Electrical Equipment

\(^{502}\) Ibid., pp. 59-65.


research Institute, a job engaging his managerial and technical skills. In 1965 Jiang was a member of a delegation that the ministry sent to attend a technical conference in Japan. Then, when the Wuhan Thermal Power Machinery Research Institute, a key project that included an atomic energy research center, had just been established in mid-1965, Jiang, with Wang Daohan’s recommendation, became both director of the new institute and deputy Party secretary. Holding both positions gave him a great deal of authority. He was at this point a high-ranking official.\textsuperscript{505}

Jiang managed to survive the CR relatively unscathed, as he returned to Beijing in 1970 and became vice director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs of the First Ministry of Machine-Building Industry, his first formal governmental position. The move marked a fundamental shift in his career, from industry to politics. What he has called ‘twenty-three years of frontline workplace experiences’ and his ‘grass roots period’ had concluded, and a new era had commenced. Soon Jiang was selected to lead a delegation to Romania. The purpose of the trip was to conduct a feasibility study for helping Romania to construct fifteen machinery factories. It was Jiang’s first official responsibility in foreign relations, and his superiors back in China, hungry for international success of any kind, judged it to be a diplomatic coup. Jiang later recalled that the experience ‘opened my eyes to see the world.’\textsuperscript{506}

Shortly after the ‘smashing’ of the Gang of Four in 1976, the Party Central Committee assigned a fourteen-person Working Group to restore order in Shanghai. Among its members was Jiang Zemin, now fifty-years old. His responsibility was to revive the city’s industry and transport, which had been controlled by the Gang of Four and their cronies, and he held authority to decide the fate of thousands. The Working Group was a great success, and it laid the groundwork for his later appointment as mayor of Shanghai.\textsuperscript{507}

Jiang’s next important task was to help design and construct the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which he would later call ‘pioneers,’ ‘windows,’ and ‘experimental fields,’ and ‘models’ for the rest of the country in the modernization drive. In the fall of 1980, the SEZs commissions were asked to organize an UN-sponsored world tour of import-and-export centers and free trade areas in twelve countries. Jiang was appointed head of the delegation, which was comprised of ten Chinese – Party secretaries from SEZs-designated cities and technical and legal specialists from various ministries – and a West German guide. The forty-day trip, which took the delegation to Southeast Asia, North America, and Europe, concluded in Geneva, where Jiang briefed UN officials.\textsuperscript{508}

Following the delegation’s return, Jiang and his team prepared a ground-breaking report. Given the still-fresh nightmare of the CR, the recommendations were daring. Included were policies allowing local governments to authorize tax breaks and land leases and to secure their own foreign funds. In addition, the report suggested that foreign-funded ventures should be

\textsuperscript{505} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{506} Ibid., pp. 82-97.
\textsuperscript{507} Bruce Gilley, \textit{Tiger on the Brink: Jiang Zemin and China’s New Elite}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{508} Ibid.
permitted to hire and fire workers they saw fit. Jiang later made his case before the National People’s Congress and succeeded in securing conditional consent to go forward. The decision was a historic breakthrough – for Jiang personally as well as for China. ‘All projects in the SEZs,’ he insisted, ‘should be started from a long-term perspective and be consistent with international standards.’ No longer just a technocrat, Jiang had leaped to the cutting edge of policymaking: he had become an early implementer of Deng’s reform, and more significantly, Jiang was now a champion of what would become known as ‘Deng Xiaoping Theory.’ The role would serve him well.509

Like Deng, he is visionary as well as pragmatic, but when it came to R&D and the technological aspect of ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ Jiang was much better informed, experienced and talented than his predecessors. In May 1982, after Premier Zhao interviewed him privately, the Party appointed Jiang to be first vice minister and Party secretary of the Ministry of Electronics Industry. It was a major promotion. Not long after he became the Minister.510

Consumerism was beginning to emerge, and the electronics industry had to scramble to meet new demands. It was said that in Mao’s era, young people getting married in urban areas wished for a bicycle, a watch, an electric fan, and a radio. By Deng’s time, it was a colour television, a table recorder, a washing machine, and a refrigerator. Jiang knew that people would want more as their living standards improving. To meet the challenge, Jiang took a self-study crash course in electronics, reading books and papers, attending technical briefings, conversing with experts. Representing the electronics ministry, he met with various technology companies, including Hewlett-Packard, with which he signed one of China’s first joint ventures. At the Ministry, Jiang was in charge of some fourteen hundred enterprises operating nearly four thousand factories, many of which were military. Under his supervision were 75,000 ministry personnel and nearly three million factory workers. His mandate was bring China current in computer technology and consumer electronics. It was a colossal task.511

‘Technically,’ Jiang said, ‘we are fifteen years behind in industrial production and eight to ten years lagging in science and technology.’ But Jiang was confident, and he knew how to catch up. In late 1983, his grand plan for China’s electronics industry – building an industrial base and increasing 1980 output eightfold by year 2000 – was approved by the State Council. Implementing the plan, Jiang made computer and integrated circuits a priority, stressing their military applications. The electronics industry produced China’s missiles and satellites, a responsibility that Jiang happily accepted. In April 1984 a Long March III rocket successfully launched a Dongfanghong II – ‘The East is Red’ – telecommunications satellite, making China the fifth country to reach geostationary orbit. Jiang, who was present at the launch site, was

510 Ibid.; also see Yang Zhongmei, Jiang Zemin Zhuan (Biography of Jiang Zemin), Chapter 4.
511 Ibid.
congratulated by the Politburo and the State Council.\textsuperscript{512}

With this new record, Jiang moved on to be promoted as mayor of Shanghai in 1985 when his mentor Wang Daohan retired from the position. In December 1984, Premier Zhao led a delegation to Shanghai for the purpose of accelerating its development, and Jiang was the only minister in the group. Zhao was taken by ideas of futurist Alvin Toffler and his ‘Third Wave’ of social development centered on computers, information, and high tech, which had broadened the vision of Chinese reformers. If Shanghai were to lead China’s Third Wave, Jiang seemed a perfect fit to be its next mayor.

As the largest city in China, Shanghai had a glorious history. In the early twentieth century it was the most prosperous metropolis in Asia, a vibrant international community and the center of finance and trade. Shanghai surpassed such upstarts as Tokyo and Hong Kong and was known as the Pearl of the Orient and the Paris of China. By the 1980s, however, Shanghai had fallen on hard times. When Jiang took the job, everywhere he saw nothing but Shanghai’s faded glory. Surrounded by the city’s shabby buildings and defective infrastructure, Jiang was appalled – and determined to build anew. From the beginning the new mayor told the media that the city’s development would be founded on three pillars: infrastructure, foreign capital and exports, and technology and training. His most far-ranging project, however, was laying the groundwork for the future Pudong New Area, an experiment in massive regional development that would have national significance.\textsuperscript{513}

Less than a year into his term, Jiang unveiled Shanghai’s Comprehensive Plan, the result of years of design and debate. The plan focused on three geographical areas: the central urban area, which included the vast Pudong region; seven satellite cities and towns, which formed the shape of a hand; and a number of farms and villages. The central city would be linked with outlying areas by high-speed trains and highways, while ring roads would connect the satellite cities. As mayor, Jiang’s management style was rooted in the systematic thinking of an engineer. First he would read or hear report, then he would listen to expert opinion, then he would conduct on-site research, and finally he would make sure to get things done according the best design and plan. His office had more than three thousand books. Lunch was often noodle soup at the municipal canteen, earning him the nickname ‘Noodle Mayor.’ He was never offended. He worked diligently, and was quick to learn. ‘In the next five years,’ Jiang declared, ‘Shanghai will experience the greatest changes and fastest development in its history.’\textsuperscript{514}

As Shanghai’s rapid development and tremendous changes have been well documented, suffice it to say the success of Jiang and his team’s plan, design, and drive to rebuild the city demonstrated that indeed they were truly ‘engineers’, capable of turning Deng’s theory of

\textsuperscript{512} Ibid., p. 109; also see Bruce Gilley, \textit{Tiger on the Brink: Jiang Zemin and China’s New Elite}, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{513} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{514} Robert L. Kuhn, \textit{The Man Who Changed China: the Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin}, pp. 113-8; also see Yang Zhongmei, \textit{Jiang Zemin Zhuan} (Biography of Jiang Zemin), Chapter 5.
4.4 Challenges Facing Ahead

When Jiang emerged in the wake of the Tainanmen crisis of 1989 as the CCP’s new leader, he first acted more cautiously, following the Party’s line which was actually pushed by conservatives headed by Premier Li Peng, backed by Chen Yun. Among Party conservatives at the time there was a deep sense of ‘we told you so.’ They believed Tiananmen was the inevitable outcome of a trend of bourgeois liberalization that extended back to the Democracy Wall movement of 1978, which had never been effectively opposed. This trend went against the Marxist political line set by the Third Plenum of the 1978, and Tiananmen was the ‘bitter fruit’ of violating this Party line. So they sought to roll back political and economic reforms.516

In one of his early policy statements reflecting a consensus based on this line, General Secretary Jiang declared, ‘the ideological sphere is a major arena of struggle between people trying to effect peaceful evolution in China and people against it. Bourgeois liberalization is the antithesis of the four cardinal principles and the struggle between these two is, in essence, a political struggle over whether or not the leadership of the Communist Party is to be held and whether or not we are to adhere to the socialist road. By and large, this struggle is usually manifest in ideological and theoretical struggle. If socialist ideology does not prevail on the ideological front and in the media, bourgeois ideology will. Party committee at all levels should attach great importance to ideological work.’517

Jiang thus strongly supported the campaign against ‘peaceful evolution’ and anti bourgeois liberalization. When talking about economic reforms, Jiang stated that the ‘greatest lesson’ to be derived from the China’s economic past was that the country must not ‘depart from its national strength, be anxious for success, or have great ups and downs.’ These were all well-known theses of Chen Yun, so Jiang’s endorsement of conservative thinking was apparent.518

Jiang’s leadership had also been influenced, and challenged, by various schools of thought on Party’s doctrine and policies. The most influential is called neo-conservatism (xin baoshou zhuyi) which emphasizes state capacity, order, tight social control, nationalism, and economic development above all else while intending to restore moral values based on the conservative elements of Confucianism. In 1992, a group of politically ambitious intellectuals, backed by taizidang (‘princelings’, that is the grown-up children of CCP elders), published a widely circulated article, ‘Realistic Response and Strategic Choices for China after the Disintegration

of the Soviet Union’, which soon became a banner of neo-conservatism. This article argued that Marxism-Leninism was no longer effective in mobilizing loyalty and legitimating the state. It was necessary to develop a new ideological vision that drew selectively from China’s traditional culture. The CCP should base itself firmly on Chinese nationalism. It advocated yanzheng (strict polity) in contrast to jiaomin zhengce (spoiling-citizens polity).519

One of the most controversial was the book Looking at China through a Third Eye (Di sanzhi yanjing kan zhongguo), published in 1994, which reflected the neo-conservative view that the economic reforms not only undermined the Party’s authority but also unleashed a host of destabilizing forces - corruption, crime, economic polarization, demoralization, and disruption caused by the migration of peasants from the countryside into the cities. Fearing a social explosion, the book calls for restoration of a strong centralized government and a unified ideology to hold the country together. Its author flatly denied liberal democracy as a viable alternative and made caustic comments on radical democratic views. The book, however, was criticized as contemptuous to peasants, hostile to intellectuals, and negative toward reforms.520

Chen Yuan, son of Party elder Chen Yun, has been regarded as one of the most important exponents of neo-conservatism ideas in China. Chen organized in late 1980s the Beijing Young Economists Association as a think-tank to study economic theory and formulate Beijing development strategy. In December 1990, he presented a paper entitled ‘China’s Deep-Seated Economic Problems and Choices – Several Issues Regarding China’s Development Situation and the Operating Mechanism (Outline),’ which decried many of the decentralizing consequences of reform. He objected to decentralization both on the grounds that it led to local protectionism and fragmentation of the national market, and, more seriously, on the grounds that the erosion of central resources was resulting in a ‘week and powerless central government’ surrounded by numerous ‘feudal lords.’521

Although Chen wanted to re-centralize authority and use the power of state to readjust China’s industrial structure, he was also very clear that he wanted to develop the role of market (by breaking down local protectionism and ministerial interference in enterprises) even as he would give a greater role to the state. Market forces along will never bring about such an economic system; the government should have a clear industrial policy and should direct scarce resources to strategic industries. He firmly rejected the ideas of deficit financing and expansionary monetary policy that were then closely associated with Keynes, but he praised Keynes for ‘pointing out in clear-cut terms that the function of macroeconomic quantitative regulation and control can only be performed by the government, not the market mechanism.’ He praised Milton Friedman for his emphasis on monetary control but rejected his laissez-faire economic

philosophy. By selecting what was useful and rejecting the rest, Chen argued that ‘Western economics can be turned to serve our socialist revolution.’ It is difficult to imagine Chen Yuan’s father citing the works of Keynes or Friedman, but not difficult to imagine the elder Chen agreeing that the state is an ‘indispensable actor’ and not simply a ‘passive referee.’

Neo-conservatism has been closely associated with the other school of thought called neo-authoritarianism (xin weiquan zhuyi), which, at the First National Symposium on Modernization Theories held in Beijing in 1988, was defined as an ‘enlightened autocracy’ to enforce economic development. New authoritarianism argued that the economic miracle of the ‘little dragons’ in East Asia was created because they all shared Confucian collectivism, family loyalty and frugality as well as a patriarchal power structure. ‘Neo-authoritarianism’, first, styled itself as political realism. Aware that China’s stability was an essential condition for economic reforms and foreign investment, the supporters of neo-authoritarianism hoped to introduce economic liberalization in a controlled manner and carry out reforms step-by-step in order to avoid any possible political chaos that could jeopardize the reform programs.

Second, the rule of an ‘enlightened authority’ was rationalized as an inevitable transitional stage for China. They argued that economic liberalization in a country of China’s size, tradition and resources should be achieved through a period of enlightened and centralized political power. The third argument was a separation of economics and politics, and the belief that market-oriented economic reform should precede political freedom and democratization. This school of thought was, however, opposed by both radical reformers and ideological conservatives. The former argued that the economic modernization must be accompanied by political modernization characterized by the rule of law, rather than the rule of man.

Many liberal scholars also argued strongly against neo-authoritarianism by questioning the validity of the allegedly causal relationship between Confucianism authoritarianism and economic success. After the Tiananmen Incident, neo-authoritarianism became a nationalistic response to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Western sanctions against China, and was known as neo-nationalism and neo-conservatism, dominating both intellectual and political circles.

Although the public discussion on new authoritarianism is generally identified with a number of intellectuals close to Zhao Ziyang, the early discussions were held in Shanghai, and Wang Huning, a distinguished scholar of Fudan University, has been regarded as the most prominent figure arguing for this school of the thought, who would later become General Secretary Jiang’s senior advisor.

522 Joseph Fewsmith, China since Tiananmen, pp. 93-5.
523 Ibid.
Another group of intellectuals of the younger generation, the New Left, took a different approach to dealing with the increasing economic inequalities, social polarization, rampant corruption, and what the New Left called ‘loss of humanistic spirit’ that accompanied China’s economic reforms and opening up. Unlike the neoconservatives and neo-nationalists, most of the New Left (this label was given to them by others to distinguish them from the old left – the neo-Maoists) had been educated or had spent time in the West. And unlike neo-Maoists, who used orthodox Marxism-Leninism to criticize the reforms, the New Left used the latest Western critique of capitalism and imperialism – neo-Marxism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism – to criticize China’s reforms and foreign policy. New Left discourse began in the mid-1990s and was published primarily in the journals Reading and Frontier (Tianya). Its leading figures include the literary scholar Wang Hui, who had received his PhD from the Institute of Chinese Literature of CASS, but like other members of the New Left, he had also spent much time abroad. The other influential exponent is Cui Zhiyuan, a political scientist who was educated at the University of Chicago and then taught at MIT before going to Qinghua University. Cui draws heavily no analytic Marxism (especially the work of John Roemer), neo-evolutionary biology, and critical legal studies (particularly Robert Unger) to derive what are basically social democratic solutions to China’s problems.527

Oddly enough, the most serious and direct challenge to Jiang’s leadership came from no other than Deng Xiaoping during his well-publicized Nanxun in early 1992. To be sure, Deng had been firm in his support of Jiang’s position. But, apparently, Deng was not happy with those conservative approaches the ‘front line’ leaders took toward reform and opening-up. In 1989-1990, they engineered a wrenching reversal of the trend of economic reform through a combination of austerity (tightening up on wages and prices as well as on investment and credit funds for business expansion), recentralization (all investment decision reverted back to the provincial or central level), and subsidies to bail out state enterprises. Economic growth slowed to 4 percent in both years. Deng knew that if China’s economic reforms were rolled back, the Party would lose the people’s support and ‘could be overthrown at any time’ and he ventured the view that it would certainly not have survived the trauma of Tiananmen, just as he said during the tour that, without the ten years of reform and opening-up, the CCP would not have survived an upheaval such as the Party had faced in spring 1989. This judgment was Deng’s response to his opponents’ contention that reform had led to the Tiananmen Incident and would lead the downfall of the CCP, just as it had to that of the CPSU and the various communist parties in Eastern Europe.528

Deng went beyond stating the general need for economic reform by implicitly criticizing those who sought to slow down the pace of change. He claimed that economic reform should not

527 Joseph Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, pp. 128-30.
‘proceed slowly like a woman with bond feet’ but should ‘blaze new trails boldly’. Most importantly, Deng announced a major change in the CCP’s political line. Ever since the events of 1989, the Chinese public had been told the greatest threat to socialism in China came from ‘bourgeois liberals’, termed ‘rightists’. As far as the Party veterans were concerned, these people were responsible for the unrest that had broken out in 1989. But now Deng pointed out that the main danger to the Party lay on the ‘left.’ ‘The right can bury socialism; the left can also bury socialism.’ He warned.529

Moreover, Deng declared that ‘saying that reform and opening-up is introducing and developing capitalism and believing that the main danger of peaceful evolution comes from the economic arena are “leftists”.’ Deng also warned that anyone who opposed reform should ‘step down’ – a threat that would be carried out against several conservative leaders the following fall and was clearly intended to shake up the cautious Jiang Zemin as well. Throwing down the gauntlet, Deng declared: ‘Whoever changes the line, orientation, and policies of the (1978) Third Plenum will be stopped by the common people (lao baixing) and will be struck down.’530

Jiang was shocked when he first heard of Deng’s remarks. Although long recognizing the need to reform, Jiang was rather an orthodox Party leader and believed in socialism’s core tenets of state ownership and central planning; he generally agreed with his conservative colleagues that reforms should be measured and unhurried. But Jiang was intelligent, and smart enough to appreciate what Deng was driving for. So he adapted himself quickly to the new situation as he jumped on Deng’s bandwagon, advocating for the new steps of reform and opening-up policy. Jiang also realized that Deng’s Nanxun could be seen as a test of his leadership and he was not about to fail it.531

To begin, the Party Central Committee, under Jiang’s aegis, prepared a paper that summarized Deng’s main ideas. On February 28 ‘The Notice about Passing On and Studying Comrade Deng’s Important Talks’ was circulated to Party branches throughout the country. Then in March, Jiang presided a Politburo meeting, during which Deng’s speeches were studied carefully, and the Politburo agreed to endorse his words and ideas. From then on, Deng’s Nanxun commentaries would be considered the ‘great guidelines’ of reform and development in China, the essence of socialist modernization, and the theme of the forthcoming Fourteenth Party Congress. The whole Party and country, Jiang now asserted, should study seriously Deng’s important statements on building socialism with Chinese characteristics. And reform was given new momentum in late May with the circulation of Document No. 4, ‘The CCP Central Committee’s Opinions on Expediting Reform, Opening Wider to the Outside World, and Working to Raise the Economy to a New Level in a Better and Quicker Way.’ The document marked a major new stage in China’s policy of opening to the outside by declaring that five

530 Ibid.
major inland cities along the Yangtze and nine border trade cities would be opened and that the thirty capitals of China’s provinces and municipalities would enjoy the same preferential treatments and policies as the SEZs.532

As discussed in Chapter 3, it was at the 14th Party Congress in 1992 when Deng Xiaoping Theory had been first time officially adopted as the CCP’s new doctrine. And it was Jiang, as General Secretary, who gave the authoritative definition and interpretation of Deng’s theory in his political report. Here again, Jiang had played a vital role of the chief engineer to design and implement his chief architect’s ideas. It was a huge challenge, but somehow Jiang managed pretty well, For example, the key idea came out of Deng’s Nanxun was so called ‘socialist market economy’, which was the first time that Deng adopted the concept as he rather discursively redefined the notion of socialism. It was Jiang who seized on the idea and spelled it out in a more theoretical way in his speech in June at the Central Party School, a testing ground for Party’s new policies. After further discussions among Party’s senior cadres and theorists, Jiang went back to consult the Party elders, not only with Deng, but Chen Yun as well.533

Jiang realized early on that the change of the current phrase ‘socialist commodity economy’ to reformist ‘socialist market economy’ would have a profound impact. In a culture attuned to even slight shifts in wording, the new term was an ideological bombshell. Descriptions of things political were always sensitive and conversions had to be made with caution. After decades of anti-Rightist, capitalist-bashing propaganda, too abrupt a change in language could be disruptive. So Jiang sought to find a consensus which could at least bring on support from conservatives. Only based on such thoughtful discussions and consultations, Jiang delivered a more considered notion of socialist market economy, which, basically, gives a greater role to market forces than that offered by any other ruling communist party to date. The state will retain the capacity to make ‘macro-level adjustments and control’ but market forces are to be unleashed to develop economy and eradicate poverty, while the laws of supply and demand are to ensure the rational allocation of commodities throughout the economy.534

In the context of recognizing the primacy of market force, Jiang seemed more positively to confirm the role of the non-state sector, as his report provides two important ideas on the subject: first, diversified economic components can on a voluntary basis practice diversified forms of joint management, which means that non-state sector can cooperate with state sector or with foreign partners; and second, state enterprise, as well as collective and other enterprises will all enter the marketplace and the state enterprises will play their dominant role through fair competition, which means that the state sector (at least in theory) does not have privileges over

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532 Ibid., pp. 447-8.
the non-state sector in the marketplace.\textsuperscript{535} This actually openly acknowledges the significant role played by non-state sector in the Chinese economy after 14 years of economic reforms. By 1992, the non-state sector already produced 47% of China’s total industrial output. The non-state sector also predominated over Chinese agriculture and commerce. For the most important feature of socialism, the ‘public ownership’ has been also defined in a far more elastic way than ever before. Jiang explained in the report that since reforms China’s ownership system have already been diversified, and that public ownership not only includes the SOEs but also the rising collectives and ‘township and village enterprises’ (TVEs) that are responsive to market signals and have been largely responsible for the relative success of China’s economic reforms.\textsuperscript{536}

However, Jiang’s political report was careful not to commit the Party to too many precise objectives, preferring to set overall guidelines. This left open the possibility for plenty of constructive argument over specific implementation of the guidelines. Once again, Jiang’s report stressed the Party’s frequent call to separate clearly the functions of government administration and enterprise management and to ensure that government organs operate within the law. More significantly, the term ‘socialist market economy’ was officially replaced with ‘planned socialist commodity economy.’ The removal of ‘planned’ in the formulation eliminated the potential for endless arguments about the balance between plan and market, placing the emphasis clearly on marketization of the economy. Moreover, Jiang gave a much more expansive definition of the ‘open door’ claiming that its structure should be ‘multi-tiered, multi-channel and all encompassing’ (duo cengci, duo qudao, quan fangwei). Apart from sanctioning the opening up of areas in the hinterland and stressing the Pudong development in Shanghai, he called for more channels to be opened for the use of foreign capital.\textsuperscript{537}

As it turned out, the 14th Congress was an important milestone in CCP’s history. From the beginning of Deng’s reforms in 1978 to his Nanxun in 1992, China continued to debate political ideology, crossing the river of reform, in Deng’s metaphor, ‘stone by stone.’ Finally, Deng’s embryonic idea of ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ has now developed in a rather comprehensive doctrine, which have been officially adopted by the Party. Thus the debate was over, the path was clear, and the speed was swift as the Party leading China into next phase of reform and opening-up under the banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory.\textsuperscript{538}

In the several years after Deng’s Nanxun, China achieved some of the fastest growth the world has known, on a scale never seen before, as the table 4.3 shows.\textsuperscript{539}

\textsuperscript{537} Ibid.
Table 4.1 China’s Economic Growth in the Wake of Deng’s Nanxun

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<tr>
<td>GDP growth (%)</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Price Index (%)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
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For Jiang Zemin, personally, the Congress has been his turning point as he would say later. It was the first Congress to be held since the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 that led to his emergence as Party’s new leader; and also the first since the collapse of communist rule in East Europe and the Soviet Union. Facing his biggest test of leadership, Jiang presided over the Congress with unexpected self-confidence and sureness of footing, and dominated the quinquennial Party convention from start to finish. As the result, he was re-elected as General Secretary, becoming officially the core of the Third Generation of leaders.

Near the end of the Congress, it became clear that as far as Deng was concerned, Jiang was his successor. The now eighty-eight-year-old Deng came to the Great Hall of the People to greet the newly elected senior leaders amid the sea of delegates, but singled out Jiang in a highly publicized show of support. For twenty minutes Deng walked with Jiang, side by side as if equals, while everyone else, including Li Peng, trailed a few steps behind. It was the ultimate blessing by China’s Paramount Leader, and it was broadcast nationally on China Central Television for the entire country to witness. ‘The Congress was well-organized,’ Deng said, grasping his successor’s hands, ‘I hope all will continue their efforts.’ Thus Jiang accepted Deng’s mantle at the historical juncture of deepening reform and opening up.540

4. 5 ‘The Important Thought’ of the Three Represents

After 14th Congress, Jiang started positioning himself as the prime interpreter of the Party’s doctrine in general and Deng’s Theory in particular. On the practical side, he took leadership of reforming the economy. On the theoretical side, he arranged a series of seminars promulgating CCP’s new ideology. On military matters, he told a conclave of army strategists that Deng’s military thinking should be considered the pillar of the PLA. During the spring of 1993 Jiang organized an elite group of about thirty economists, social scientists, and political theorists. Out of these intensive studies came fifteen advanced papers, which he hoped would lay a new foundation for reform. It was expected in China that its top political leader should also be its

leading political theoretician. Mao had been both, as had Deng. It was time for Jiang to develop his thought for Party’s doctrine; also he realized that the CCP must search for a ‘new way a thinking’ as he led China into the new century.\textsuperscript{541}

Thus, even before Deng’s death in 1997, Jiang began to advance his own thoughts, not only with the hope of solving China’s moral problems but also as a way of ideologically justifying or legitimatizing for new policies of further reform and opening-up. Jiang’s push for ‘spiritual civilization’ is perhaps one of the most important aspects of his ‘new ideological campaign’ against moral and ethical deterioration and social disorder that has swept China under economic reform, as the Party’s document pointedly identified the existing problems in social, ethical, and cultural life: ‘The standard of moral conduct has been lowered in some spheres, and the practice of worshiping money, seeking pleasure and individualism has grown; feudal superstitions and such social vices as pornography, gambling and drug abuse have resurfaced; production of shoddy and fake goods and fraud have become a social scourge . . . the phenomenon of corruption has been spreading in some places, seriously damaging the work style of the Party and the government; and a number of people have a weak percept of the state, and waver and doubt the future of socialism.’\textsuperscript{542}

To solve these problems, Jiang’s ‘spiritual civilization’ calls for education in patriotism, collectivism, and socialism and vigorous advancement of ‘social morality, professional ethics and family values’ to foster ‘a hard-working and pioneering spirit of the whole nation.’\textsuperscript{543}

Jiang Zemin’s great contribution to the Party’s official ideology is his theory of the Three Represents which he first expressed during an inspection tour of Guangdong province in February 2000. He noted at the time that CCP should always represent ‘the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.’ What this boiled down to was a reaffirmation of Deng’s modernization program and economic reforms.\textsuperscript{544}

But there was also an important element of innovation that was made clear only through further explication and other formulations of the Three Represents and how it was actually put into practice. As Jiang told his speechwriters that ‘Marxism has so many theories out there, Marxism, Leninism, dialectical materialism, historical materialism – we need something applicable to the realities of contemporary China that makes sense and is easy to remember.’ In other words, Jiang had to modernize the Party’s doctrine, and his thought of Three Represents was the mechanism by which he would do it. For those local cadres who first heard of his remarks, their immediate response was pretty exciting. ‘President Jiang’s Three Represents

\textsuperscript{541}Robert L. Kuhn, \textit{The Man Who Changed China: the Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin}, p. 236.

\textsuperscript{542}‘Resolutions in the CCP Central Committee Regarding Important Questions on Promoting Socialist Ethical and Cultural Progress,’ \textit{Beijing Review}, November 4-10, 1996, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{543}Ibid.

speech in 2000 was just like Deng Xiaoping’s Nanxun speeches in 1992.545

At a broader ideological level, Jiang’s Three Represents implied that the CCP was moving to cast itself as the representative, not just of working classes, but also of ‘the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.’ Some scholars see this as reflecting an even more profound transformation of the CCP’s self-image role from being a ‘revolutionary party’ committed and empowered to lead the nation toward socialism and communism to that of a ‘governing party,’ which implies a less ideological claim about its purpose and possibly a greater sense of accountability to all citizens of the PRC.546

As the Party’s new guideline, Jiang’s Three Represents are rather complex but quite useful. The First Represent, ‘advanced productive forces’, extends the Marxist phrase ‘productive forces’ in a practically ideological way, and works to elevate the status of and bring into the Party the most dynamic strata of society - managers, entrepreneurs and business owners. Jiang declared that reform had created ‘new social strata’, and that most people in the private sector are engaged in ‘honest labor and work’, obey the law, and contribute to society. These people, he asserted, are the driving force behind China’s ‘advanced productive forces’, working for building socialism with Chinese characteristics.547

He also redefined the historically loaded term ‘capitalist’ by inventing a new label as ‘private business owners’, and they are now to be known as the ‘new social strata’. In order to maintain the momentum of reform, he argued, these new social strata should not be banned from Party membership. In doing so, Jiang echoed Deng Xiaoping’s reclassification (at the 1978 National Science Conference) of intellectuals as members of the working class. Thus, entrepreneurs and managers are grouped together with all types of professional employees to form a kind of white-collar elite without a particular ‘capitalist’ class background. Connotations of the ‘exploiting’, ‘capitalist’ class that used to be almost automatically associated with private business people in Marxist discourse are totally avoided. Based on this theoretical argument, the CCP’s ruling constituency is ideologically reconstructed to include the representation of private entrepreneurs and managers without giving up its original role as ‘vanguard of the working class’.548

The Second Represent, ‘advanced culture’, combines morality, civil behavior, progressive social attitude, shared beliefs. It is the Party’s complementary goal for rejuvenating China, sought to restore the values and virtues of Chinese civilization, integrating them with Marxism. It signified the building of ‘spiritual civilization’ together with ‘material civilization’. To bring forth an advanced socialist culture, the party must not dogmatically cling to the Marxist classics, but rather develop Marxist theory with the times and enrich it with modern elements of patriotism, nationalism, science, social morals, community-mindedness, and a law-abiding

545 Ibid.
546 Joseph Smith, ‘Studying the Three Represents,’ China Leadership Monitor 8 (Fall 2003), pp. 2-4; also see Sun Daiyao, Yushi jujin de kexue shehui zhuyi (The Scientific Socialism Keeping up with the Times), pp. 575-587.
547 Li Shuxin, Zhongguo gongchandang zexue sixiangshi (The History of the CCP’s Philosophical Ideology), pp. 579-81.
548 Ibid.
mentality. Also, it seemed to signal greater openness to modern Western culture. Advance culture also signals a pride-filled return to the glories of thousands of years of Chinese civilization – explicitly before the foreigners came, and implicitly before Communism took over. Although the Party is praised for liberating the country, it is criticized for eroding, and at times decimating, traditional Chinese culture. The teachings of Confucius, for example, were for decades derogated as ‘feudal.’ With his strong cultural roots, Jiang sought to restore the values and virtues of Chinese civilization, integrating them with Marxism. In the next section we shall discuss further about how the Party represents cultural nationalism. 549

The Third Represent, ‘the fundamental interests of the majority of people,’ is a reaffirmation of the Party’s role in serving the masses. At first glance, it simply appears to iterate the Maoist concept of the ‘mass line’, but in reality, it implies a substantial redefinition of the ‘common interest’ represented by the Party. In former revolutionary visions, the CCP had defined itself as the ‘vanguard of the working class’ in the sense of the majority of (proletarian) workers and peasants. In the early reform period, the very category of the ‘working class’ was expanded to include intellectuals – a far-reaching signal to rehabilitate a group of people which had been purged since the late 1950s and particularly during the CR due to its ‘bourgeois-liberal’ class background. It now reaches out to all Chinese society. More significantly, it superseded key elements of the Party’s founding theories - class struggle, the vanguard of the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat - with a concept of an all-encompassing party that brought in advanced or elite members from all sectors of society. 550

Ideologically, the Three Represents created an important breakthrough since Jiang revised classic Marxist doctrine - the labor theory of value, reinterpreting its notion of ‘exploitation and surplus value’. In short, ‘labor’ should be defined as a ‘factor of production,’ just as capital, technology and managerial expertise are. This equation of labor and other factors of production hardly strike the Western ear as strange, and that is just the point: Jiang has revised classic Marxist doctrine to the point where it seems familiar to those raised on free-market economics. Thus, the CCP has totally changed its doctrine on labor and the development of a middle class in China. 551

Moreover, within the rhetorical framework of the Three Representations, the emphasis is clearly on the development of ‘productive forces’. Attention is thereby shifted away from the corresponding notion of the ‘relations of production’ which, according to Marxism, create the contradictions between classes and determine whether a special system is either Capitalist (exploitative) or Socialist (non-exploitative). By actively supporting the development of the

most ‘advanced’ production forces, class struggle becomes irrelevant, at least played down. The conceptual shift away from Marxist class theory then allows the coexistence of different ‘social strata’ to be framed, including the ‘new social strata’ – among them entrepreneurs and managers – in a positive light. Further, according to the logic, the representation of the ‘new social strata’ as the ‘most advanced productive forces’ becomes the foremost task of the Party and the precondition to live up to the third proposition of the Three Representations, that is, the representation of ‘the fundamental interests of the greatest majority of the people.’

But Jiang’s ideas of the Three Represents contracted strong criticism, as mentioned above, from the Party conservatives, who were particularly unhappy with such an open embrace of private entrepreneurs by the Party. Some Party theorists also argued that the Three Represents had brought about an ‘erroneous situation’, which resulted from confusing production relations with essential factors of production and extrapolating an erroneous understanding that the ‘current capitalists are labourers’. Instead of allowing the ‘nascent class of capitalists’ into the party, the CCP had to control and lead this emergent class in order to manage economic development and prevent social polarization. If the Party allows capitalists in, it will create serious conceptual chaos within the Party, and destroy the unified foundation of political thought of the Party that is now united, and break through the baseline of what the Party is able to accommodate in terms of its advanced class nature. And they believed that the Three Represents, with their new definition of ‘common interests’ as advocated by Jiang, had crossed the boundaries of ‘proper’ ideological discourse thus endangering the political legitimacy of CCP rule.

Obviously, proponents and opponents of the new concept are not only clinging to different ideological doctrines but, as a consequence, they are also speaking in different ‘languages’ which have made theoretical debates inside the Party more complicated. As the leading neo-Maoist Deng Liqun alleged, Jiang’s Three Represents is ‘more a slogan for a social democratic party than a communist party.’ While bitter controversies seem to revolve around the specific criteria for admission into the Party of ‘outstanding elements from the new social strata’, widespread resistance could not hinder the ‘Three Represents’ from entering the Party constitution. After two years of internal debate, the ‘important thought of the Three Represents’ was adopted formally by the Party in 2002.

Politically, co-option of entrepreneurs and other new social strata into the Party was designed not only to benefit the Party by tapping new sources of support, but also to pre-empt a potential source of opposition, maintaining political stability and Party leadership. Defending Jiang’s theory against the implicit accusation that the CCP has betrayed its original class nature, some

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553 Ibid.
theorists argued pragmatically that only by incorporating the new economic and social elites and allowing them to participate politically can the Party adequately expand its ‘mass base’ and uphold its ruling position. It was also a theoretical attempt to come to grips with three phenomena that were affecting China and the Party: globalization and the advance of science and technology; the diversification of Chinese society, social organizations, and lifestyles; and lax party organizations and the need to improve the CCP rank and file.555

Therefore, the important thought of the Three Represents has been advertised as the core of an ideological reconstruction of the CCP’s legitimacy as ruling party: in the words of Jiang Zemin, the Three Represents is the ‘foundation for the Party’ (li dang zhi ben), ‘the cornerstone of its governance’ (zhizheng zhi ji) and ‘the source of its strength’ (liliang zhi yuan). This is really an expression by the third-generation leadership to impress upon, or provide ideological direction for the forthcoming fourth-generation; and, for Jiang Zemin, to leave his personal imprint on Party theory before handing the leadership over to his successor. By ascribing a canonical status to the Three Represents, on par with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory, Jiang was said to claim a position in CCP history equal to his predecessors. For the Party, the Three Represents have been described as an innovative product of the collective wisdom of Party leadership.556

4.6 Integrating Nationalism with Official Doctrines

It should be noted that the formulation and promotion of the important thought of the Three Represents is CCP’s response to dramatic socioeconomic changes taking place in the post-Tiananmen period. Domestically, there had been surging of nationalistic sentiments in the 1990s; internationally, as a result of ‘open-door’ policy and China’s further integration into the world economy, the Party leaders face challenges of globalization. So, in a broader sense, Jiang’s Three Represents have been used as theoretical grounds for CCP’s ideological innovation and adaptation in addressing new issues, such as nationalism and globalization, as discussed below.

The Party leaders and theorists understood that the official ideology, in the form of MLM and Deng Xiaoping Theory, is no longer an effective means of mobilizing the people of China in support of the Party’s goals. The impact of the CR, China’s economic reform program, and the withdrawal of the Party-state from people’s day-to-day lives, all have contributed to this decline in its significance. However, while the public impact of official ideology has faded, it is important to note that the terms and ideas of Party’s official ideology continue to be an important means of communication within elite, and still frame what is and isn’t permissible in

555 David Shambough, China’s Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation, p. 113.
the wider reform program as examined before.

The decline in the public impact of an ideology which continues to be significant for the Party leaders is important for the way in which CCP can utilize nationalist symbolism to garner support. Perhaps most significantly, the language of Marxism requires China’s leaders to place the Party at the center of nationalist, or patriotic, sentiment. Bear in mind that, according to the Chinese political lexicon, minzu zhuyi (nationalism) within China refers to the ethnic nationalities of which officially China has fifty-six. Nationalism is therefore a divisive and pejorative concept – a view that is reinforced by the traditional Marxist disdain for it. Aiguo zhuyi (patriotism, or literally, love-country) was more encouraged. As interpreted by the leaders of the PRC it calls uncritical devotion not only to the state and its institutions, but also to the leadership of the Party.557

Therefore, what the CCP represents, or, promotes, is more akin to a Chinese variant of patriotism rather than nationalism. Also, the nationalism that the CCP has pursued bears a statist feature as it portrays the Communist state as the embodiment of the nation’s will, seeking for its goals the kind of loyalty and support granted the nation itself. The official discourse is reminiscent of much earlier debates about making China strong again and regaining its rightful place in the world. It draws on quite genuine and understandable sentiment in the wider population. Thus, this kind of state-centered nationalism is significantly different from what is called popular nationalism, which either goes beyond the relatively restrictive boundaries of the official discourse or is more critical of the Party and its policies, and which are the spontaneous actions of members of the public to perceived national insults.558

In the 1980s, as a result of reform and opening-up, there was a rise of ‘cultural fever’ (wenhua re) among Chinese intellectuals. There were two basic themes in the cultural fever: criticism of traditional Chinese culture and criticism of Chinese national character. Many Chinese intellectuals blamed China’s ‘feudal culture’ for the country’s absolutism, narrow-mindedness and love of orthodoxy, even calling Chinese people the ugly Chinese. Thus anti-traditionalism became a dominant discourse. But, in spite of their heavy attack on Chinese history and tradition, most anti-traditionalists remained in their heart deeply nationalist. Their critique or even cynical treatment of their own past was one way of yearning for the re-creation of China’s greatness. This cultural fever culminated in the 1988 television series Heshang (River Elegy). It provided a good example of how nihilism and nationalism, two seemingly contradictory sentiments, were reconciled in anti-traditionalist discourse.559

The producers of the film suggested that the pernicious influence of traditional values was mainly responsible for China’s millennial inertia and its modern backwardness. The Yellow

558 Ibid.
559 Suisheng Zhao, ‘Chinese Intellectuals’ Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s,’ pp. 726-8.
River, both stagnant and destructive, was River Elegy’s metaphor for Chinese history, which marked by periodic and violent collapse of the socio-political order, and then inevitably reconstructed on its old foundations in accordance with an archaic and unchanging value system. The Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese culture and civilization, symbolizes the profound conservatism and backwardness of this peasant-based and inward-looking society, which, on its own, is capable only of producing itself and stifling traditions. The antithesis of the Yellow River in the film is the vibrant blue-sea, symbolic of the out-looking oceanic cultures of capitalist West, the dynamic homeland of modern science, industry, and democracy. A romanticized image of the ‘West’ for China to emulate was thus constructed. But the film series received fierce criticism and was later denounced by the authority as a dangerous example of ‘bourgeois liberalization’ that blindly advocated total Westernization and boosted national nihilism.560

The decline of anti-traditionalism after the Tiananmen Incident led to a ‘de-romanticization’ of the West among Chinese intellectuals in the 1990s. This resulted in an image of Western countries, especially the United States, closer to the portrait in official propaganda, as many Chinese people found a West similar to what the Party leaders have described in the media. The Chinese people, including leading intellectuals, tended to concur with the official position that the failure of the Chinese bid for the 2000 Olympics was orchestrated by Western bullies, and the United States was a ‘black hand’ behind the Taiwan and Tibet independence movement, and a ‘liar’ about China’s human rights. This can be seen from the publication of a large number of books attacking the West by Chinese writers in the 1990s.561

The most sensational work was the best-selling collection of essays that appeared under the title of Zhongguo keyi shuo bu (China Can Say No), authored by a number of young writers whose formative experiences were mainly in the 1980s. They confessed that while at college they craved Western culture and things but they really began to think after Beijing’s defeat in the Olympic site competition, the Yin He incident and, particularly, after the U.S. aircraft carriers were sent to defend Taiwan in March 1996. Before the Chinese could say no to the Americans, they had to say no to themselves, to their lack of nationalistic spirit and to their blind worship of the United States. They had come to realize, they claimed, that the United States was not the bastion of idealism that it claimed to be, and ‘human rights’ were merely a façade behind which American pursued its national interests. In fact, far from championing ideals in the world, the United States was an arrogant, narcissistic, hegemonic power that acted as a world policeman; and now it was doing everything in its power to keep China from emerging as a powerful and wealthy country.562

Public attention was also gripped by the publication of Zai yaomohua Zhongguo de beihou

560 Ibid.
561 Joseph Fewsmith, China since Tiananmen, p. 160.
562 Ibid.
Behind the Scene of Demonizing China), produced by eight graduates of top Chinese universities who had participated in American doctoral programs. They revealed the so-called deliberate political bias of the American opinion by describing the way in which its government, media and academia work together to construct a thoroughly evil portrait of China.  

Both of these works have taken on a strong significance in the narrative of the rise of ‘popular nationalism’ in the 1990s due to the new and open defiance they display towards the West in general and the United States in particular. They are also skeptical of the authority, as the authors of China Can Say No charged that the Chinese government had been naïve and soft in its dealings with America, that it should be more forthright in just saying ‘no,’ and that the government was neither confident enough not competent enough – it was too wrapped up in the past and insufficiently bold in engineering China’s modernization. But many intellectuals pointed out that the book was shallow, poorly written, and overly emotional; it was also criticized by the authorities.

Nationalistic writing in the 1990s also promoted cultural nationalism which took Chinese culture as a symbol against Western cultural hegemony and claimed the positive function of traditional culture in maintaining political order. Cultural nationalism argued that the dominance of Western culture in international cultural exchanges was threatening cultures of developing countries such as China. Through these exchanges, Western values and lifestyles were able to influence the social ethics of developing countries. Satellite and television broadcasts played a big role in this, when Western countries’ military colonization gave way to ‘electronic colonialism’ or ‘cultural hegemony.’

The advocates of cultural nationalism asserted that ‘the Western nations are wholeheartedly intent on turning China into a country such as India and Mexico.’ So they argued that China needed to get conceptually free from the ideological and psychological ‘Western mind-set.’ Encouraged by China’s rapid economic development in the 1990s, cultural nationalism predicted a Chinese cultural renaissance on the world stage in the 21st century. As a result of the upsurge of cultural nationalism, ‘Western learning fever’ (xixue re), common in the 1980s was taken over by ‘Chinese/Confucius learning fever’ (guoxue re) among scholars. Intellectual debates were redefined in terms of ‘Chineseness.’ Some scholars called for an academic nativism (xueshu bentuhua), namely, extracting a brand new set of concepts and theories from ancient Chinese thoughts and experiences. Interestingly, many advocates of cultural nationalism were trained in the West, and they used the critical knowledge they learned abroad, such as post-colonialism, post-modernism, post-Marxism and orientalism, to attack Western culture. Because they discarded official ideological rhetoric, their arguments seemed more influential and

564 Joseph Fewsmith, China since Tiananmen, pp. 160-2.
565 Ibid.
persuasive for many Chinese.\(^5\)

More close to the Party’s ideological lines of nationalism is the best-selling book entitled *Yu zongsiji tanxin (A Heart-to-Heart Talk to the General Secretary)*, which was written by a team from the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) and addressing a number of important policy issues. The most eye-catching feature of the book – apart from the picture of Jiang on the cover – was the preface and endorsement by Liu Ji, vice-president of CASS, who was the General Secretary’s major advisor. The book was a self-conscious effort to rebut leftist criticism made in the first and second ‘10,000 character manifestos’ as well as the rising tide of popular nationalism. It took a more open-minded perspective on a new belief system as the authors call for a ‘dialogue among liberalism, conservatism, and socialism.’ Whereas insisting on the leading role of Marxism in shaping the new belief system, it argued that Marxism should be modernized and open to the various cultural values to regain its vitality.\(^5\)

The book also reinterpreted the relationship between China’s Confucian tradition and socialism. It drew an analogy to a tree, arguing that China’s traditional culture can be understood as the roots, Marxism-Leninism as the trunk, and the outstanding parts of various cultures from around the world as the branches. It should be noted that this analogy stood the orthodox CCP understanding of history on its head. Whereas the CCP had traditionally rooted itself in the May Fourth rejection of Confucian heritage, the tree analogy envisioned contemporary Marxism as growing out of Confucianism. Although this imagery drew harsh criticism from the left wing of the Party, it was perfect consistent with what the Party had been trying to do over the past several years: somehow ‘integrating’ (*zhenghe*) China’s traditional history and its modern revolution so that the latter can be viewed as a continuation, rather than a refutation, of the former.\(^5\)

In a more benign vein, the authors deal with issues of maintaining China’s identity by citing Bertrand Russell’s proposition that historical progress comes from the interaction between cultures. As Mao Zedong stated, the most advanced Chinese people were those figures who had introduced foreign cultures, from Qing reformer Liang Qichao to Sun Yat-sen. Even Marx and Engels had described how the spread of the market had created world system in which barriers between nations had been broken down.\(^5\)

Moreover, some scholars argued for making Confucianism the material base of Chinese nationalism, as they believed that Confucianism in the 1990s no longer characterizes ‘anti-modernity,’ since it has been long disassociated with the dynastic autocratic system. Confucian tradition, particularly its moral codes and its sense of social responsibilities, can be the best basis upon which to rebuild Chinese cultural identity. A widely shared belief in intellectual

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\(^5\) Suisheng Zhao, ‘Chinese Intellectuals’ Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s,’ pp. 735-6.


\(^5\) Joseph Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, pp. 190-2.

circles was that Chinese traditional culture could prevent moral decline in society.570

Some official events seem to echo the neoconservative call for a rediscovery of traditional mainstream culture. For example, in the 1994 Qingming festival, Li Ruihuan, a member of PBSS, appeared in a memorial ceremony for the Huangdi tomb. Renmin ribao (People’s Daily) commented on the event as ‘seeking a common language before the common ancestor . . . inspiring the national spirit in order to achieve China’s great national rejuvenation.’ In 1995, Li Ruihuan and Li Lanqing (vice-premier) attended a conference celebrating Confucius’ 2,425th anniversary. Confucianism was praised in their speeches as a positive force able to unite the Chinese nation and foster socialist spiritual civilization. These two events are symbolically significant, since it was the first time that top Communist leaders had been present on such occasions. They are read by neoconservative thinkers and nationalists as an official gesture in favor of the revival of traditional mainstream culture, integrating nationalism with Party’s doctrines.571

4.7 Integrating into the World

Associated with nationalism, there had been hot debates on the issue of globalization and whether China should join the World Trade Organization in the 1990s, which also had an enormous impact on the Party’s ideological change. The CCP leaders and theorists were active early on to embrace globalization, as they have identified in the writings of Marxism the origins of globalization theory which can be used to confirm the correctness of Party’s policy of opening up and engagement with the world community. They accepted the insights of Marx and Engels that foresaw a world increasingly integrated on the basis of capitalism’s global expansion. Indeed, there is a rather self-congratulatory tone to their identification with Marxism, a theoretical tradition that so clearly foretold the emergence of globalization. They have turned for an understanding of the origins of globalization primarily to two Marxist classics – The German Ideology and the Communist Manifesto. These documents represent a rich vein of insights into the historical forces that created the modern world without which globalization could not have been possible.572

The German Ideology shows the ‘genuine theoretical origin’ of concept of globalization, for here Marx and Engels first articulated the idea of ‘world history’ premised on the unifying potential of a market expanding under the impact of industrial capitalism. They developed this notion in both documents, and enunciated in each of a series of ‘theoretical points’ to elaborate

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571 Ibid.
the transition of history from one based on separate nations and localities to a ‘world history’. Chinese theorists have written approvingly of these points, accepting them as an appropriate historical perspective on the emergence of the modern world within which lay the seeds of globalization. Furthermore, they have attempted to interpret Lenin’s *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* in a way that reinforces the Party’s current policies. What interests them more is Lenin’s ‘New Economic Policy’ which was introduced following the phase of ‘War Time Communism’ in the wake of the October Revolution, as it was premised on learning from and applying the achievements and experiences of capitalism to develop socialism. They argued Lenin believed that, just as capitalism required foreign trade, so too did socialism, and that the world economy, created by capitalism and build on foreign trade, would impact on the remote areas of the globe. Lenin thus concurred with Marx that economic globalization as ‘an inevitable law and trend of economic development.’

Some Chinese scholars even argue that globalization is not intrinsically capitalist, regardless of its capitalist origins. Rather, globalization can be defined as a new mode of economic, political and cultural association between peoples and states, one that results from the new information technology; it is thus similar to a market economy, which can be used for socialism as well as capitalism. When globalization integrates with a socialist nation, such as China, it can become socialist globalization; and China’s persistence as a socialist nation constitutes the guarantee that globalization will not forever be capitalist globalization, but will be transformed into a socialist globalization. That will pave the way for the eventual realization of Marxism’s historical promise – communism. Although this argument is not convincing, as some scholars such as Nick Knight pointed out, its logic has built on Deng Xiaoping’s insistence that modernization is not inherently capitalist modernization.

One leading Chinese commentator explained further that the concept of socialist modernization in Deng’s Four Modernizations is ‘naturally different in essence from capitalist modernization. The distinction is reinforced by Deng’s Theory that it is possible to have ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’, which for the foreseeable future at least will incorporate significant dimensions of capitalism. It has also been made possible by the insistence, by Deng and his successors that it is possible to construct a socialist market economy, one that supposedly incorporates the best of both worlds: the efficiencies of a capitalist market under the guidance of a socialist state.

The logic underpinning Deng’s Theory appealed to many Chinese theorists who have extended it to explore the possibility that globalization can not only serve the interests of socialism, but can itself lead to a socialist form of globalization that will triumph in the

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573 Ibid.
inevitable competition between capitalism and socialism. There is this considerable optimism that, despite its capitalist origins and its contemporary dominance by capitalism, globalization will not result in the permanent dominance of the global economy by capitalism. Rather, the contradictions of capitalism, which intensify under the impact of economic globalization, will lead to capitalism’s eventual demise; and the ultimate victor in the contest between ideologies and economic system will be socialism.576

What is particularly significant about this discourse is the extent to which Party theorists have accepted the insights of Marxist tradition and have thus retained its predictions of a globalizing world in constructing their own explanations of globalization; but they have, for the most part, excised the class implications that flow from those predictions. However, their abandonment of class struggle as the catalyst for the achievement of socialism has not led to a parallel abandonment of a Marxist teleology that perceives communism as the final goal of historical development. This process of ideological accretion has thus involved a complex process involving both retention and rejection of earlier renditions of CCP doctrine, which eventually has formulated Deng Xiaoping’s Theory and, along the line, developed in Jiang’s thought of the Three Represents. The fundamental postulate of CCP’s ideological innovation has been that it is the forces of production that generate historical change, particularly changes of magnitude of the transition from capitalism to socialism; change to the relations of production and within superstructure are second order phenomena, and generated by changes within the forces of production.577

Jiang Zemin declared the official position as follows: ‘Productive forces are the most dynamic and the most revolutionary factor. It is also the ultimate decisive force of social development . . . All relations of production and superstructures, irrespective of their natures, develop with the development of productive forces’. From this perspective, it is technological progress, the spread of advanced productive techniques, and the general growth of the economy and its increased industrialization and modernization that lead to social and economic transformations of such historic proportions; it is not class struggle, and it is not political struggle in the superstructure.578

Based on these arguments, China has adapted very well to the notion of globalization. Abandoning Mao’s views on self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency, China joined the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank and many other multilateral organizations and became one of Asia’s biggest borrowers in the mid-1980s. The CCP leadership viewed its policy of opening-up as one of the most important features of globalization. Deng Xiaoping worked out a comprehensive strategy of reform and opening-up, and he believed that through it, China could draw on foreign capital, technology and experience

576 Ibid.
577 Ren Zhongping, ‘Fazhan she guanchuan “se ge daibiao” zhongyang sixiang de zhuti,’ (The development is the key theme of the Three Represents), People’s Daily, 21 August, 2003.
578 Ibid.
in management from developed countries and give play to the comparative advantages of socialism.\textsuperscript{579}

To further integrate into the world economy, China applied to join the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1986, but its numerous regulations that constrained foreign economic activity and the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 led to long delays. There was a period of renewed interest and possibility prior to the formal establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, but by then the bar to admission had been raised significantly. Anyway, to meet the rigorous terms set by the USA, the European Union, and Japan, China made greater compromises to enter the WTO than any other country in history.\textsuperscript{580}

Joining the WTO was not an easy decision for the Jiang Zemin leadership. Yielding to the West on some issues weakened China’s sovereignty in the eyes of strongly nationalistic intellectual circles, while the WTO’s prohibition on discrimination by any member country against any firms from any other member country (under the concept of ‘most favored nation status’), its insistence that all economic regulations be made public (under the concept of ‘transparency’), and the rule that foreign firms must been treated like any local firm (under the concept of ‘national treatment’), challenged the PRC government’s control over the economy. Rising nationalism in China in the 1990s made such compromises politically risky for any leader. But China’s top leaders agreed to the terms and China officially became a member of the WTO in November 2001.\textsuperscript{581}

To his credit, Jiang Zemin played a decisive role, for he had long been a supporter of China’s entry into the WTO, as a way both of tying China’s economy more closely to the world’s and of demonstrating his ability to enhance China’s status as a world power. The decision to enter the WTO shows the CCP leadership’s ideological vision and determination to integrate China into the world system, which has thus considerably enhanced China’s rise as a big power in the international community in the new century. It turned out that WTO entry has had positive implications for China’s political economy, as Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1 show.

In addition to the international-level advantages of having a more direct say in the course of the global economy and the development of liberalized trade, the benefits of membership for Chinese governance was also apparent. A new layer of pressures, this time external, was placed on various actors in the Chinese economy to accelerate the reforms of the 1990s and to better address politically and economically sensitive areas, including flexible links between state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the government, as well as the country’s burgeoning financial sector. At the same time, China has also taken on other approaches to improving its international


\textsuperscript{581} Ibid.
## Table 4.2 Selected Indicators of China’s Global Integration, 1978 - 2008

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<tr>
<td>Total Foreign Trade (US billions)</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>324.0</td>
<td>620.8</td>
<td>2,561.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Exports (US billions)</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>183.7</td>
<td>325.6</td>
<td>1,428.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inbound Foreign Direct Investment (US billions)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Exchange Reserves (US billions)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>145.0</td>
<td>286.4</td>
<td>1,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Foreign Tourists (1,000s)</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>7,108</td>
<td>13,440</td>
<td>24,325</td>
</tr>
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Sources: China Statistical Yearbook; Ministry of Commerce of China; US-China Business Council; and plus data compiled by the author.

## Figure 4.1 China’s Trade Surpluses, 1997 – 2009 (US billions)

Sources: [http://www.chinability.com](http://www.chinability.com), edited by the author.
economic contacts, as now it can trade easier access to its market for similar access by Chinese firms to the rest of the world’s domestic markets. Before the global economic crisis of 2008-9, China had become the quintessential ‘trading state’, whose international commerce dramatically increased its national power (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2 China’s Foreign Trade, 1980-2008 ($US billions)**

![Graph showing China's foreign trade from 1980 to 2008](image)


China’s trade grew at an annual rate of 15 to 17 percent for almost thirty years, well above the 7 percent growth rate for world rate over the same period. Following its entry into the WTO, China’s trade became an even more important source of growth for its overall economy, supplying one-third of the annual increase in GDP between 2004 and 2007. Some people assert that trade has contributed to the technological upgrading of goods produced in China, as indicated by a change in the structure of exports from labor-intensive goods to higher value-added ones. Similarly, internationalization has helped China’s exports shift from low-tech to high-tech products. From a business viewpoint, the CCP today has adopted and expanded Deng’s ‘open door’ policies, encouraging foreign investment by ‘inviting in’ (qingjinlai) foreign firms at an accelerated rate. More recently, China has promoted the ‘going out’ (zouchuqu) of Chinese firms into international markets, as well as the development of commodity and service industries capable of competing globally, as Figure 4.3 indicates. Beijing’s increasing visibility
in business, financial and trade circles has firmly entrenched the so-called ‘China Inc,’ mystique around the world.  

**Figure 4.3 China’s Nonfinancial Outbound Investment, 2003-2008 ($US billions)**

Source: PRC Ministry of Commerce.

There is no doubt that China’s successful integration with the world economy has had a significant impact on the CCP’s ideological change in foreign policy, as we will see in the next chapter. But, on the other hand, the Party authorities’ views of China’s integrating into the world economy, both in theory and practice, have drawn considerable criticism which should not be overlooked. For example, the leading New Left scholar Wang Hui argues that globalization is not as the extension of free markets but as the growth of multinational corporations that collude with domestic political forces to undermine both market forces and political democracy. Like the neo-Maoists, the New Left called attention to the fact that the privatization of state industries and China’s integration into the global economy had deprived vast members of workers of their social status, social security safety net, and economic rights, producing an underclass of laid-off workers. Specifically, they focused their criticism on the

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widespread corruption that accompanied the process of privatization of the SOEs and the establishment of new enterprises, which they attributed to the collusion between local officials and foreign entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{583}

Chapter 5

Ideological Initiative: Hu Jintao’s Harmonious Society

5.1 Overview

Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang Zemin in the posts of general secretary of the CCP in 2002 and president of the state in 2003, respectively, and became ‘the core’ of the so-called ‘fourth generation’ of Chinese leaders. Like his predecessor, Hu was a trained engineer, a befitting CEO figure, but he is certainly more than that. He is chiefly a very experienced and skilled politician.

Hu emerged as a national figure in early 1980’s when he became president of the All-China Youth Federation, and in 1985, aged 43, Hu was appointed Party secretary of Guizhou, the youngest provincial Party secretary in PRC history. In 1992 Hu was hand-picked by Deng to be appointed a member of the powerful Politburo Standing Committee, becoming part of the ‘Third generation’ of the CCP leadership team headed by Jiang. Then in 1998, Hu became vice-president, ranking fifth in the Party’s hierarchy. Obviously, Hu had been Jiang’s heir apparent for a decade. Hu Jintao’s political biographer Richard Ewing noted that Hu has risen to the elite level of Chinese politics through his own skills and his diverse network of political patrons, including Song Ping, Hu Yaobang, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin.

Dr. Bruce Gilley observed that Hu was clearly more romantic about the Party’s orthodoxies than the other leaders of the reform era though far from being a Maoist. He was a ‘Leninist romantic’ who believed in firmly upholding the principle of Party leadership. He was sympathetic to the ideological critiques of the New Left, favoring more redistribution of the fruits of development through expanding welfare programs. Under Hu’s leadership, China began a serious attempt to redress the questions of social justice and sustainable development that arose during the Jiang era with its emphasis on sheer growth as the measure of success and progress.

Hu Jintao oversaw the canonization of Jiang’s Three Represents and shared his interest in the ‘governing Party’s adaptation to China’s changing society and economy; however, his most significant contribution to the Party’s ideological innovation is his concept of Harmonious Society (hexie shehui). This concept was first put forward in his speech at the Central Party

586 Bruce Gilley, ‘Deng Xiaoping and his Successors (1976 to the Present)’, in William A. Joseph, ed., *Politics in China*, p. 120.
School in February 2005. Hu defined his idea follows: ‘The socialist Harmonious Society we wanted to build should be a society featuring democracy, the rule of law, fairness, justice, sincerity, trustworthiness, amity, full vitality, stability, orderliness, and harmony between mankind and nature.’ Though some may dismiss this as propaganda, it is nevertheless the vision articulated by China’s new paramount leader for his nation and society, and it has been rooted both in traditional Confucian concepts like Datong (Great Harmony) and in more contemporary socialist precepts.587

More importantly, Hu’s notion on harmony presents a programmatic solution to China’s ‘performance dilemma’ and an innovative model of political legitimization, and it serves as a popular starting-point for a critical analysis of the last two decades of economic reforms which have produced a disturbing degree of social inequality and injustice, reflected in an alarmingly high and still increasing Gini coefficient. The situation is made more precarious by the prospect that even with sustained economic growth, the satisfaction of material needs will be followed by immaterial ones. Growing demands for political participation, the pluralisation of ideas and life styles, the formation of a civil society, and the Internet put increasing pressure on Party rule and foreshadow a crisis of confidence, if not an outright crisis of CCP legitimacy. If the social ills are not remedied, Chinese society might fall back to the level of development of the pre-reform period. Apparently, Hu’s Harmonious Society represents a dramatic shift away from the growth-at-all-cost of developing model of his predecessors.588

The central feature of Hu’s goal of creating a harmonious society is his ‘Scientific Outlook on Development’ (kexue fazhan guan), a new model of development. Two elements emerged as the core of the concept: ‘taking people as the basis’ (yiren weiben) and ‘comprehensive development’ (zonghe fazhan). Both seemed to be a deft, but substantial modification of his predecessors’ priorities. Unlike Jiang’s emphasis on the recruitment of the ‘advanced productive forces’ into the Party, Hu now has distinctly shifted the emphasis of the Three Represents to the third ‘represent’: the interests of the majority of the people.589

This ideological reorientation was politically very astute, for the Three Represents which in their original formulation had a conspicuously elitist background are now given a populist reinterpretation. In a way, the Three Represents are translated into Hu’s ideas of the ‘Three Peoples’: the Party must ‘exercise its power for the people, have passion for the people and seek benefits for the people’. Without explicitly criticizing the elitist concept of the Three Represents, it is subtly but unambiguously transformed into a formula of populist legitimation. But Hu’s brand of populism is very different from Mao’s that was mostly a matter of mobilizing the mass to take action in support of his agenda. In contrast, Hu is a populist in the sense of advocating

589 Ibid.
policies that address the socioeconomic downside of China’s rapid development.\textsuperscript{590}

Hu’s theory also includes how to build a harmonious world, and take advantage of globalization to promote peace, development and common prosperity. The Chinese leader has been aware that China’s rapid development has attracted worldwide attention in recent years. The implications of various aspects of China’s rise, from its expanding influence and military muscle to its growing demand for energy supply, are being heatedly debated in the West, and particularly in the U.S.\textsuperscript{591}

Facing a rising China, there have been increasing wariness, fear and suspicion from the world. Thus those realists who see China as a competitor have been advising the U.S. government to adopt a new containment strategy to counterbalance the ‘China Threat’. Therefore, the Chinese government proposed ‘peaceful development’ in response, seeking to reassure the world and other countries that China’s rise will not be a threat to peace and stability in the region and the world, and that the U.S. and other countries can benefit from China’s peaceful development. China’s development is mutually beneficial to China and the world in the process of globalization. In his programmatic speech to the UN in September 2005, Hu called even for greater international cooperation based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, and he dismissed the ‘clash of civilizations’ in favor of harmony between different civilizations on the basis of ‘seeking common ground while reserving differences.’\textsuperscript{592} In that year, China issued a white paper entitled ‘China’s Peaceful Development Road.’\textsuperscript{593}

Hu Jintao’s ideological initiatives were formally endorsed at the 17th CCP Congress in late 2007. They were written into the party constitution. ‘The Communist Party of China leads the people in building a harmonious socialist society’ was added to the preamble. It goes as far as saying this is ‘a scientific theory that is in the same line as Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of Three Represents and keeps up with the times.’ In practice, they have turned it into an umbrella theory – under which numerous policies could be encompassed.\textsuperscript{594}

This chapter discusses how the fourth generation leadership came to power, the making of the new General Secretary and the Hu-Wen New Deal; then looks into Party’s new ideological initiatives, including Hu’s ideas of Harmonious Society, the Scientific Outlook on Development and Harmonious World. And finally, as a fitting end, we will, in the last section, explore and discuss how, after such dramatic changes, CCP’s ideology remains the source of its legitimacy.

5.2 Making of the New General Secretary

Hu’s succession to the Party’s top leader of the fourth generation has been hailed as a great achievement of CCP’s political reform that has resulted in political institutionalization. For most of the PRC’s history, the leadership succession has long been recognized as one of the critical failings of China’s political system. The designation of Liu Shaoqi implicitly and, later, of Lin Biao explicitly as Mao’s successors failed amid the ferocious power politics of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The previously obscure Hua Guofeng emerged as Mao’s successor as Party chairman after Mao’s death in 1976 on only the thinnest justifications and his tenure ended soon after his control over the Party agenda was broken by Deng Xiaoping at the watershed Third Plenum of 1978. And Deng’s first two successors, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, fell victim to leadership power struggles in 1987 and 1989. Only in Jiang’s case, Deng’s effort to ensure an orderly transition in leadership succeeded.

As discussed above, Jiang’s consolidation of his power benefited from a broader support by Deng as well as the ongoing institutionalization of China’s leadership succession. Political institutionalization over the last three decades in China can be measured at two levels: external and internal. External institutionalization implies an evolution over time and the regular convening of political organizations, according to the Constitution and laws, by which political organizations gain more stability, regularity, continuity, and predictability. Internal institutionalization refers to the changes in hierarchy, relations, and operations of political organizations, through which political organizations of the party and the state are to acquire more efficiency, functionality, autonomy, transparency, and accountability.595

Internal institutionalization may not be as apparent as external institutionalization. Accordingly, the 1982 PRC constitution stipulated fixed terms of not more than two consecutive five-year terms of office for top state positions, including PRC president, Chairman of the National People’s Congress (NPC), and premier of the State Council. Since then the Party has generated a massive turnover in leadership generations. These trends of institutionalization of retirement and rejuvenation were accelerated under Jiang. The age and two-term limits have also rigidly imposed on top posts in the 1990s. thus, at the 16th Party Congress in 2002, all of the members of the PBSC, save Hu Jintao, were prohibited from running for re-election as they were over 70 and had served two terms, and, consequently, retired. The CCP had thus successfully and smoothly managed leadership transition from the Third to the Fourth generation.596

In many respects, Hu is typical of the rising ‘fourth generation’ of technocratic leaders. A

native of Anhui Province, Hu was born in 1942 in Taizhou city, Jiangsu Province, where he completed his primary and secondary schooling. Little is known about Hu’s family background except that his father was an accountant at a local household supplies store, and his mother died when he was young. In 1959, the 17-year-old Hu went to Beijing attending Qinghua University, one of China’s most prestigious universities. Indeed, Hu’s association with Qinghua would be an important factor throughout his political career. He majored in hydroelectric engineering and specialized in fluvial multi-purpose power stations.597

Hu joined the Communist Party in 1964 and graduated from Qinghua in 1965, just as the Cultural Revolution was consuming Beijing. This timing was fortuitous. China’s universities were soon closed because of the growing chaos, making him one of the last students to earn a degree before the educational system was frozen. He accepted a research position at Qinghua while served as a political counsellor for the next two years. Qinghua’s political counsellors, created by university president Jiang Nanxiang, were ‘double-loaded’ (youhong youzhuan) – selected as both technical experts and political leaders. As the CR grew, Qinghua University became a headquarters of young Red Guard factions, but at the age of 23, Hu was regarded too old to participate fully in the Red Guard movement composed of younger students. In fact, like many of his intellectual counterparts, Hu came under pressure from these groups. And he was criticized for being ‘too individualistic’ and charged with being a member of the ‘carefree clique,’ not interested in the movement. The chaos eventually grew too much for Mao, and he ended the mass movement by sending students to the countryside.598

Hu was sent to the Liujiaxia Hydraulic Power Plant in remote Gansu Province. When he arrived in 1968, he first labored in a housing construction brigade and then worked as a technician and deputy Party secretary in the engineering bureau under the Ministry of Water Resource and Electric Power. This work marked the beginning of his involvement in Party affairs. In 1974, Hu was transferred to the Gansu Provincial Construction Committee and served as deputy head of the Project Management Division.599

Despite the arduous work, Gansu provided an opportunity for the young engineer to improve his political fortunes. He caught the attention of the powerful Gansu Party secretary, Song Ping. His wife happened to be deputy Party secretary of Qinghua University while Hu was studying there. The veteran Song liked Hu and became his first political patron. Song promoted Hu’s advance into higher positions, first in Gansu Province, and then at the national level in the early 1980s. Song made Hu deputy director of the Gansu Provincial Construction Committee in 1980, a major promotion. Soon, Hu was appointed secretary of Gansu’s Communist Youth League (CYL) and member of the national CYL Secretariat in 1982. Later, under Song’s recommendation, Hu left Gansu for political instruction at Beijing’s prestigious Central Party

In Beijing, fortune smiled upon the rising political star. Jiang Nanxiang, former Qinghua University president and a long-time ally of Hu Yaobang, was serving as vice-president of the CPS. As the 12th Party Congress approached in 1982, the Party leaders were eagerly looking for younger, better-educated, able and revolutionary cadres, Hu was immediately selected, because what was rare at that time was that he had a university degree, and from Qinghua; and he was duly elected as an alternate member of the CC that year. Hu became first secretary of the national CYL organization in 1984.

Hu’s CYL appointments undoubtedly required the endorsement of the relatively liberal reformer and then Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, who had close association with the CYL since the 1950s when he served as its leader. Hu Yaobang was impressed with the aspiring Hu Jintao and became his second major political patron. In the spring of 1984, Hu Jintao accompanied Hu Yaobang on inspection tours of Hubei, Henan and Guizhou provinces. During the tours, Hu Yaobang stressed further agricultural reforms, and he urged promotions for younger cadres because they were capable, and ‘less affected by past convictions’, but had broad knowledge. In 1985, Hu Jintao travelled to North Korea to visit Chinese exchange students – his first trip abroad.

In July 1985, Hu had a rare opportunity to enter executive office when he was appointed Party secretary of Guizhou, one of China’s poorest provinces. He was then 42, the youngest of his rank across the country and in PRC history. His appointment was probably a result of his association with Hu Yaobang, and the transition both tested and heightened his leadership abilities. Moreover, the post strengthened his experience with minority populations, an important factor later in his career. In the first year after taking office, Hu called for the development of education as the fundamental strategy for invigorating Guizhou’s economy and enabling local people to become wealthy. He then outlined the four main components of his plan: utilizing knowledge and talent, strengthening popular unity, seeking pragmatic solutions, and persevering in reforms.

As Guizhou Party secretary from 1985 to 1988, Hu visited all 86 counties, cities and districts; often inspecting the poorest areas and gaining a personal understanding of people’s needs. As the provincial leader, Hu began to gain international exposure by meeting foreign officials. In 1986, he received the Australian governor general and met Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke in Canberra. At the invitation of the French Communist Party, Hu traveled to France in 1988. In Guizhou, he also began formulating his position toward maintaining social stability. Recognizing the importance of economic development for all Chinese, Hu stated that, ‘we cannot have political stability and unity and economic prosperity . . . without the equality and
solidarity of all nationalities.’ In October 1988, a fight broke out among some Guizhou universities, leading to a street demonstration by thousands of students, Hu immediately called for an emergency meeting, requiring relevant departments of the provincial government to talk with the students. Hu himself went among them, and listened to their opinions. With authorities taking such a mild and responsible approach, the students quickly calmed down, and Hu’s ability to deal with crisis was fully displayed.603

In late 1988, Hu faced the greatest challenge of his political career when he was transferred to become Party secretary for the Tibetan Autonomous Region, where living conditions were harsher and the political environment more complicated. In the autumn that year, unrest was growing in Tibet. At a festival in Lhasa, pro-independence demonstrators crowded the streets, and the police began a crackdown. Hu was given a mandate to end the disturbances. Amid growing ethnic conflict, Hu became the first civilian Party secretary for the Tibet Autonomous Region in the history of the PRC. He was chosen because of his young age, his ideological commitment, and extensive experience in minority areas gained from his 14 years in Gansu and Guizhou.604

As the Party leader of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Hu made efforts to develop the local economy and improve people’s lives on the one hand, and firmly proposed the adoption of tough measures for separatists on the other. As the 30th anniversary of the 10 March 1959 Tibetan uprising neared, the situation deteriorated dramatically. Police shot and killed dozens of protestors on 5 and 6 March. On 7 March Beijing imposed martial law in Tibet for the first time in 30 years.605

Hu acted decisively, coordinating the movement of the PLA troops in Tibet to suppress the uprising. In a radio address on 9 March, Hu commanded security forces to crack down harder: ‘You must maintain vigilance against separatists now that martial law has been declared, and you must take even sterner measures against those who stubbornly resist.’ And late, speaking to Xinhua reporters, Hu stated: ‘The imposition of martial law, subduing the riots, stopping sabotage, opposing separatism and safeguarding unification, is a major measure to stabilize the situation in Tibet.’606

Martial law lasted nearly 14 months. Commenting on the end of martial law, Hu said, ‘Situations in Tibet are stabilizing, victory has been scored in quelling Lhasa turmoil, and improvement and rectification have seen preliminary results.’607

From 1988 to 1992, Hu served as Party chief in Tibet, but his appearances in Lhasa were rare, and he seemed to have spent most of the period in Beijing, for he developed ‘altitude sickness’ in late 1990 and had to leave the Region for recuperation. This respite gave him an opportunity

603 Ibid.
605 Ibid.
606 ‘Other reports on Tibet: Hu Jintao says martial law does not change policy on Tibet,’ Xinhua, 17 March 1989 (BBC Summary of World Broadcast).
to expand his network and political base in the capital. Although still Tibet Party leader, he remained in Beijing for nearly two years. Because he was young, skillful and politically trustworthy, the top leadership gave him many important projects. He briefed Party elders, wrote reports and presided over government panels. He was becoming the de facto executive director of the powerful CCP’s Organization Department under his mentor Song Ping as he became a member of the PBSC in 1989 after Tiananmen.

During this period in Beijing, Hu personally impressed Deng Xiaoping. Deng reportedly praised Hu by saying, ‘I see this person Hu Jintao as not bad at all.’ In January 1992, during his famous nanxun (southern tour), Deng again openly praised Hu. Deng became Hu’s third major political patron, and his personal endorsement solidified Hu’s position within the top leadership. His political fortunes soared. Deng was so confident of Hu that he offered him opportunity to lead organizational preparations for the important 14th Party Congress in 1992, and Hu played a vital administrative role. He drafted paperwork for Jiang’s elevation to the presidency, and helped secure several Politburo positions for Jiang’s allies. As older Song was going to retire, he recommended, with Deng’s approval, that Hu should be promoted to the new leadership team. Thus he was elected as one of the seven members of the powerful PBSC at the 14th Party Congress, which was to become the third generation of Party’s leadership under Jiang Zemin.

Since Hu gained a ‘helicopter’ promotion straight up to the key decision-making group of the central leadership, Jiang started grooming him and made it clear that Hu was designated as the ‘core’ leader of the emerging ‘fourth generation’ of leaders eventually to replace Jiang’s generation. Hu was first appointed to the party Secretariat. In that position, Hu began working closely with General Secretary Jiang in running the Party apparatus, a key responsibility and a major opportunity to establish networks throughout the Party. Historically, paramount leaders in communist systems – from Stalin to Deng Xiaoping – have taken this route to the top. According to a 1992 PRC media report, Hu was in charge of ‘the day-to-day matters of the Secretariat.’ Also in that capacity, Hu assisted in the selection of the Central Committee elected at the 1997 Party Congress.

At the 9th NPC in 1998, Hu was appointed vice president of the PRC. This appointment symbolically enhanced Hu’s stature as second to Jiang. More significantly, Jiang decided to expand the powers of Hu’s office, making him the country’s first active vice president. Having come to know U.S. vice president Al Gore during his visit to America the past year, Jiang wanted China’s vice president to play a similar role.

Additionally, it provided Hu state post of high-ranking protocol, allowing him to begin routinely to meet visiting foreign leaders and establish international visibility more actively than...
when he had held only Party posts. And then, in September 1999, Hu was appointed vice chairman of the Party’s CMC. As the only other non-professional military man on the key military decision-making body, this clearly put Hu on line to succeed Jiang as chairman. There is no doubt that, as Hu’s mentor and political patron, Jiang has been all along in grooming and helping him to become the Party’s new leader. Jiang once revealed to Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew that ‘it was the responsibility of old leaders to groom the younger generation of political leaders.’

Hu’s career path to the top leadership suggests that he has demonstrated a capacity to work with and gain the favor of Party’s elders, both conservatives such as Song Ping and liberals such as Hu Yaobang; he is broadly appealing. His political beliefs are economically mainstream but politically conservative. He advocates reforming China’s economy, but steadfastly defends the Communist Party’s monopolization of political power, making him a ‘moderate’ with wide appeal. Deng’s endorsement of Hu stood him in good stead long after Deng was gone.

More importantly, Hu has displayed great skills in political maneuvering to smooth leadership transfer and to establish his own authority. He skilfully managed his relations with Jiang and earned Jiang’s trust and cooperation in leadership succession. Hu has showed both a dedicated discipline in following Jiang’s leadership and a quite but visible interest in promoting reform. This has been evident in his active support for key Jiang themes, such as pressing the important thought of Three Represents. At the same time, Hu’s reformist inclinations are suggested by the evolution of the Central Party School (CPS) under his tenure into a think-tank active in debate over political issues. As president of the CPS from 1993-2002, Hu built a reputation for being an ideological authority and a skilful technocrat. In 1995, Hu played a critical role in managing the anti-corruption drive that destroyed Chen Xitong, Politburo member and mayor of Beijing, who had been regarded as Jiang’s political rival. The episode solidified Hu and Jiang’s political relationship.

On 7 May 1999, during the NATO intervention in Kosovo, US bombers unleashed missiles that demolished the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Many Chinese believed that America acted deliberately in a brutal effort to intimidate China. Speaking on Chinese national television the day after the incident, Vice-president Hu used the strongest language to condemn the attack. However, in the same breath, he felt the need to warn against people who might try to take advantage of the demonstrations and called on individuals to maintain social order.

He was the first Chinese official to make a public response, and it was the first time most Chinese had ever heard him speak. For Hu, the address was a political windfall that broadened his public appeal and boosted his nationalist credentials. During 2001, Hu’s profile on the

614 Ibid., p. 31.
615 See the televised speech by Vice-President Hu Jintao, Xinhua, 9 May 1999.
international stage rose significantly when he was received by major foreign leaders with full honors. Hu had been active in Chinese foreign police after becoming vice-president. In October 2001, he embarked on a five-nation tour, including Russia, Britain, France, German and Spain. Hu had important opportunities to meet US leaders in 2002.616

5.3 The ‘Hu-Wen New Deal’

It has been said the ‘third generation’ of CCP leaders headed by Jiang reflected four main features: ‘technocratic’ backgrounds and outlooks; training in the Soviet Union during the 1950s; work in the intraparty apparatus at the provincial and central levels; and suspicion of the United States and the West. And the ‘fourth generation’ also exhibited the predominant characteristic of coming from ‘technocratic’ backgrounds, as show in the following table.

But there are other attributes characterized the new Party leadership. First, this was the post-Sino-Soviet split generation, who came to age in the aftermath of the 1960 rupture between Moscow and Beijing – thus one assumes that their affinity to Russia is less than their predecessors. Second, the vast majority had background of Party work in the provinces. Third, there were substantially younger and they were the best-educated leadership in CCP history. Fourth, the fourth generation leadership is the ‘Cultural Revolution generation’ – but not all experienced the CR in the same way. More significantly, as far as the top leadership team, they were the best-trained and more experienced generation. Like Hu Jintao, other eight members of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Education Background</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Engineering, Qinghua University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Bangguo</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Engineering, Qinghua University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen Jiabao</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Geology, Beijing Geology Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia Qinglin</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Engineering, Hebei Engineering Institute</td>
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<td>Zeng Qinghong</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Engineering, Beijing Engineering Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huang Ju</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Engineering, Qinghua University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wu Guanzheng</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Engineering, Qinghua University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Li Changchun</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Engineering, Ha’erbin Indu. University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luo Gan</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Engineering, Beijing Steel Institute</td>
</tr>
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the PBSC all saw their career take off in Deng’s era. They fit the profile for a future generation of leaders who had been repeatedly employed throughout the 1980s – younger in age, tertiary-educated, professionally competent and politically reliable.

Wu Bangguo, No. 2 in the Party’s hierarchy, Chairman of the NPC, became, in 1985, deputy secretary of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee, assisting the work of Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji and then succeeded them in 1991. He was elected member of the Politburo in 1992, and was augmented as member of the Secretariat of the CCP, and thus transferred to work in the central leadership. The following year he was appointed vice premier of the State Council.

Wen Jiabao, No. 3, Premier, also had a remarkable political career. He became an alternate member of the Secretariat and director of the General Office of the CCP at the age of 45. Five years later he was elected an alternate member of the Politburo and also member of the Secretariat. As a vice premier, Wen worked closely with Premier Zhu Rongji for five consecutive years since March 1998 before becoming Zhu’s successor. Hu-Wu-Wen would become the backbone of this new leadership team.617

Since the transfer of power from the third generation leadership to the fourth has been the smoothest in the history of the CCP, Hu’s consolidation of power has also been the most effective and uneventful. After coming to power, the new leadership appears to be remarkably stable. Hu, Wu and Wen have proven an experienced and capable team, who work very well together without encroaching on each other’s bureaucratic or policy turf. Hu has moved gradually and deliberately to consolidate more widely his power base – both within the leadership and the Party apparatus.618

To take a broader perspective, they contributed to an emerging political system with a collective leadership in which Hu is largely the ‘first among equals.’ In this new era, the decisive role of the ‘strong-man’ in decision-making and the zero-sum games in elite politics have gradually been replaced by ‘Chinese-style checks and balances’ among competing factions. Political negotiation and compromise are taking place far more often than before because no individual, no faction, no institution, and no region can become dominant power. But working together, they have been able to shape China’s politics in the recent years. Along with his political partner Premier Wen, Hu unfolds a set of policies that bears his own political trademark.619

Judging from the record so far, Hu and Wen have built on the themes of the Jiang Zemin era to pursue an activist agenda of liberalizing economic and political reform and have projected a liberal approach to leadership. It is worth noting that Hu and Wen had decisively dismissed the incompetent senior officials during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic in

2003, projected an image of caring for commoners, and polished their leadership image at home and abroad. Hu-Wen new policy initiatives have even earned a positive term, i.e., the Hu-Wen New Deal.620

In terms of reform and opening-up, the Hu-Wen New Deal has undertaken several steps and emphasized new themes that together have been described in China’s media as its distinctive approach to leadership. These departures in the political process emphasize collective leadership, decision-making transparency, official accountability, and responsiveness to interests of China’s people. These steps include routine public reporting of meeting of the Politburo, the Party’s top decision-making body. Even more remarkable, Xinhua was for the first time given the opportunity to report on the meetings of the PBSC. A similar effort is apparent in the reporting of State Council plenums and executive sessions under Premier Wen. Both Hu and Wen have been depicted as promoting a ‘scientific and democratic’ style of decision making that emphasizing broadened consultation with interested constituencies, expert advice and feasibility studies, and collective leadership.621

The most prominent instance of enforcing leadership accountability was the dismissals of Minister of Health and Beijing Mayor in April 2003 for their mishandling of the SARS epidemic. In terms of policy, the more interior-oriented and populist agenda is certainly an important shift, but many policies begun under Jiang’s tenure have continued. They have pushed ahead with various market-oriented reforms, particularly in the state industrial and banking sectors. These are the two least reformed sectors of the economy, but significant strides have been made in each case since 2002. New reforms have also been introduced in the agricultural sector in an effort to boost decade-long declines in rural incomes. Generally speaking, with the exception of the realm of intellectual property rights, the government has pushed ahead in complying with China’s accession commitments to the WTO. Politically, however, the Hu-Wen leadership has done nothing to loosen coercive control on dissent, the Internet, or other potential challenges to CCP rule. To the contrary, those who hoped that Hu might be a Gorbachev-in-waiting have been sorely disappointed.622

The new steps and themes have proceeded under the broad ideological umbrella of the Three Represents. Since becoming the Party’s leader, Hu has served as the frontline spokesman in the effort to explicate the significance of the Three Represents and stimulate renewed study of them. Hu presided over the current Politburo’s first meeting in November 2002, which commissioned nationwide study of the congress’s political report and authorized a new ‘upsurge’ in studying the Three Represents, as mandated by the Party congress.623

On July 1, 2003, Hu gave a long speech on the Three Represents to the opening session of a

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620 Ibid.
621 See ‘Hu’s in Charge,’ The Economist, August 18, 2005; also see H. Lyman Miller, ‘The Hu-Wen Leadership at Six Months,’ pp. 3-4.
622 Ibid.
theoretical symposium convened to explore the various implications of this ideological doctrine. His speech was rather well constructed. He started by acknowledging the role of Jiang Zemin in explicating the Three Represents, thus paying respect to the senior leader. Then he stated that the Three Represents had developed in three stages – February 2000 (which Jiang first enunciated the concept) to June 2001, July 2001 (on which day Jiang gave his Party Day speech) to November 2002, and November 2002 (the 16th Party Congress) to the present.

This exposition clearly presented the Three Represents as an evolving concept, thus giving Hu, as General Secretary, the scope that he needed to develop the doctrine in the future. He could ‘keep up with the times’ by continuing to make additions to the Party’s ideology. At the end of the speech, Hu listed some 14 questions, including how to improve the economy, how to expand employment, how to foster China’s ‘national spirit’ (minzu jingshen), and how to build the CCP’s ‘ruling capacity’ (zhizheng nengli). These questions gave Party theorists plenty of scope to develop the official doctrine based on the Three Represents in the future.624

The other important trend of CCP’s ideological development is the increasingly active role of the CPS, over which Hu presided for a decade until 2002. In May 1994, the Party’s Central Committee issued a document entitled ‘On the Strengthening of Work of Party School under a New Situation,’ which gave equal emphasis to training cadres not only with a solid grounding in MLM but in applying these theories to cope with new and real situations. The document called on Party school at all levels to steadfastly adhere to this task in the continuous training of cadres. To keep up with the times, the CPS established the Center for Research on the Theory of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Also, the Institute of International Strategic Studies was established to broaden the horizon of those attending the CPS.625

Thus, under Hu’s leadership, the once reclusive school has begun teaching international politics and economics, and it has recently fostered a lively intellectual environment in which foreign scholars have lectured, and the experiences of foreign political parties have been examined. More significantly, it has served as a platform where new party ideas are initiated and tested, and new party doctrines are formed, while engages and facilitates the transformation of the official ideology, and develops policy discourses that support party identity and guide the formation of actual policies. It has become a think-tank active in debate over political reform. It was at the CPS Jiang first formally delivered his important thought of the Three Represents, and Hu increasingly used the CPS as a forum to present his new ideas, such as the Socialist Harmonious Society.626

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624 Ibid.
5.4 The Harmonious Society

Hu’s important contribution to Party’s ideological innovations and political development is his concept of Harmonious Society, which was first enunciated in his speech at the CPS in February 2005. Actually, the term of ‘harmonious society’ was originally mentioned in the resolution of the 16th Party Congress in November 2002. Toward the end of his tenure in office, Jiang Zemin began to promote the overarching goal of building a comprehensively well-off society (xiaokang shehui). After succeeding Jiang, Hu started to modify and replace Jiang’s vision with one of his own and put forward his more sophisticated doctrine of building a ‘Socialist Harmonious Society’ (shehuizhuyi de hexieshehui).627

Officially, Hu’s notion has been described as both a society full of vigor and a society of unity and harmony. It is a society where the interests of various sides should be coordinated in an overall manner, social administrative mechanisms undergo constant innovation and optimization, and society develops in an orderly manner. Since a Socialist Harmonious Society is the intrinsic nature of socialism, it should also be a society that reflects the essence of socialism. That is to say, it is the society that constantly emancipates and develops productive forces, and eliminates exploitation and polarization. It is also a society wherein the masses can own production materials, get along equally, conduct democratic consultation, develop freely and eventually realize common prosperity through their diligent labor. With respect to social relations, the new notion was described as a society ‘in which all the people will do their best, each individual has his proper place, and everybody will get along in harmony with each other’, as the society is built on ‘democracy and rule of law, justice and equality, trust and truthfulness, amity and vitality, order and stability, and a harmonious relations with nature.’628

However, the analysis that underlies Hu’s vision, on the other hand, reveals some of the social problems that have developed in China – in particular, social stratification and inequality, which have led to disharmony in society. China now has among the world’s fastest growing Gini coefficient ratings, a measure of the pace of income disparity and social stratification, as large numbers of the populace have been left behind as others have enriched themselves from the reforms. This disadvantaged and disenfranchised sector, known as ruoshi qunti, has mushroomed over the past decade. During the Jiang era, economic policies disproportionately benefited the coastal areas to the neglect of the interior. The rural sector in particular experienced relative deprivation. Rising social inequalities have led to rapidly rising incidents of social unrest. ‘Mass disturbances’ (i.e., demonstrations and riots) numbered 58,000 nationwide

628 Ibid.; also see Xinhua, February 19, 2005.
in 2003, and rose to 74,000 in 2004 and 87,000 in 2005. Most of such incidents were caused by tension between cadres and masses.629

The Party’s Organization Department attributed these disturbances largely to growing income inequalities, saying that ‘if income inequality cannot controlled within certain limits, the broad masses of the people will inevitably lose faith in socialism and their faith in the Party will be shaken. It is even possible that reform could be broken off and social chaos followed.’630

But the problem was not just income inequalities; it was also a matter of local cadres arbitrarily seizing economic opportunities, preventing people under their control from the chance to prosper. Economic reforms, after more than two decades, arrived at a crossroads. If the social ills were not remedied, it was possible that Chinese society might fall back to the level of development of the pre-reform period. Or, even worse, China might fall into the ‘Latin American trap,’ whereby a country is unable to sustain development due to the over-concentration of wealth in the hands of a small elite and the spread of deepening poverty and instability throughout society. Therefore, some commentators argued that on the chessboard of modernization, reform, development, and stability are three closely linked strategic pieces, and China must pay particular attention to achieve orderly development. To tackle these problems, Hu’s Harmonious Society presents a programmatic solution to restore social justice and create common prosperity, and more importantly, to deal with China’s ‘performance dilemma’ and develop an innovative model of political legitimation.631

Samuel Huntington’s ‘King’s dilemma,’ that is ‘dilemma of political achievements,’ serves as a popular starting-point for a critical analysis of the first two decades of economic reforms. According to Huntington, autocratic rulers may undermine their basis of power by adopting reforms, improving economic performance and thus breeding demands for political participation and democratic freedom, but may risk the same result if they do not do so.632

Thus, the notion of a ‘Socialist Harmonious Society’ starts from the acknowledgement of serious social contradictions that have risen in the process of reforms. Besides the well-known problems of economic imbalances, energy and infrastructure bottlenecks, Hu Jintao highlighted pressing social issues such as the ‘people’s growing and increasingly diverse material and cultural needs’, ‘the increasingly complex interests in different social sectors’, and ‘the great fluidity of personal flows, social organization and management’. He also admitted ‘the appearance of all sorts of thought and cultures’, the fact that ‘people’s mental activities have become noticeably more independent, selective, changeable, and different’ as well as ‘people’s

630 Josoph Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, 2nd, p. 256.
631 Ibid., pp. 256-7.
heightening awareness of democracy and the law and growing enthusiasm for political participation."633

Quite different from former party rhetoric that emphasized the fundamental need of maintaining social stability through rigid instruments of party-state control, we find here an explicit recognition of social complexity, of diverging social interests and of pluralist tendencies translating into demands for political participation. The discourse of a ‘harmonious society’, of course, should not be misread as a signal to launch democratic reforms. Rather, it appears as a strategic attempt of the new leadership to rationally resolve the root causes of growing social contradictions that are increasingly perceived as a risk to social stability and to the political legitimacy of CCP rule. The underlying assumption is that unless these issues are addressed, social and political instability will increase and lead to disharmony.634

Also, the concept of a ‘harmonious society’ entails a new way of management of social expectations. By projecting the ideal of a society ‘in which all the people will do their best and each individual has his proper place,’ the Party gives rise to social expectations that it will not only satisfy people’s basic material needs, but create conditions that allow everyone a fair chance to develop his or her individual abilities to the fullest extent and thus to contribute to the creative vitality of society as a whole. Some scholars take up this rhetoric in the name of ‘self-creation, self-development, and self-realization.’635

At the rhetorical level, this vision goes far beyond the ‘paternalist’ mode of legitimation in many former Soviet-type societies, where people were provided basic existential guarantees in exchange for social immobility and political loyalty. Rather, it seems to approach more ‘liberal’ governance styles in modern industrial states that guarantee equal opportunities to their citizens while assigning them with the responsibility of taking risks which involve individual choice. In this idealized vision, the legitimacy of one-party rule is validated in terms of social entitlement vis-a-vis the party-state and of more symmetric contribution of rights and responsibilities between the individual and the state. It is also in this context that some scholars request the intensification of political reforms, the institutionalization of democratic mechanisms and the provision of civil rights to satisfy the growing demands for political participation.636

Realistically, of course, some would say that this new form of ‘liberal’ governance does not apply to the whole populace but only to the educated and affluent elites, which, in fact, appear as the main protagonists in the vision of a ‘harmonious society’. At least in their eyes, the concept assigns to the Party a central role in the dynamic process of economic development, social engineering and nation building. This seemingly open-minded approach, however,

converges in a peculiar way with traditional Confucian modes of governance: on the one hand, political leaders are ‘responsible’ to develop their individual potentials to the full and thus to contribute to the nation’s material development. On the other hand, they are expected to subscribe to traditional schemes of social self-governance based on Confucian ethics of individual self-discipline and self-improvement and thus to contribute to build a ‘spiritual civilization’.  

Here again, the Party seeks to justify its ‘historical governing mission’ and ruling position by reference to a unique blend of modern liberal and of traditional norms of social responsibility and government. While ideological innovation is regarded as a necessary concomitant of rapid social transition, it still remains anchored in the orthodox doctrine of legitimacy provided in Confucianism, thus following an evolution path of ideological change. In this sense, the Harmonious Socialist Society concept presents a unique blend of classical liberal and traditional Confucian norms of social governance. Some scholars argue further, while future welfare policies will continue to require a sufficient measure of economic growth and performance, the emphasis on ‘performance-type legitimacy’, which at the best produces specific support, must be replaced by an emphasis on a new ‘harmony-type legitimacy’ to produce enduring support for Party rule. If this lesson is not learned in time, they warn, ‘social instability will eventually swallow up the previous achievements in efficiency and accumulation of wealth’.  

The inclusion of ‘harmonious society’ in Chinese socialist lexicon, in terms of political development, represented an extension of the move away from the anachronistic notion of class struggle and antagonism, and also constituted a rhetorical approach to addressing the emergent class divides of the socialist market economy and the new antagonisms that have emerged in post-Mao reform society. Since the early 1980s, the idea of socialist material and socialist spiritual civilizations has provided an ideological framework through which the CCP articulated the values necessary to achieve ‘balanced development’. While continued economic growth highlighted gain in ‘material civilization’, regular morality drives promoting ‘socialist spiritual civilization’ ostensibly to instill within the Chinese people a modern socialist morality robust enough to handle the new challenges of the socialist market economy. Slogans such as ‘to grasp with two hands’ (liangshou yiqi zhua) reinforced the idea that complimentary progress in both the economic and moral spheres was necessary if China was to achieve its developmental ends without losing its soul in the process.  

The two civilizations became necessary halves of the coin of human existence that required a unifying narrative representing the management of a multi-layered struggle between economic and moral progress, materialism and ideology, reform and conservatism, globalization and

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637 Ibid.
nationalism, cultural dissolution and positive repackaging of China’s historical traditions. As a more advanced stage of development, a ‘harmonious society’ was to feature democracy, the rule of law, equity, justice, sincerity, amity and vitality. Although focused on the balancing of relationships and resolution of contradictions domestically, the concept has also been employed in relation to the international environment and accounts of China’s ‘peaceful rise’. The achievement of a harmonious society became a key target of China’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan for 2006-2010, which focused on dealing with social problems and divisions arising from inequity in economic growth and on promoting more balanced, or scientific development.640

5.5 The Scientific Outlook on Development

In his early years as Party and state leader, Hu worked hard to establish himself as a man of people – a leader concerned with the welfare of those left behind in China’s headlong rush toward economic development, and wanted to adopt new approach aimed to correct the presumed overemphasis in recent years on the pursuit of increases in gross domestic product (GDP), which encourages the generation of false figures and dubious construction projects along with neglect for the social welfare of those left behind in the hinterland. Beginning with the Third Plenum of the 16th Central Committee in fall 2003, Hu has started to establish his own ideological thought, though he has been careful to depict it as built on the Three Represents of Jiang (as well as on Deng’s Theory and Mao’s Thought).

The key notion in this emerging body of ‘Hu Jintao thought’ is the Scientific Outlook on Development, which is now described as Party’s strategic thought: In light of the basic reality that China is in the primary stage of socialism, the Scientific Outlook on Development has been formulated to meet new requirements of development by analyzing China’s developmental practices and drawing on the experience of other countries. It is a major strategic thought that China aims to uphold and apply to developing Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The Scientific Outlook on Development takes development as its essence and puts people-oriented approach as its core, with comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement and overall consideration as its fundamental approach.641

The first time Hu used the term of the Scientific Outlook on Development appeared during his September 2003 inspection trip to Jiangxi Province. The context is interesting, because Jiangxi is one of the lesser-developed, agricultural provinces where the scientific development concept is intended to address. So it became clear from the start that it was not science per se that he had in mind. As Hu has done before, he also made a point of visiting the old revolutionary sites in the province, where the CCP was based in the early 1930s, and praising the spirit of Mao and

640 Ibid.
641 Beijing Review, November 1, 2007, p. 15.
other first generation revolutionaries. Furthermore, in December that year Hu would give an expansive talk on the 110th anniversary of Mao’s birth, lauding Mao extensively. In light of these actions and his well-known 2002 trip to Xibaipo, the CCP’s last ‘capital’ before it entered Beijing in 1949, a pattern emerges whereby Hu has repeatedly tried to identify himself with China’s revolutionary history. Notably, this impulse comes even as Hu has tried to move forward a distinctly post-revolutionary future, in which market, the law, and institutions circumscribe the parameters of political life.642

The Scientific Outlook on Development tries to reconcile these seemingly divergent political impulses, as demonstrated in Hu’s speech during the trip:

It is necessary to solidly adopt the scientific development concept of coordinated development, all-round development, and sustainable development, and to actively explore a new development path that conforms to reality, further improves the socialist market economic structure, combines intensified efforts to readjust structure with the promotion of rural development, combines efforts to bring into play the role of science and technology with efforts to bring into play the advantages of human resources and the environment, combines opening up to the outside world with opening up to the other parts of the country, and strives to take a civilized development path characterized by the development of production, a well-off life, and a good ecological environment.643

Hu again used the term ‘Scientific Outlook on Development’ on his early October 2003 trip to Hunan, another inland province that is identified with China’s revolution and being left behind in recent years. This time he said: ‘The broad masses of cadres and people in the central region must conscientiously enhance their sense of responsibility and urgency for accelerating development, firmly foster and resolutely implement the Scientific Outlook on Development, actively explore ways of development that conforms to reality, continuously inject new impetus for development through reform, and strive for faster and better economic and social development.’644

That these first two policy explanations occurred away from the capital and in the interior of China suggests two main things about Hu’s strategic thought: ‘taking people as the basis’ and ‘comprehensive development’. Both seemed as deft, but substantial modifications of Jiang’s priorities. The former contrasted with Jiang’s emphasis on commercial and social elites (although, to be fair to Jiang, his own Third Represent spoke about the broad masses), while the latter was an implicit criticism of the unbalanced growth that had favoured the coastal provinces, neglected the interior and agriculture, and damaged the environment. Hu was thus subtly, but substantially, shifting the Party’s reform agenda, and at the same time giving evidence of his own attentiveness and concern for the downtrodden. The Politburo formally endorsed Hu’s

643 Ibid.
Scientific Outlook on Development at its meeting in November 2003; and in February 2004, at the special seminar convened by the Central Committee, the term had been formally put forward. It was adopted as new guidelines for social and economic development by the National People’s Congress in March of the same year.645

In the following years, the Central Party School, the CCP’s propaganda organs, and Hu, himself, began to develop and elaborate the Scientific Outlook on Development, and in so doing they turned it into an umbrella theory — under which numerous policies could be encompassed. For example, by December 2005, Hu was able to give a remarkable speech that embraced all the following topics under the rubric of the Scientific Outlook on Development: improving the rural situation; accelerating economic growth; overcoming energy bottlenecks; efficiently using resources; fostering competitiveness and a culture of innovation; reforming the administrative system; improving government transparency and introducing e-government; continuing the transformation of state-owned enterprises without allowing state asset stripping; controlling pollution and environmental degradation; further opening to the global economy; improving public health and safety; increasing employment, job training and reemployment; opening up the labor market; solving the internal migration problem; constructing new social security systems for basic services and pensions; improving tertiary and secondary education, particularly in rural areas; deepening poverty relief programs; improving workplace safety standards; dealing more effectively with social unrest; improving relations with the ethnic minorities; and undertaking a series of measures to strengthen the Party apparatus from top to bottom. It looked more like a comprehensive policy blueprint – all in the name of the Scientific Outlook on Development.646

While generally associated with economic development, the Party leaders made it clear that there is an important political dimension to the concept. Vice president Zeng Qinghong emphasized that the scientific development concept would entrench the Three Represents and would, if successfully implemented, result in social stability and harmony.647

Wang Mengkui, head of the State Council Development Research Center, presented perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of the concept in Qiushi, the Party’s theoretical journal. Wang depicted it as correcting the flaws that have stemmed from continuing impact of the old planned economy on the one hand and from the ‘inherent contradictions and drawbacks’ of the market economic system on the other. He argued that many ‘gaps’ had appeared in China’s social development, ‘including those between urban and rural areas, between different areas, and between the income levels of different citizens.’ Although Wang emphasized the importance of having an ‘overall plan’ for harmonizing reform, development, and stability, he also emphasized that overall planning ‘absolutely does not require the government to intervene in the

production and operation of enterprises.’ Apparently, Wang has in mind greater government efficiency, better governmental supervision, the development of more effective social security systems, and perhaps more effective distribution of government resources.648

Premier Wen linked the concept not only to China’s economic and social development strategy but also to the project of raising both the ‘governing ability’ of the CCP and the ability of the government to carry out its public management and public service functions. Thus, the Scientific Outlook on Development became inextricably intertwined with the campaigns to improve the Party’s governing capacity and advanced nature. As Hu emphasized, ‘Building up the Party’s governing ability and construction of the Party’s advance nature are two closely related things that supplement and enhance each other. They should run through the Party’s ideological construction, organizational construction, improvement of work style, and institutional construction.’649

Another important element of Hu’s Scientific Outlook on Development concerned pollution problems in China, which remain among the worst in the world. Chinese leaders recognize this and have taken steps to improve scientific understanding for the problems and have promulgated a comprehensive set of broad environmental status, making the environment a prerequisite to achieve ‘sustainable development’ in China. Many Chinese officials, even environmental protection authorities, have believed that China’s pollution problems will be resolved once it has developed economically.

A similar belief is held by proponents of the ‘environmental Kuznets curve,’ which refers to an inverted U-shape relationship between economic growth in a country and its pollution emissions. Kuznets curve theories suggest that pollution will begin to decrease after a country reaches a per capita GDP of between US$3,000 to 5,000. Some areas in China have achieved a per capita GDP within that range. In addition, if China’s per capita GDP is measured in terms of PPP international dollars then, nearly half of China’s provinces reached a per capita GDP of $3,000 in the early 1990s and all but three by 2000. Chinese official statistics indicate that some pollutants have started to decline at provincial and national levels; however other pollutants continue to increase. Industrial wastewater effluent discharges are declining in many provinces while sulphur dioxide (SO2) emissions continue to rise.650

The evidence shows that economic development alone does not ensure a shift along the environmental Kuznets curve; other conditions are necessary, including more proactive policies and leadership. In the first years of Hu’s leadership, the authority was trying to put a stop to the gargantuan projects of the 1990s and put in their place a more sustainable approach to development. The central government’s environmental watchdog was upgraded to ministerial

status as the new Ministry of Environmental Protection in 2008. Dr. Guo observed China’s authorities have recently launched the ‘environmental new deal’ under the guideline of the Scientific Outlook on Development. From command-and-control strategy, to market-based environmental economics, and from state governance to cooperative governance, the new policy represents a new direction in China’s environmental protection. It mirrors a fundamental shift in China’s developmental strategy. The combined efforts should help produce some significant improvements in China’s environment in the years to come.651

International environmental organizations welcomed the new approach as it appeared to react in a constructive manner towards long-standing criticisms by Western economists that China’s quantity-driven growth could not be maintained for an indefinite period. By stressing ecological and other qualitative aspects of economic and social development and by integrating the term ‘sustainable development’ into official policy, the Chinese leadership aimed to demonstrate its innovative capacities. In the domestic context, particular emphasis is given to the ‘scientific’ character of concept, signifying the objective qualification of the party-state to formulate and implement this strategic guideline, which has been reflected specifically in the so-called ‘five overall plan’ (wuge tongchou) attached to the new concept: overall planning for urban and rural development; for regional development; for economic and social development; for harmonious development of man and nature; and for domestic development and opening the country to the outside world.652

In light of a dominant perception of growing income disparities and social inequalities in China, the ‘overall planning’ envisaged here seems to legitimize social expectations that the Party will not let this trend go unheeded, but actively arrange for mechanisms of compensation between urban dwellers and peasants, between East and West China, and between the social-economically privileged and the underprivileged, at least in the long run. This is a clear departure, at least at the ideological level, from the elitist orientation of the previous leadership under Jiang. In this way, the Scientific Outlook on Development not only claims to present an innovative embodiment of new leader’s populist approach, but also projects a specific redistributive role of the party-state in pursuing social equality and ‘common interest’ which, in turn, supports the normative justification of its leading position in the China’s modernization drive.653

Some Chinese scholars also argued that the ‘economic first’ strategy had run its full course, and that economic development along could not solve all social problems. If the government and ruling party continued to base its political legitimacy on economic achievement, the declining capability of the state to control economic performance in an era of market economy

651 Ibid.
653 Ibid.
and globalization would lead to a crisis of governance should China suffer an economic slowdown or a challenging economic situation.654

Zheng Bijian, one of Hu’s advisors, proposed three strategies to deal with the new challenges. The first grand strategy refers to a new pattern of industrialization. China’s development cannot rely on old patterns of industrialization of high input, high energy consumption, and heavy pollution. Instead, China should take new path of modernization with more high technology, higher economic efficiency, low resources consumption, less environmental pollution, and full utilization of human resources advantages. The second strategy highlighted active participation in economic globalization by transcending the path of modern latecomers of great powers and the Cold War mentality. The third grand strategy is to build a society of socialist harmony by transcending the outdated model of social governance. In sum, China’s strategy is aimed at peace and harmony, i.e., internal harmony and external peace.655

Economist Joshua Ramo summarized these new approaches in China as the ‘Beijing Consensus,’ which includes a commitment to innovation and constant experimentation, sustainable development and more equitable distribution, and a commitment to self-determination, instead of to one-size-fits-all neoliberal projects. Compared with so-called ‘Washington Consensus,’ the new approach is unusual because it rejects the universalism of the Western market fundamentalism, and tries to define Chinese characteristics for the first time.656

Whether one agrees or not, Hu’s Scientific Outlook on Development, which aimed to build a harmonious society, indicates clearly that China has been trying to create a new mode of modernization, with comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement and overall consideration as its fundamental approach.

5.6 The Harmonious World

Under the Hu-Wen leadership, China has also taken a new approach in foreign policy which demonstrates much greater moderation, engagement, and integration with the existing world order than prevailed in the past. Some analysts in China and abroad foresee a clear road ahead for China. They see Chinese leaders following a strategy that deals pragmatically with world conditions, conforms to international norms, and pursues international peace, development, and harmony seen in the interests of China, its neighbours, and other concerned powers, notably the United States.

The recent record of Chinese foreign policy shows ever expanding Chinese interaction with

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655 Ibid.
the outside world through economic exchanges in an era of globalization and broadening Chinese involvement within international organizations dealing with security, economic, political, cultural, and other matters. They demonstrate a continuing trend toward greater transparency in Chinese foreign policy decision making and policy formation. In general, CCP leaders are focused on promoting China’s economic development while maintaining political and social stability in China.657

Foreign policy serves these objectives by sustaining an international environment that supports economic growth and stability in the country. Foreign direct investment, foreign aid, foreign technology, and foreign enterprise have been critically important in China’s economic growth in the post-Mao period. China is the center of a variety of intra-Asian and other international manufacturing and trading networks; it is the world’s second-largest trading nation and the largest consumer of a variety of key world commodities and raw materials. China today depends fundamentally on a healthy world economy in which Chinese entrepreneurs promote economic development as an essential foundation for continued rule of the Party. At the same time, the world economy depends increasingly on China. The Chinese government exerts ever greater influence in international economic matters as a key manufacturing center for world markets and an increasingly prominent trading nation with a positive balance of trade and large foreign exchange reserves.658

China’s approach to its foreign relations became less ideological and more pragmatic as it sought friendly relations with all states on the basis of the ‘five principles of peaceful coexistence’ (heping gongchu wuxiang yuanze) – a set of principles expounded by Premier Zhou Enlai in the 1950s which called for mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. In Deng’s era, China focuses its work on economic modernization instead of on the class struggle which dominated Chinese politics in Mao’s era. China’s reform and open-door policy calls for peace, development and cooperation with the neighbouring countries and the world as a whole. Meanwhile, various theoretical elaborations were put forward in China regarding the concepts of revolution, war, and era in order to justify some major foreign policy actions including China’s changing approach to foreign communist parties and its efforts to promote friendly relations with ruling regimes in the developing world. In the process Mao’s theory of National Democratic Revolution, the ideological justification for China’s support for communist revolution in the developing world, was revised and finally discarded.659

Nor did Beijing offer much by way of tangible or rhetorical support for the Third World’s goal of establishing a new international economic order. China’s leaders no longer supported the

658 Ibid.
thesis that world war was inevitable, though lesser conflicts were not ruled out. In the mid-
1980s, China described its foreign policy objectives as maintaining world peace, developing
friendly cooperation with all countries regardless of social system, and promoting common
economic prosperity. Its stance on external issues would be determined according to the merits
of each case. Developed and developing countries alike were to be encouraged to contribute to
the maintenance of peace, stability, and economic progress within the existing world system.660

Chinese leadership priorities regarding economic development and domestic stability also
favor a foreign policy that is inclined to accept the world situation as it is and avoid disruptive
and assertive initiatives in international affairs. Modern history has taught the Chinese a very
clear lesson that China cannot develop well without a peaceful environment. Since Deng’s
‘independent peaceful foreign policy’ (heping duli waijiao) came into being in the early 1980s,
China has followed a peaceful foreign policy. Its strategy is said to accept the prevailing global
and regional balance of power and influence that is often dominated by the United States. It
pursues China’s advantage by working with existing regional and other international
organizations and cooperating more closely with international groupings dealing with security,
politics, culture, environment, and other matters.661

In 2005, China issued a white paper which provided an outline of this view of Beijing’s
strategy in foreign affairs. Titiled China’s Peaceful Development Road, the document stressed
that achieving peaceful development has been the ‘unremitting pursuit’ of the Chinese people
and administration for almost thirty years and that China’s approach will remain along these
lines and compatible with Chinese and international circumstances for decades to come. It
outlines the major policies China has taken to achieve the goal and its key features included
striving to sustain a peaceful international environment helpful to Chinese development and the
promotion of world development and peace, achieving Chinese development beneficial to China
and its economic partners through growing economic interchange conforming to economic
globalization, and doing China’s part to build a harmonious world with sustained peace and
common prosperity featuring more democratic international decision making than that
prevailing in the past. While acknowledging problems and conflicts in contemporary world
affairs, the overall optimistic assessment said that ‘there are more opportunities than challenges’
in the world today and the rise of China was one of the most salient international opportunities,
as ‘China’s development will never pose a threat to anyone.’662

In recent years, however, China’s rapid development has attracted worldwide attention. The
implications of various aspects of China’s rise, from its expanding influence and military
muscle to its growing demand for energy supplies, are being heatedly debated in the

660 Rosemary Foot, “China’s Foreign Policy in the Post-1989 Era,” in Robert Benewick & Paul Wingrove, eds., China
661 Ibid.
662 People’s Republic of China State Council Information Office, China’s Peaceful Development Road,
international community. Facing a rising China, there have been increasing wariness, fear, and suspicion from the world, particularly from the United States. The Bush Administration has been advised to adopt a new containment strategy to counterbalance the ‘China Threat’.663

In response to the ‘China Threat’ and U.S. pressure, the Chinese government proposed ‘peaceful development’ (heping fazhan), which has become a new strategic thinking in Chinese foreign policy under the Hu-Wen leadership. The concept of peaceful development was officially introduced at the 2003 Bo’ao Forum in Hainan by Zheng Bijian, Chairman of China Reform Forum, in his speech which he declared, ‘The only choice for China under the current international situation is to rise peacefully, namely, to develop by taking advantage of the peaceful international environment, and at the same time, to maintain world peace through its development.’ But at the time, there was continued disagreement on the use of the term ‘peaceful rise’ (heping jueqi) both in the Chinese authorities and academia. Originally, the concept, ‘China’s rise’ or ‘the rise of China,’ was first used by a Chinese distinguished scholar, Yan Xuetong of Tsinghua University, in his controversial book entitled International Environment of China’s Rise published in 1998, and then in his English article titled ‘The Rise of China in Chinese Eyes’ which appeared in Journal of Contemporary China (vol. 10, no. 26, 2001, pp. 33-44).

The concept was developed not only in terms of the Chinese history and international environment but also from the perspective of China’s foreign policy strategies under the new generations of Chinese leadership at the present and in the future. But it caused internal debates in China, mainly about possible misinterpretation of the term ‘rise’ that could boost the ‘China Threat.’ As a result, the Chinese government under Jiang rejected this concept and the word ‘rise’ was forbidden to appear in official documents. Thus, at the 2004 Bao’ao Forum, Hu Jintao called instead for ‘peaceful development’. Since then, ‘peaceful development’ has become CCP’s new ideological innovation in its foreign policy. Hu’s decision is that the rise of China should be discussed freely by scholars in their writings but the term of ‘rise’ is no longer used in government statements.664

The new foreign policy strategy is, to some extent, a continuity of Deng Xiaoping’s concept of ‘taoguang yanghui’ (keep a low profile and never take the lead) but a break away from Jiang Zemin’s notion of ‘duoji shijie’ (multipolar world). Under Jiang, building a multi-polar world implies to ‘multi-polarize’ the American uni-polarity and counterbalance the U.S. hegemony. This ‘peaceful development’ approach is, in fact, to accept the uni-polar structure of international system and that the U.S. will continue to be the hegemonic power in the long term. Professor Sutter observed that looking back at the post-Cold War period, Chinese foreign policy pronouncements and actions showed that even basic goals in Chinese foreign policy had

changed.  

One salient example involved Chinese opposition to ‘hegemonism.’ This was one of the guiding principles in Chinese foreign relations for more than twenty years, mainly in 1980s and the 1990s. It was successor to the principle of anti-imperialism that shaped Chinese foreign relations in the Maoist era. As China sometimes grudgingly accommodated to the continued strong superpower status of the United States during the George W. Bush administration, it dropped prominent treatment of anti-hegemonism as a goal in Chinese foreign relations. Chinese officials acknowledged in private that they continued to oppose hegemonism, and several indicated that Bush was the most hegemonic U.S. president in world affairs that they had seen, however, the goal of anti-hegemonism was overshadowed by public and private Chinese efforts to persuade Americans that China’s rise would not be a threat to the United States. Therefore, China tried to avoid direct confrontation with the U.S. in order to secure a favorable external environment for its rise, although China can adopt a multilateral and bilateral diplomatic approach in the unipolar world dominated by a single hegemony.666

More broadly, as China’s interactions with the rest of the world have increased, China’s view of international relations has undergone three significant changes: (1) from viewing international relations in ideological terms to viewing them in more conventional terms; (2) from viewing international relations as a zero-sum game to a win-win game; and (3) from a position of suspicion and hostility toward the international system, to one with which China identifies. These attitudinal changes have, in turn, led to China’s conceptualization of its relations with the outside world, and its redefinition of the objectives of its foreign policy in a way that is reassuring to the international community.667

China today has joined most international organizations and their related regimes. The current international regimes are dominated by Western countries. The core values, systemic structure, standards of behaviour and decision making procedures are not necessarily consistent with China’s strategic goals. Nevertheless, the Chinese leaders have realized that there is no viable alternative to participating in international regimes. Although China is under the influence and restraint of the current international systems, it will make necessary reforms and adjustments and might have some impact on the evolution of international systems. Thus, China’s foreign policy became sophisticated, complex, measured, and broadly effective, especially from the mid-1990s onward. Its strategy in the Asian Pacific regions has become more flexible and cooperative with multilateral organizations, such as the ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and APEC. From another perspective, joining international regimes such as WTO will provide powerful incentives for China to deepen its domestic

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667 Ibid.
reforms because China will not be able to succeed the tough global competition without making its institutions compatible with international regimes.\(^{668}\)

The ‘peaceful development’ strategy has also had an obvious impact on Beijing’s Taiwan policy. The CCP’s leadership has quietly shifted its Taiwan policy to ‘budu buwu’ (no independence, no war) – aimed at maintaining the status quo and putting aside the ‘tongyi’ (unification) for the time being. Deng made the unification one of the central tasks for the Chinese government, and Jiang pressed Taiwan for unification by declaring that the resolution of the ‘Taiwan issue’ would not be delayed indefinitely. However, Hu suggested in September 2005 that the resolution of the Taiwan issue was complicated and would take a long time, and that ‘fantaidu’ (struggle against the ‘Taiwan independence’) would be a long fight – without setting a timetable for the unification. This is a departure from Jiang’s ‘jitong’ (hasty unification) to a new thinking in the Taiwan policy that seek ‘peace,’ ‘reconciliation,’ ‘cooperation,’ and ‘win-win situation’ (heping, hexie, hezuo, shuangying) across the Taiwan Strait that could lead to a future of ‘peaceful development’ and ‘common prosperity.’\(^{669}\)

In 2005, The CCP invited Taiwan’s top two opposition leaders, Lien Chan (KMT) and James Soong (PFP), to visit mainland China, accompanied by Taiwanese legislators, politicians, businessmen and media leaders, and embarked on the first major historical dialogue and political interaction across the Taiwan-Straits since 1949. They held fruitful talks and established regular communication channels. However, serious differences remain between the CCP and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Beijing has demonstrated greater determination against Taiwan independence on the one hand and greater flexibility in exploring peaceful means to solve the Taiwan issue on the other hand.\(^{670}\)

Apparently, Hu prefers a velvet glove to the iron fist that his predecessor showed with his 1996 military exercises. Perhaps most important in the long run, China’s formidable economic power works to attract Taiwan. Its increasingly diverse and sophisticated economy has been persuading many leaders and ordinary people in Taiwan that they stand to gain from some accommodation rather than confrontation with the PRC. In 2008, the DDP lost the Presidential election to Ma Ying-jeou, the KMT candidate who ran on precisely such a platform. Soon after Ma’s election, direct flights between China and Taiwan – a bellwether issue – were finally inaugurated, and a host of measures to facilitate tourism and economic cooperation were adopted. Of course cross-strait relations are bound to continue to have ups and downs. But overall China can take pride in having successfully deployed a mature, patient approach to improve its position and stabilize relations with Taiwan.\(^{671}\)


\(^{671}\) Ibid.
Furthermore, with the new strategy, the Chinese leaders gave high priority to countering growing regional and international perceptions of an emerging threat coming from China. They did so by emphasizing efforts through diplomacy and other means to reassure China’s neighbors and eventually the United States and other powers that rising China was not a danger but a source of opportunity. This new Chinese goal provided the foundation for Chinese formulations in the twenty-first century regarding China’s ‘peaceful rise,’ China following ‘the road of peace and development,’ and more significantly, China seeking a ‘harmonious’ world order.672

In his political report to the 17th Party Congress in 2007, Hu outlined his views dealing with the realization of a Harmonious World:

To this end, all countries should uphold the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, observe international law and universally recognized norms of international relations, and promote democracy, harmony, collaboration and win-win solution in international relations. Politically, all countries should respect each other and conduct consultations on an equal footing in a common endeavor to promote democracy in international relations. Economically, they should cooperate with each other, draw on each other’s strengths and work together to advance economic globalization in the direction of balanced development, shared benefits and win-win progress. Culturally, they should learn from each other in the spirit of seeking common ground while shelving differences, respect the diversity of the world, and make joint efforts to advance human civilization. In the area of security, they should trust each other, strengthen cooperation, settle international disputes by peaceful means rather than by war, and work together to safeguard peace and stability in the world. On environmental issues, they should assist and cooperate with each other in conservation efforts to take good care of the earth.673

As professor Keith points out that, by promoting the notion of Harmonious World, the CCP leader now talks of Chinese-style international relations even as he avoids overweening claims to international leadership.674 Hu Jintao’s strategy as it relates to the character of the China’s international relations, is somehow new, but it also updates the notion of ‘harmony’ by synthesizing it with Zhou Enlai’s five principles of peaceful coexistence and its operational corollary, ‘seeking common ground while reserving differences’ (qiutong cunyi) together with Deng’s ‘independent foreign policy’ towards ‘peace and development.’ Bearing in mind, ‘harmony’ is an easier and more expressively Chinese concept to work with than ‘peaceful rise’. It pays a bigger political dividend embracing peace while taking the edge off potentially threatening connotation of ‘rise’. ‘Harmony’ neatly separates China out from the classical rise

674 Ronald Keith, China: From the Inside out, p. 131.
and fall of the great powers in the European balance of power and provides a positive basis for contemporary national cohesion.675

Moreover, in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, ‘harmony’ celebrated the greatness of Chinese civilization, thus supporting a culturally progressive rather than inherently aggressive and popular Chinese nationalism. ‘Harmony’, in its relation to ‘peaceful coexistence’, cuts across the past and present to challenge the contemporary ‘theory of the China Threat’ (zhongguo weixie lun) while projecting the positive identification of Chinese nationalism with internationalism. At the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, the word of he, used in the Chinese compound terms for ‘peace’ and ‘harmony’, was repeatedly projected in the performance on the undulating floor of the ‘Bird’s Nest’ stadium, highlighting the theme of the game – ‘One World, One Dream’. The Chinese leader’s foreign policy strategy has intensely focused on the same notion of ‘harmony’, which calls on the peoples of different nations to join hands to establish a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity.676

It should be noted that China’s cultural tradition, featuring ‘he er butong’ (harmony with differences) and ‘he wei gui’ (priority to peace), goes a long way toward facilitating China’s harmonious coexistence and sharing of prosperity with its neighbouring countries and the world at large. The CCP’s notion of Harmonious World emphasizes that the international community should also recognize, and show respect for, the reality of cultural and political diversity in the world.677

Diversity of civilization in the world, according to Premier Wen, is a basic feature of human society. It is also an important driving force for world progress. The numerous differences in historical tradition, religion, culture, social system, values and levels of development, Wen argues, are what make the world colourful and fascinating. Countries should recognize and accept such a reality. ‘Harmony with differences’ was a great thinking put forward by the Chinese ancient philosophers.678

Harmony is for the sake of living and growing together. Differences are aimed at achieving complement. Adopting the ‘harmony with differences’ attitude to view and to handle problems ‘is not only conducive to our warm treatment of our friendly neighbours, but also to helping defuse contradictions in the international community.’ Premier Wen reiterated this view when arguing that it was time to abandon the old Cold War mentality and develop a new way of thinking on the basis of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. ‘All countries should show greater tolerance and respect for diversity,’ and, the Premier emphasizes, ‘should learn to live in peace despite differences between and among them.’679

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675 Ibid.
677 Ibid.
678 ‘Turn your eyes to China,’ full text of Premier Wen’s December 10, 2003, speech at Harvard University, People’s Daily online, December 12, 2003.
679 Ibid.
5.7 Sources of CCP’s Legitimacy

It has been said before that ideology has played a crucially important role in Chinese politics, and it has figured very visible throughout the history of the CCP. The Party’s official ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, has been the cornerstone of its legitimacy. So, in this last section, let us discuss, after so much dramatic change and innovation of CCP’s doctrines, how the Party defines and maintains its legitimacy.

The concept of legitimacy refers to a political order’s worthiness to be recognized; the belief that a particular political order is just and valid. In its early usage in Roman jurisprudence no clear distinction is drawn between the legitimacy and legality of a regime, for it designated rule according to law in contrast to arbitrary rule or tyranny. Under the influence of Christian thought, in medieval jurisprudence the concept of legitimacy also remained closely tied to the ideas of natural law and a normatively ordered cosmos. With the rise of absolutism in the sixteenth century, the idea of secular justification of political power spread rapidly, and under the subsequent influence of social contract theory and Enlightenment thought the concept was gradually democratized and aligned with the idea of popular sovereignty. With the ‘legitimist’ disputes between ultra-monarchists and constitutional monarchists over the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in France, the concept finally entered into the mainstream political discourse.

The most celebrated academic study of legitimacy is unquestionably provided by German sociologist Max Weber. He stressed the importance of follower’s beliefs. Weber identified three distinct categories of legitimacy, each of which has had a profound influence on the work of subsequent scholars of legitimacy. He distinguished between legal-rational legitimacy, which rests on the belief in the legality of rules on which those with authority act; traditional legitimacy, which rests on the acceptance with customs and practices of tradition; and charismatic legitimacy, which rests on devotion to an individual leader believed to possess exceptional powers.

Chinese traditional understanding of original justification shares insights similar to those of Weber’s classification and can be articulated by using four Chinese concepts: mandate of Heaven (tian ming), rule by virtue (ren zhi), popular consent (min ben) and legality (he fa). This cognitive pattern of political legitimacy can further be summarized as follows: a ruler who has the mandate of Heaven, possesses the quality of virtue, shows respects to his subjects, follows the rules of the ancestors, and tries to win the hearts and minds of his subjects will be regarded a just and legitimate one. A just ruler will strengthen his legitimacy by promoting policies that

681 Ibid.
will benefit the people, not himself, by ensuring a relatively equal distribution of these benefits
and by allowing people to do what they do the best. But both Confucians and legalists agree that
common people are motivated primarily by profit and self-interest. To strengthen the mandate of
Heaven, Confucians believe, rulers must make decisions on behalf of the people, and those
decisions must not do harm to the well-being of the people. This belief in the government’s role
as a benefit provider has enabled Chinese governments to assume a more assertive role in
managing the economy.682

However, a corollary to this notion of the mandate of Heaven was the right to rebel if the
emperor failed to maintain harmony. It was, therefore, an ancient tradition providing for
rebellion as a means of deposing an intolerable imperial ruler – but rebellion was legitimate
only if it succeed.683

After the CCP came to power in 1949, it relied heavily on revolution as a basis for political
legitimacy, including orthodox Marxism, the personality cult, egalitarianism and state
corporatism. In the post-Mao era, Deng emerged as China’s paramount leader and he
acknowledged openly that the decades of political chaos and the failure to improve people’s
standard of living had weakened the Party’s legitimacy. Faced with a stagnated economy and
eroded public confidence, Deng decided to put an end to the pursuit of class struggle and the
mass political campaigns. The leadership has now relied heavily on utilitarian justification and
ideological pragmatism.684

Since he took office, Jiang and his colleagues have focused on three major areas for the
sources of the political legitimacy of the Party, that is, development, stability and national unity.
They identified reform and development as the only means to cope with growing internal and
external pressures, which will in turn help strengthen their authority. Furthermore, stability was
a prerequisite for reform and development. Domestically, the leadership has to maintain social
and political stability and prevent any sort of chaos from taking place at all costs. Internationally,
stability means a peaceful environment. Amidst its multifarious concerns, the CCP’s highest
priority has been national unity. As a result, the Chinese economy has experienced
unprecedented growth since it began to pursue the reform and open door policy three decades
ago, and such an impressive socioeconomic performance has provided the CCP with a solid
base for political legitimacy.685

Nationalist sentiment also plays a crucial role in helping the Chinese government to maintain
its political legitimacy. Scholars have pointed out that nationalism must be taken into account
when come to discuss the nature of political support in China’s current situation. They have
used different explanatory variables to explain political legitimacy. Yet, without taking into

682 Baogang Guo, ‘From Conflicts to Convergence: Modernity and the Changing Chinese Political Culture’, in Y.
Zhong & Hua, eds., Political Civilization and Modernization in China: the Political Context of China’s
683 J. Wang, Contemporary Chinese Politics: An Introduction, p. 6.
685 Ibid.
consideration of nationalism, any explanation is incomplete. There is no doubt that nationalism played a central role in China’s struggle for modernity and international respect throughout the twentieth century. The post-Mao CCP leadership came to recognize the potential of nationalism as more than an instrument for achieving political and social stability and reinforcing its own legitimacy. Party leaders also recognize nationalism as a powerful source of motivation that will propel the Chinese people to compete in the new century. The past two decades have witnessed the rise of state-led nationalism as an instrumental response to the decline of Communism, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The evidence of effectiveness of the movement is the success of nationalist campaigns the Party has launched in the early 1990s to promote patriotism and national prestige. It is likely that elite discourse and government campaigns work together to mobilize the public. These campaigns have helped the Party to increase the popularity of the authority and also overcome various economic and political difficulties domestically and internationally. More significantly, the state-led nationalism today is pragmatic and the Party is able to strategically take advantage of the domestic and international situations to improve its image and strengthen its power and legitimacy, as evident in the cases such as Hong Kong and Macau returns (1997 and 1999), Belgrade Booming protests (1999), bidding for hosting 2008 Olympic game (2000).  

Still, the legitimacy of the ruling CCP has become one of the most intense debates currently underway among scholars, cadres and policy-makers in China. This debate has its origins in China’s analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It spilled into public view in the early 2000s, when a series of Party pronouncements implicitly raised the issue of the CCP’s legitimacy as a pressing topic of discussion. As Gilley and Holbig observed in their study that the debate was launched and framed by the Party leadership via the Party school system, and, while this is clearly a bounded discourse, it has both top-down and a bottom-up dynamic, giving room to diverse views and arguments which can be discerned and analysed in a meaningful way.  

Based upon 168 articles between 2003 and 2007, from the China Academic Journals Database, Gilley and Holbig’s analysis shows that, while 30% of these Chinese opinion-leaders believed the CCP already faced a legitimacy crisis (hefaxing weiji), a large proportion (68%) believed that legitimacy was under some form of challenge or threat. They also looked at the perceived sources of legitimacy challenge or threat. In general, globalization and other international factors are downplayed (mentioned in 34% of articles) compared to domestic factors like changing values (63%), changing interests (61%) and the exhaustion of revolutionary-historical legitimacy. One set of strategies in response to these legitimacy challenges concerns economic

performance, as half of all authors mention economic growth as a crucial component of a legitimization strategy, while over one third stressed the importance of social equality. As far as institutions and governance are concerned, the main emphasis was on the rule of law (62%), and control of corruption (38%).

A second type of strategy related to various ideological theories. The ideological adaptation and innovation have been seen as the prerequisite of re-legitimating Party rule. Not surprisingly, the Three Represents was noted by more authors than any other (39%). Also frequently mentioned were Marxism (34%), Deng Xiaoping Theory (24%), Hu’s Harmonious Society (18%) and Maoism (13%). Moreover, while half of all authors (50%) use the word ‘democracy’ in discussing their strategies, the meanings attached to that term vary widely. Mentions of diminished sub-types of democracy are evenly spread across electoral democracy (20%), intra-party democracy (13%), and consultative democracy (12%). More significantly, the analysis shows that elite thinkers in China citing Western literature on political legitimacy widely – they even have replaced their concerns with the writings of one German Makesi (Karl Marx) with the writings of another German Makesi (Max Weber). It demonstrates that they are tackling the question of legitimacy in a rigorous manner, which may help to explain CCP endurance well into the future.

More significantly, with changes of official ideology, the CCP has reformed itself as it has involved from a revolutionary party into a more sophisticated governing party. Reforms within the CCP itself have sought to strengthen the Party organisation, to remedy deficiencies in its operational procedures and more significantly, to change the composition of both membership and leading bodies. Over the past half century, CCP membership has increased enormously, as Figure 5.1 shows.

Also, its occupational composition has changed in dramatic ways over the past three decades. Figure 5.2 displays the occupational composition of CCP members in 2007. Although workers farmers and soldiers continue to constitute the largest single group in the CCP, other groups, including managerial and technical personnel, and even private entrepreneurs (a fairly recent addition), also comprise significant percentages of the CCP’s membership.

Moreover, the nature of the Party’s values has changed as a result of reforms, justified by new ideologies as discussed above. In the mid-1950s, for example, peasants still formed over 60 per cent of Party membership. They were recruited mostly during mass campaigns, which heavily relied on political criteria such as class background. Generally they had a low level of education and lacked specialized knowledge. In 1979 when the reform started, approximately half of the CCP’s then 37 million members had joined the Party during the Cultural Revolution. During those years the Party recruited from among poor peasants and urban workers and emphasized

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688 Ibid.
689 Ibid.

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Figure 5.1 The Growth in Membership of the CCP's Party Congress, 1956-2007

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the [http://www.xinhuanews.net](http://www.xinhuanews.net).

Figure 5.2 The Occupational Composition of CCP Members (2007)

the values of class struggle and Maoist ideology. By 1998, another 20 million Party members had been recruited from more diverse social backgrounds using decidedly different criteria that emphasized economic development, some people getting rich first, mixed modes of ownership, reliance on market forces and remunerative incentives.\footnote{Colin Mackerras, Pradeep Teneja and Graham Young, \textit{China Since 1978: Reform, modernization and 'Socialism With Chinese Characteristics'}, 2nd edition, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1998, pp. 110-3.} It should be noted that the educational level of CCP has gone up significantly in the past three decades, now that ‘expertise’ is much more valued than ‘redness’ in the recruitment process. In 1998, among the 61 million CCP members, over 11 million were college graduates (17.8 %), about 4.5 times more than the general population average in the 1982 census. By 2007, about 24 million members held, at minimum, a two-year college degree, constituting 32.4 % of the total membership. The growth in the percentage of national-level party leaders with higher education has been particularly dramatic. For example, in 1982, none of the Politburo members had a university degree; among the 25 Politburo members selected at the 17th Party Congress in 2007, 23 (92 %) have a university degree. Furthermore, there are 52 members of the 17th Central Committee with PhD degrees, up from 12 in the 16th and 4 in the 15th Central Committees, respectively.\footnote{Bo Zhiyue, \textit{China's Elite Politics: Governance and Democratization}, Singapore: World Scientific, 2010, pp. 53-9.} With all the best and the brightest it has absorbed, the CCP has become a modernizing force in the country.\footnote{Guo, Xiaoqin, \textit{State and Society in China's Democratic Transition: Confucianism, Leninism, and Economic Development}, New York & London: Routledge, 2003, p. 56.}

In recent years, as a result of its study of foreign political parties and systems, as well as its own intensive self-examination, the CCP has been implementing a series of new policies and programs aimed to reinvigorating and strengthening its organizational apparatus from top to bottom. At the Fourth Plenum of the Sixteenth Party Congress in 2004, the CCP Central Committee adopted an important Decision on the Enhancement of the Party’s Governing Capacity, and subsequently, the Party undertook systematic and comprehensive programs intended to ‘rebuilding of the Party’ (\textit{dangde jianshe}), improving the ‘Party’s governing capacity’ (\textit{dangde zhizheng nengli}), maintaining ‘Party’s advanced nature’ (\textit{dangde xianjinxing}), and improving ‘inner-party democracy’ (\textit{dangnei minzhu}). The CCP leadership realizes that, in order to maintain its relevance and legitimacy, the Party must strengthen its ruling capacity, and it must become more professional and efficient, and the Party must rise to the challenges of the modern world. As the Party leadership stresses that the Party must develop a stronger sense of crisis, think of danger in times of peace, heighten their sense of hardship and governing, and earnestly strengthen the Party’s ability to govern. Also, the Party must draw experience and lessons from the success and failure of other ruling parties in the world and enhance its governance in a more earnest and conscientious manner.\footnote{K. Brodsgaard and Zheng Yongnian, eds., \textit{The Chinese Communist Party in Reform}, pp. 1-2.} Some scholars argue that the CCP has been constantly changing its views of legitimacy in
order to maintain its regime stability. First, they are pre-emptive, for the Party has demonstrated its willingness to adapt itself according to the time. This is one of the CCP’s strengths since so many other communist parties have failed to do so. Second, the CCP demonstrated a good understanding of the traditional cognitive model of political legitimacy. The ancient eudemonic justification has been refined several times to suit its needs. A comprehensive ‘balance sheet’ assessment of China’s strengths and weaknesses, collaboratively undertaken by China specialists at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies and the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, concluded that the regime’s strengths far outweigh its weaknesses.694

Therefore, the Chinese political system, which has been based and shaped by CCP’s ideology, has now been able to generate significant degrees of regime legitimacy by adapting rather successfully to a changing domestic and international environment. At present, an organizational alternative to the CCP is not in sight, and to many Western observers the majority of the Chinese people would like the Party to remain in power to ensure political stability.695

If we additionally factor in that the regime’s overall economic performance is still good, and that it has won China unprecedented ‘Great Power’ status in the international arena, the perspective of a rather strong and enduring ‘party-state democracy’ becomes more real than it may appear at first glance. Thus, the Chinese political system might be much better understood by looking at its capacity to generate political legitimacy and, hence, stability, rather than focusing on its numerous problem and structural weakness caused by market transformation and social change, as most China scholars usually do. The unquestioned truth of an illegitimate regime in China that informs so much scholarly research should not simply be taken for granted.696

Furthermore, Dr. Schubert, a leading German scholar on China, points out that, recently, there seems to be a growing inclination among some native as well as Western China scholars to test the hypothesis that one-party rule in China can indeed become more democratic and, consequently, more stable in the future.697 In his research, he hypothesizes on the capacity of the Chinese political system to generate legitimacy by identifying ‘zones of legitimacy’ in present-authoritarian China in which the people do express – actively or passively – their accordance with the regime in terms of ideology (moral values), structure (institutional order), and role of authority (quality of personnel), as laid out in David Easton’s approach to regime legitimacy.698

694 David Shambaugh, China’s Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation, p. 33.
697 Ibid., p. 193.
That is we need to conceptualize regime legitimacy as the net sum of those ‘partial legitimacies’ of moral values, institutional order and roles of authority which are generated in different spaces, as well as at different administrative layers and by different personal relationships within the Chinese political system.

As regards ideological legitimacy, i.e. the people’s moral consent to the regime and its values, the CCP has taken remarkable steps in recent years to broaden its support base in the Chinese society and to become a ‘governing party’ instead of a class-based party. Most CCP theorists believe that ideology still lies at the very heart of Party legitimacy. It is the key factor for public identification with the political authority, which fulfils various functions crucial to political, social and economic life, such as interpreting political order, cementing national identity, and mobilizing support. Ideological adaptations and innovations, such as Deng’s Theory, Jiang’s Three Represents, and Hu’s Harmonious Society, are thus seen as the prerequisite of legitimating Party rule.699

On the structural level, Chinese legal reforms have probably done the most to generate legitimacy for current regime. Surely, there is much well-founded criticism that the ‘socialist rule of law’ has not attained (and cannot attain) the quality of a genuine rule of law. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that the new laws and regulations have made officials more accountable and granted citizens more rights. On the personal level, the quality of the relationship between the people and the cadres in the local state – in both rural and urban China – is decisive for the regime’s political legitimacy.700

In short, the Party’s endeavours to generate legitimacy through a mix of official ideology, nationalism, economic performance, technocratic governance and limited political reform (including a more legally based system) – while successfully claiming to be only viable force in the country capable of guaranteeing social and political stability – have paid off and can explain what has been called the regime’s ‘authoritarian resilience’.701

But it should be emphasized that the political legitimacy in China must be examined more systematically, and do not leave the analysis at the point of the claim or warrant. In this regard, David Beetham has presented a more detailed model of political legitimacy, which takes into consideration the ongoing process of ‘legitimation’ in terms of communicative interaction in society aiming at reproducing regime legitimacy, and of the role of ideology in this process. According to Beetham, irrespective of the political system, power can be said to be legitimate to the extent that (1) it conforms to established rules (conformity of rules), (2) the rules can be justified by reference to shared beliefs (justifiability of rules), and (3) there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation (legitimation through expressed consent).

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701 Ibid.
consent). All three criteria have to be fulfilled in order to safeguard the legitimacy of political power.702

However, Dr. Schubert notes that the research on political legitimacy undertaken thus far by scholars in the China studies field is still too scant to make any generalized assumptions. A look at the literature shows that this issue has hardly been addressed up until the present. This is especially true with regard to the legitimacy-building potential of China’s political reform, which has yet to be thoroughly investigated by China scholars. As a matter of fact, research on legitimacy poses serious methodological pitfalls, not to mention considerable practical problems. To begin with, legitimacy is a ‘soft’ category within the social sciences, prone to change over time and difficult for quantitative and qualitative research. On the other hand, the micro-political approach is particularly sensitive, as it aims at investigating the political awareness of the people and their regime support. There is also too little belief in the possibility that one-party rule in China does not only depend on steady economic gains for the majority of the population, but could also be based on limited political reforms which make the regime more accountable and more democratic without fundamentally questioning the current political order.703

Political legitimacy in China is usually understood as the net outcome of the CCP regime’s economic performance, nationalist politics, and the Chinese people’s conservative preference for stability over uncertainty. The possibility of China’s political reforms creating meaningful ‘zones of legitimacy’ within the current political system has hardly been addressed to this point by systematic empirical research. Consequently, China’s political system has remained a ‘black box’ in terms of its capacity to adapt to changing external conditions and of how this adaptation exactly functions. Moreover, apart from prejudicial assumption and stereotyped views, many Western scholars believed that the current regime’s legitimacy has since long evaporated and cannot be regained by reforming one-party rule. Thus, China’s political reforms have never been considered viable and routinely discredited as too little and manipulated by the Party. So the impact of these reforms on current regime’s legitimacy is under-researched, arguably blinding us for a better understanding of its resilience. Therefore, Dr. Schubert argues for taking seriously the possibility of zhengzhi tizhi gaige (political system reform) that has generated critical degrees of political legitimacy for the CCP regime, and proposes a new agenda of micro-political research which should thoroughly address the relationship between different reform measures and the public’s responses to them in China.704

While supporting Dr. Schubert’s view, Gilley and Holbig argued further that legitimacy must be given a central place in explaining CCP regime’s durability. This is not only due to the fact that, as their studies show, CCP’s theorists are citing Western literature on political legitimacy

703 Ibid.
704 Ibid., pp. 203-4.
widely, but also that they are tackling the issue very seriously and even have worked out strategies to strengthen their sources of legitimacy, which may help to explain CCP regime’s popularity and endurance in China well into the future. Therefore, ‘We believe that in the ongoing process of adaptation, perceived legitimacy deficits or even legitimacy crises have to be taken into account as important triggers of institutional changes within the context of authoritarian rule. It is against this background that we take the legitimacy debate among Chinese elites to be relevant to the pace and specific process of institutional change.’

My thesis, to some extent, have filled the gap in this field of China studies, as it has undertaken a systematic and comprehensive analysis of changes of the CCP’s ideology, and how they have facilitated China’s reforms, re-built the Party and improved the political system as a whole, thus remarkably strengthened the regime’s legitimacy.

So I strongly support these scholars proposal that we should take the CCP’s political reforms more seriously, and ‘bring the party back in,’ that is, more closely and specifically to study the Party’s leading role in its ideological change and organizational adaptation. Also, as Professor He Baogang urged, we should think on the unthinkable, and take a revisionist view of the CCP’s political reforms, ‘viewing the Party with a fresh eye.’ And Western liberals should have the courage to adapt their principles to Chinese reality, looking objectively at the Chinese unique path of political development, both in terms of modernization and democratisation.

Conclusion

The thesis argues that The Chinese Communist Party’s ideology has undergone remarkable changes in the past three decades which have facilitated China’s reform and opening up as well as its modernization. To maintain its relevance and legitimacy, the Party has not only restructured orthodox Marxism and redefined Mao Zedong Thought, but also developed new doctrines, such as Deng Xiaoping’s Theory, Jiang Zemin’s Three Represents and Hu Jintao’s Harmonious Society. Instead of declining, China’s official ideology has thus been revitalized and reoriented, guiding the Party to adapt to rapid changes of socioeconomic situations, both internally and externally.

First, the Party has restructured its ideological orthodoxy. While reaffirming that Marxism-Leninism is ‘pure ideology’ and Mao’s Thought as ‘practical ideology’, the Party theorists declare that both Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought contained ‘fundamental principles’ and ‘specific principles’. The former refers to universal truths, such as dialectical materialism and historical materialism, which were universally applicable for it was a scientific worldview; while the latter refers to concrete truth that was an application of universal truth in concrete circumstances and thereby true only under certain historical conditions, and changed with time and context.

This distinction provided not only the basis for purportedly new approach to official doctrines but also a more coherent repudiation of the ‘whatever’ dogmatism. Significantly, the notion of ‘class struggle’ has been revised, modified, and in effect demoted, so that the ‘productive forces’ have been emphasized as the motive forces of history. Therefore, the Party had shifted its prime attention to economic development and socialist modernisation.

The Party leaders, such as more reform-minded Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, and theorists such as Su Shaozhi and Yu Guangyuan, proposed Marxism should also be treated as a ‘developing science’ and a branch of the social sciences, but not an all-encompassing ‘science of sciences.’ They regarded MLM as a method of analysis, the guide to action rather the criterion of truth; and applied MLM as a system of thought open to practice and adjustment. They encouraged a critical reassessment of established theory and practice, and permitted this effort to extend to China’s entire experience with Marxism. These efforts have been so transformative that they have brought revolutionary changes in Chinese thinking of, and approach to Marxism.

As Professor Colin Mackerras observed that ‘there has clearly been a substantial broadening in the Chinese approach to Marxism since the Third Plenum. To judge from what they write, Chinese Marxists show greater familiarity with the works of Marx and Engels now than was ever the case during the decade 1966 to 1976.’ Also, as David Shambaugh points out, the CCP
has changed the role that ideology plays in the Chinese politics while remolding Marxist ideology.

Second, the CCP has redefined Mao Zedong Thought, which is now regarded not only as the ‘sinification’ of Marxism, but also a collective wisdom of the Party. While the CCP’s 1981 Resolution reaffirms that Mao’s thought remains ‘the valuable spiritual asset of our party’ and that ‘it will be our guide to action for a long time to come’, it stresses that the Party must acknowledge that Mao made serious mistakes, and that some of these were guided by parts of his ideology that simply were wrong.

Mao’s political and theoretical errors included his over estimating the role of subjective will, the flouting of objective economic laws, the widening and absolutizing of class struggle, and the mistaken identification of the principle contradiction in socialist society. Shortly after the successful transition to socialism in early 1950s, Mao began adopting utopian approach as he became ‘smug and impatient.’ In his later years, Mao became increasingly radical, ‘confused right and wrong and the people with the enemy,’ which were not only at variance with Marxism, but also divorced from China’s realities.

Mao was thus ‘de-deified’, and the new orthodox view is that Mao Zedong Thought refers to accumulated wisdom through the whole process of the Chinese revolution. Mao may have been the main individual who articulated or expressed the results of this collective endeavour, but there were other contributors to ‘Mao Zedong Thought’, Such as Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Liu Shaoqi. They are Mao’s close colleagues, the leaders of the first generation of the CCP, and founding fathers of the PRC. They had also contributed quite significantly to the development of the Party’s doctrine.

This approach was in fact redefining and revising the official ideology, thus it allowed two further important steps in framing a new orthodoxy. One was the selective use of Mao; the other was the flexibility allowed to by continuing addition to CCP’s doctrines. Mao Zedong Thought as a product of collective experience could continue to adopt and grow, as the revolutionary movement developed and assimilated new elements. Theoretically, such operations of enclosure and exclusion were possible precisely because of the definition of Mao Zedong Thought as a ‘method’, the very quintessence being ‘practice as the sole criterion for testing truth.’ As Paul Healy and Nick Knight comment the line of reasoning bears a striking similarity to that of Lukacs when he insisted that the ‘essence’ of Marxism relates not to any substantive proposition made by Marx, but to the dialectical method itself.

Third, the CCP has been promoting Deng Xiaoping Theory as the Party’s new doctrine that addresses the ‘basic questions concerning the building, consolidation and development of socialism in China,’ which is precisely where Mao failed. Deng’s Theory has been said to be the ‘developmental theory of Marxism.’ The central theme is ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’, which had significantly redefined the notion of socialism. The theory maintains
that China, in terms of political arrangement and economic interpretation, has established a socialist society, which must be preserved. However, the socialist system has been limited by China’s poverty and backwardness. Also, the pernicious influences of feudal tradition and decadent capitalist ideas remain widespread. Thus, socialism in China is still in its primary stage, and the Party must proceed from this reality and not jump over this stage.

The central task of the primary stage of socialism is defined as socialist modernization, thus necessitating some measures that not consistent with the Marxist orthodoxy. In other words, the CCP has to achieve this intermediate goal before it can process to the next stage, just as Marx himself prophesied that capitalism was the necessary penultimate stage of development because it created the material abundance necessary for the realization of communist principles of distribution (‘from each according to his work to each according to his need’). The official timetable for socialism in China now sees the initial stage lasting at least until the middle of the twenty-first century, ending with the ‘basic realisation of socialist modernization’. This Theory is certainly useful in officially justifying both present and future policies, especially in programs of economic reforms and opening up to the outside world.

The CCP has been adamant that China would not become capitalist even if it used many aspects of a capitalist market economy to promote development. And they argue that the critical difference between a socialist market economy and capitalist economy seems largely to be a matter of who has political power in the country. In a capitalist country, the wealthy capitalist (owners of private property) dominate both the political and economic systems. In a socialist system, such as in China, political power is in the hands of the vanguard communist party that represents the interests of the ‘people.’ It is the Party that will make sure that the socialist market economy does not lead to the kind of exploitation and inequalities that disfigure the capitalist system, and that the market part of the economy ultimately serves the goal of building socialism and achieving communism.

While ‘Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ conveys the economic feature of Deng Xiaoping Theory, the ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ express its political essence. Deng laid out what he called the Four Cardinal Principles that were ‘the basic prerequisite for achieving modernization’: 1. The socialist road; 2. The dictatorship of the proletariat; 3. The leadership of the Communist Party; and 4. Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. It symbolizes the continuity of the Party’s orthodoxy, emphasizes the need for ideological reinforcement against bourgeois liberalization, and fosters socialist modernization rather than promoting capitalism.

Fourth, the successive Party leaders, such as Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, have gone to considerable lengths to develop the official doctrine by continuing to adapt Marxism to changing historic situations. Jiang’s important contribution is his theory of the Three Represents. That is, as he claimed, the CCP should represent most advanced productive forces, more advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the majority of the people, which indicated an
important, even radical, shift in Party philosophy, Party organization and Party orientation.

What Jiang intended was to modernise the Party’s ideology. He argued that Communism, in its industrial age formulation, was not viable as a contemporary economic system, but the Communist Party, by ‘representing’ these three powerful principles, would be modernizing Marxism, advancing with the times, and securing its place at the vanguard of society.

As the Party’s new guideline, Jiang’s Three Represents are rather complex but quite useful. The First Represent, ‘advanced productive forces’, extends the Marxist phrase ‘productive forces’ in a practically ideological way, and works to elevate the status of and brings into the Party the most dynamic strata of society - managers, entrepreneurs and all types of professional employees (white-collar elite). Thus, the CCP’s ruling constituency is ideologically reconstructed to include the representation of private business people without giving up its original role as ‘vanguard of the working class’.

The Second Represent, ‘advanced culture’, combines morality, civil behaviour, progressive social attitude, and shared beliefs. It is the Party’s complementary goal for rejuvenating China, sought to restore the values and virtues of Chinese civilization, integrating them with Marxism. It signified the building of ‘spiritual civilization’ together with ‘material civilization’. Also, it seemed to signal greater openness to modern Western culture. The Third Represent, ‘the fundamental interests of the majority of people,’ is a reaffirmation of the Party’s role in serving the masses. It reaches out to all Chinese society.

Ideologically, the Three Represents created an important breakthrough, since now Jiang has revised classic Marxist doctrine - the labour theory of value, reinterpreting its notion of ‘exploitation and surplus value,’ and the development of a middle class in China. Politically, co-option of private entrepreneurs and other new social strata into the Party was designed not only to benefit the Party by tapping new sources of support, but also to pre-empt a potential source of opposition, maintaining political stability and Party leadership.

Fifth, Hu jintao’s significant contribution is his concept of Harmonious Society, which he defined as thus: ‘The socialist Harmonious Society we wanted to build should be a society featuring democracy, the rule of law, fairness, justice, sincerity, trustworthiness, amity, full vitality, stability, orderliness, and harmony between mankind and nature.’ The new doctrine has been rooted both in traditional Confucian concepts like Datong and in more contemporary socialist precepts. The Party’s ideology has been increasingly reconciled with Chinese history and culture.

Hu’s theory on harmony presents a programmatic solution to China’s ‘performance dilemma’ and an innovative model of political legitimization, and it serves as a popular starting-point for a critical analysis of the last two decades of economic reforms, which have produced a disturbing degree of social inequality and injustice, reflected in an alarmingly high and still increasing Gini coefficient. Also, it demonstrates a dramatic shift away from the growth-at-all-cost of developing pattern of his predecessors.
The central feature of Hu’s theory is ‘Scientific Outlook on Development’, a new model of modernisation. Two elements emerged as the core of the concept: ‘taking people as the basis’ and ‘comprehensive development’. Both seemed to be a deft, but substantial modification of his predecessors’ priorities. Unlike Jiang’s emphasis on the recruitment of the ‘advanced productive forces’ into the Party, Hu now has distinctly shifted the emphasis of the Three Represents to the third Represent: the interests of the majority of the people. This ideological reorientation was politically very astute, for the Three Represents which in their original formulation had a conspicuously elitist background are now given a populist reinterpretation. In a way, the Three Represents are translated into Hu’s ideas of the ‘Three Peoples’: the Party must ‘exercise its power for the people, have passion for the people and seek benefits for the people’.

Hu’s theory also includes how to build a harmonious world, and take advantage of globalization to promote peace, development and common prosperity. The Chinese leader has been aware that China’s rapid development has attracted worldwide attention in recent years. Facing a rising China, there have been increasing wariness, fear and suspicion from the world. Therefore, the Chinese government proposed ‘peaceful development’ in response, and seeks to reassure the world that China’s rise will not be a threat to peace and stability in the region and the world, and that the U.S. and other countries can benefit from China’s peaceful development. China’s development is mutually beneficial to China and the world in the process of globalization. Based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, China dismissed the ‘clash of civilizations’ in favour of harmony between different civilizations on the basis of ‘seeking common ground while reserving differences’.

More significantly, as the CCP has restructured, redefined and reoriented official doctrines, the Party has revitalized itself, advancing with the times and involving from a ‘revolutionary party’ into a more modern and more sophisticated ‘governing party’ with considerable support among the Chinese people. With all the best and the brightest it has absorbed, the CCP has become a modernizing force in the country. Moreover, China’s unique Party-State apparatus have been institutionalized, and thus, achieved to some extent the rule of law and democratisation, despite difficulties and weaknesses in both theory and practice. Therefore, the CCP appears better qualified and technically more competent than at any other time in the post-Mao period, and its political system is now able to generate significant degrees of regime legitimacy.

Contrary to what the CCP has achieved in its political reforms, the mainstream scholars in the West still assume that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought is dead, ‘the Party is over’, and China’s one-party political system will inevitably collapse; that Political legitimacy in contemporary China is precarious and the current regime suffers from a legitimacy crisis only superficially covered up by economic development and nationalist politics. Consequently, the impact of CCP’s ideological changes on the current regime’s legitimacy has been overlooked. Apart from prejudicial assumption and stereotyped views, China’s political reforms have never been considered viable and routinely discredited as too little and manipulated by the Party. This
is not only to be attributed to methodological or practical problems, as most researches have focused on the centrifugal forces in Chinese society rather than on the forces that hold the system together and make it work.

Apparently, the size of the Chinese political system and the scale of the social transformation it is undertaking are simply too big and too complicated to fit into any one of the theoretical paradigms. New approaches and new perspectives are needed to analyse the characteristics of Chinese experience. This is why some scholars have recently proposed a new research agenda in China Studies, to take seriously of CCP reforms. Only when we have a better understanding of how the Party has changed, can we get a better idea of why and how the CCP remains in power.

Thus, this thesis has so far achieved three objectives as set out in the Introduction: 1, to challenge the conventional wisdom of mainstream China watchers on the CCP’s ideological changes; 2, undertake a systematic and detailed analysis of what and how the Party has changed its official doctrines; and 3, support a new approach to China studies as some scholars recently proposed.
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