



Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China

Public Affairs

Ezra F. Vogel, Joanne J. Myers

Transcript

- [Introduction](#)
- [Remarks](#)
- [Questions and Answers](#)

Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, director of Public Affairs Programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council I'd like to welcome our members and guests and to thank you for joining us.

It is indeed a pleasure to have as our speaker, Ezra Vogel. Professor Vogel, as perhaps many of you know, is one of our country's foremost Asian scholars. Today he will be discussing his widely acclaimed biography entitled *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*.

Now, you may be wondering Why *Deng*, why now? As Professor Vogel writes, Deng is "the one Chinese leader who has most influenced China's modern trajectory." In addition, he convincingly argues that if we study his rise to power we will have a better understanding of what it is that is taking place in China now.

One of the world's greatest stories is the rise of China. Today hundreds of millions of Chinese are living far more comfortable lives than ever before, enjoying relative stability, and benefiting from spectacular economic growth. But how China embraced globalization, confronted the damage wrought by the [Cultural Revolution](#), dismantled the cult of [Maoism](#), lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, and opened trade relations with the West is a remarkable story that unfolds around a single individual: Deng Xiaoping.

Few would dispute the positive steps Deng took in placing China on the world stage. But it should also be pointed out that he is known as the leader who in June 1989 ordered troops to fire on student protesters at [Tiananmen Square](#).

Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China is a nuanced political biography which focuses on Deng's career as a revolutionary, party leader, and architect of China's reforms. He was once described by [Mao](#) as "a needle inside a ball of cotton." And, although tiny in stature (just 4'11" tall), his impact was immeasurable.

Yet, as Professor Vogel points out, his rise to power was not all that smooth. It was marred by setbacks, including brutal persecution, personal tragedy, and a few purges from the [Communist Party](#). Still, Deng succeeded in doing for China what others had tried and failed to do for so many centuries, which was to transform this poverty-stricken country into a rich nation and world power.

Professor Vogel has been traveling to China since the 1960s and speaks fluent Chinese. His meticulous research, which took place over a ten-year period, was conducted without the help of a translator and includes extensive interviews with Deng's family members, colleagues, and party historians—all those who had knowledge about Deng and his era. In the end, this wealth of fascinating material implicitly shows how China's future was advanced by the efforts of this one individual.

It's quite amazing when you realize that it has only been a little more than three decades that China was a rural economy, beset by widespread poverty, and reeling from the chaos and destruction wrought by the Cultural Revolution. Yet, last year the country overtook Japan as the second-largest economy in the world. As China grows increasingly important in the 21st century, knowing the back story of this nation's unprecedented transformation provides a foundation for a better understanding of the future.

We are grateful to you, Professor Vogel, for giving us the necessary tools and for keeping Deng's legacy alive in this wonderful book.

Please join me in welcoming our guest today, the preeminent Asian scholar Ezra Vogel. It is an honor to have you with us.

Remarks

EZRA VOGEL: Joanne gave such a wonderful introduction that I feel that she prepared so well, she could probably give this lecture too. She already set the context that I will not have to repeat.

But I want to say what a pleasure it is to be a part of your distinguished series and to have a chance to talk about Deng Xiaoping, which has preoccupied me so much the last ten years that my wife complains that I haven't cleaned my study and haven't gone out much because I was so dedicated trying to get this done.

What I want to do this evening in roughly half an hour is to trace Deng's views primarily about foreign policy. I don't want to recite the whole 800 pages in this short occasion. One reviewer said the book is so heavy that you have to be careful; it could be dangerous to household pets and small children if you dropped it.

What I want to do is start with Deng the young man and trace him through the contacts with the outside world. I think these should be clear enough that you have a chance to see from one of those screens the people that he got to know and met during his career [points to screens showing Powerpoint presentation; pictures are referenced throughout this talk. To see the full video, with slides, [click here](#).].

He was born in 1904. The first picture we have of Deng is in 1920, when he went to France. He was born in the rural county and province of Sichuan, in the southwest of China.

During [World War I](#), some of the Chinese leaders got the idea that to learn about the outside world we could send people abroad, much as Chinese have come abroad to study in the United States since 1978, since Deng opened it up to the outside world. But at the time, World War I, there were not yet scholarships available for Chinese students to go abroad. So they devised the program where they would take extremely bright students who were very skilled, send them to France, which was considered the great country to go to to learn about civilization in the advanced world, and there they would work part-time to earn enough money and then they would study part-time.

Now, when Deng in 1920 went abroad, it was already after World War I. In 1919, nationalism had just come alive in China, with the [Versailles Treaty](#) and the [May Fourth Movement](#). Deng, although only a high-school student at the time, was also out in the streets, along with the educated youth who were determined to build a stronger China.

The 2,500 students, roughly, who went to France after World War I, in the early 1920s, were to become great, important leaders.

But when they got there, they ran into something that the leaders who sent them had not anticipated; that the labor shortages had disappeared. When the French soldiers came back after World War I, they went to the factories, and the jobs they thought were going to be available for Chinese were not really available.

So when this group of bright young Chinese in France looked around and tried to find an explanation of what was going on, they saw a lot of rich people living very comfortable lives and French workers living in very miserable conditions (this was before the development of labor unions), and at the bottom of the heap were Chinese who had to scrounge for the dirtiest jobs with the least pay.

What they saw in their study groups, it seemed to fit the pattern that they were hearing about the [Soviet revolution](#) that had just occurred several years earlier, that the bourgeois rich were exploiting the workers and the local people in the advanced countries of the world were exploiting those who were from poor countries.

So these bright young people, if you look at them—this is the group in the Young Communist Organization in France in 1924—if you look at them, they don't look like they just came out of the gutter. They thought of themselves as the vanguard of the poor classes.

When they went back to China in the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s, they did not necessarily have such important responsibilities. But when China began the course of modernization a little bit in the 1950s, and even more after 1978, after Deng took over, these people, who had a better education, better understanding of the outside world, played a very critical role. Some of them already played a role even before 1949.

The head of this group is right in the center, [Zhou Enlai](#), who was about six years older than Deng and was the student leader among them. Deng at that time, who was born in 1904, was just turning 20 this year. Zhou Enlai was about 26, and of course he became premier and was in charge of foreign policy, and he was the one who welcomed [Kissinger](#) in 1971 and [Nixon](#) in 1972 and played the key role in guiding foreign relations.

Not only in foreign relations did this group play an important part, but in science and technology it played an important part. The man on the left, [Nie Rongzhen](#), really became in charge of scientific policy in China in the 1950s and 1960s, and particularly after Deng came to power. Not only that, he played a key role in military technology.

The man a couple to your right of Zhou Enlai, [Li Fuchun](#), played a key role in the first [five-year plan](#) in developing the economy.

Way back in the last row, Deng, who was among the youngest in this group—as Joanne said, 4'11", standing on a bench—was sort of an understudy in this group.

When Deng returned to China after five years in France and one year in the Soviet Union, he first

worked from 1949-1952 in the southwest. He was already in charge of the entire region, about 100 million people, and of the six major regions of the country Mao considered him the strongest of the leaders. That was 1949-1952.

In 1952, when they transferred the main administration of the country from the regions to Beijing, he and other leaders in the regions went to Beijing. At that time he began to take over government responsibilities and Party responsibilities. The outside world—of course, since it was the [Cold War](#), his main meetings with leaders from other countries were the Communists from various countries. Mao already considered him a potential successor and gave him a lot of responsibilities.

Here is Mao in a major visit to the Soviet Union in 1957. You can see the person he took along with him, over to the far left, is Deng Xiaoping.

Here we are in 1960, when Deng is visiting Moscow and meets [Khrushchev](#). Deng was also in Moscow in 1956 at the [Twentieth Party Congress](#) when Khrushchev roundly [denounced Stalin](#), and he denounced Stalin in such dark terms that everybody who had worked with Stalin was tarred, and all the leaders of the [Party](#) had worked with Stalin, so it really greatly ruined the entire authority of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Deng was determined from then on that if China should change leadership and criticize the previous leader, they should do it in more measured terms so that it did not destroy the leadership of the Party.

Here is just an example of the other communist leaders from other countries he met. [Ho Chi Minh](#) of Vietnam had been in France in the early 1920s and had met Zhou Enlai and some of the other Chinese communists. They were together at that point against imperialists. Of course Deng met many other leaders from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but he met virtually no one from the Western countries.

In the early 1960s, when the arguments for the Soviet Union became very severe, Mao put Deng in charge of criticizing the Soviet Union and writing the letters of exchange. Already in 1957—that picture I showed before when Deng was with Mao in Moscow—Mao was very pleased with how strong and vigorous and effective Deng was in arguing with the Soviet ideologues.

Here we are in 1963 at the airport in Beijing. Deng was getting ready to go to Moscow to have the final argument with the Soviet Union before they really broke off relations in 1963.

If you look at Deng, even though he was 4'11", he didn't seem to have an inferiority complex. President [Carter](#), when I interviewed him about Deng, said that a lot of the Soviet leaders tried to impress him, as if they could keep up, and a lot of time was wasted on trying to prove that they were as smart and wise as the Western leaders. But with Deng there was a confidence that was already there, so he could get down to business right away.

Here is Deng. To his immediate left is [Liu Shaoqi](#), who was chairman of the PRC at that time. Just to his left behind him is Zhou Enlai, and just to his right is [Peng Zhen](#), who is mayor of Beijing.

In 1966, as the Cultural Revolution began, Mao was dissatisfied with all the leaders. He criticized those who were in authority and complained that they were not pushing the revolution hard enough. So a lot of leaders were thrown out of power. The two top leaders, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, were considered the main targets of the Cultural Revolution in the early days. Therefore, Deng was out of power.

However, Mao had liked Deng way back in the 1930s. The first time Deng was criticized, he was criticized for being head of the Mao group, the Mao faction. So way back early they had bonded. Whereas Mao was very vicious in the way he handled many leaders, he basically put Deng aside and would give him a chance to recoup later on. So from 1966-1973 Deng was out of power. Four of those years he spent in Jiangxi Province.

After he came back, he was allowed, under Mao's watchful eye, to start seeing people again. The first time he appeared in public was at a dinner that Zhou Enlai gave for [Sihanouk](#) of Cambodia, their ally. Here Deng is meeting with Sihanouk at that dinner when he first came back, as if nothing had happened; he's back at work, after seven years of criticism and denunciation.

This I think is a very poignant picture because Zhou Enlai had been the great leader in foreign policy. When Beijing was given a seat in the United Nations, the China seat, in 1971, taking Taiwan's place, it was expected that a leader from China would go to the United Nations and make a major address. It would have been logical for Zhou Enlai, who had been the great leader of foreign policy, to have that honor.

But Zhou Enlai had already contracted cancer and was not so well. But even more important in terms of what Mao decided, Mao was not confident that Zhou Enlai would be tough in standing up to the United States. He felt that Zhou Enlai was too soft in dealing particularly with Kissinger and was too willing to entertain ideas that were not in China's interest. But Deng had been so tough in standing up to the Soviet Union that he was ready to send Deng.

Here Zhou Enlai is at the airport, logically the man who should have had the honor to represent China at the first major speech to the United Nations, passing the mantle to Deng Xiaoping, his understudy.

From about 1973, when Deng returned to Beijing and first met Sihanouk and then other leaders from other countries, then in 1973—Nixon had already gone—Deng was put in charge, instead of Zhou Enlai, of meeting foreign guests. So he met guests from all the European countries and from the United States, Japan, South East Asian countries. So he had already had some considerable experience before he was sent to the United Nations in 1974.

Here he is addressing the United Nations, the first speech of a Chinese leader in the United Nations.

Here he is up close addressing the United Nations.

While he was in New York he met Henry Kissinger for the first time. Of course he was out of office and down in the countryside when Kissinger first went in 1971 and 1972 and 1973. So the first time that Deng got to meet Kissinger was in that trip to New York.

Henry Kissinger said about Deng that he seemed to be on a training mission. Deng was not as experienced as Zhou Enlai. Zhou Enlai had several decades of experience. Henry considered Zhou Enlai perhaps the leading official that he met, one of the two most memorable leaders that he met in all his years of diplomacy. So Deng he considered basically on a training mission.

Actually, I think that's a little unfair. I think Deng at that time was very concerned. He had just come back and Mao was keeping a very watchful eye, and he didn't want to say the wrong thing, and he was very cautious and careful in his response. I think he already knew more than he was saying, but he was very careful and cautious.

Then, in 1975 Deng was given major responsibility for guiding not only government but also Party administration.

Then, at the end of 1975, Mao was again disappointed that Deng was not pushing the revolution hard enough and again purged him. So the third time that Deng was sent down. Then, in 1976-1977, Deng was completely out of it.

In the spring of 1976, Mao decided that his successor would not be Deng but would be [Hua Guofeng](#). Hua Guofeng had been a regional political figure. Some of my Chinese friends say Hua Guofeng was a *tu baozi*, really a country hick. But I think it would be more accurate to say that Hua Guofeng was a *shengji ganbu*, a provincial-level cadre who hadn't had the depth of experience and was not up to the national leadership. But in any case, Mao had selected him.

Then, in September of 1976 Mao passes away and Hua Guofeng inherits the mantle as the leader. The question was, should Deng be allowed to come back? Some people felt he would overwhelm Hua Guofeng very early if he were allowed to come back. Others said he had so much experience and knowledge that they needed Deng's experience and knowledge in running the country and providing new direction.

So in August 1977 Deng was allowed to come back to work. When he first came back to work, he was already given charge of foreign policy issues, but he also volunteered to take what he thought was a very important role, developing science and technology education, because he felt of all the modernizations—industry, agriculture, national defense—the most important was science and technology, and if you had a good scientific-technological base and good education, then the basic issues of modernization would be solved.

So he called a gathering of the education officials in August 1977 and said to them, "Can we reopen the universities?" They had been closed for ten years during the Cultural Revolution. We academics can't understand how a country could survive closing the universities for ten years. But of course China wasn't a mess, but the universities were almost entirely closed.

During Mao's days, he felt that the admissions should be maybe partly on merit but also should take account of political attitudes. So if you had the correct political attitude, that was even more important than what you knew.

But Deng said at this occasion that the important thing was merit and they were not going to measure political attitudes. He said 30 years after China had been taken over the communists they didn't really have any bourgeois or landlord class anymore and the important thing was to get merit. So he held this educational forum and asked these leaders, "Can you reopen the universities and establish a merit-based exam this fall?"

They gave all the reasons why it was so difficult: there would be about 7 million applicants; they would have to choose the subjects to examine; they would have to write the examinations, administer them, grade them; get the universities ready. They gave all the difficulties.

Deng said, "Is it possible to do this year?"

The Education Minister said, "It is possible."

Deng said, "We're going to do it."

One of the ways in which Deng quickly got to understand what was going on in the outside scientific world was to work with Chinese-American scientists who knew about the world of science and had done very well. At that time, there were three Chinese-American Nobel Prize winners. They all had left China in the late 1940s. They knew the situation. They could speak to Deng in Chinese. They knew the world of science and they had good ideas about what China needed to do to really introduce science and technology, prepare for modernization.

As I say, there were three Nobel Prize winners in the United States. One was [Yang Zhen-ning](#)—here he is with Yang Zhen-ning. One was [Samuel Ting](#) of MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]—here he is with Samuel Ting. One was really a pair, [Lee Tsungdao](#) and Yang Zhen-ning—and here he is with them. He met all the major Chinese-American scientific leaders in all kinds of fields. That was very critical in this year as he began to prepare for modernization that would come.

Here he is with [Chao Yuenren](#), who was a leading linguist. I show this partly because the lady over at the right, his [daughter](#) [Rulan Chao Pian], taught Chinese at Harvard, and people like [Andy Nathan](#) of Columbia and I studied Chinese under her. She was one tough cookie.

I think many people in the West had not given adequate attention to the visit of delegations of Chinese leaders who went abroad in 1978. It was December 1978, the so-called [Third Plenum](#), when Deng really takes over.

But already in mid-1978, when Deng was helping guide science and technology, he strongly pushed sending delegations abroad. He had been at the United Nations in 1974, and on the way back to China he stopped in France. The next year he was a state visitor to France and visited many factories. Since he had been there in the 1920s, he could see how far France had advanced and he could see that China hadn't advanced. So he understood how much China needed to change.

But he needed the support of the top leadership who shared that same awareness. This delegation, led by Vice Premier [Gu Mu](#), consisted of leaders of all the major economic departments of the government and several important provincial leaders. They went abroad for five weeks. They were in Switzerland, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and they visited factories, mines, scientific establishments. They divided up according to their own specialty. They had leaders who in their own specialty—agriculture, science, technology, ports, shipping, whatever—would visit facilities.

When they came back, they were to give a report one afternoon to the top leadership that some thought might take a couple of hours. They started at 3 pm and they went on until 12 midnight. Those who were part of this delegation reported that they were completely surprised by what they saw. They had been so victims of their own propaganda about how much communism had done for China that they had not been aware of how far China had fallen behind.

But they also were just shocked that these imperialist countries were willing to show their factories. A lot of the comparable factories in China would not even be open to ordinary Chinese, they were so secretive. But here they were opening to another country. They were ready to teach and lend money. So they were just shocked.

This visit alone had a lot to do with changing the mood and the consciousness among top leaders. Of course, I make the argument that Deng provided a necessary leadership role. But I think it wasn't just leadership; it was the change of consciousness among these high-level people who had experienced the Cultural Revolution and seen the mess in the [Great Leap Forward](#) and knew that China had to do a lot of things differently and that Deng would help provide that new direction.

Here Deng is talking to the leader of the delegation, Gu Mu.

In November 1978, the top leaders of the party assembled for a work conference to discuss the new direction. Mao had died just two years before and they were beginning to have a clear idea of the kinds of things that were needed.

The very top leaders of the party—there was Marshal [Ye Jianying](#) and Nie Rongzhen and a few others—felt that the important thing was that they needed to provide a strong leadership and that Hua Guofeng was not up to the job. So they decided that Deng should be chosen for that leadership position.

However, there were a lot of leaders who remembered way back in the 1940s that Mao was quite open to lots of ideas and that after he became chairman of the party and chairman of the country and premier, held all the top positions and had everybody learning Mao's sayings, that even when errors came about, people didn't have the power. They had been so inundated by Mao's domination that they couldn't make corrections.

So they decided that even though Deng would be the most important leader, the paramount leader, they would not name him premier, they would not name him chairman of the party, and that Hua Guofeng could retain those titles for a while. Deng was never to be given those titles. He was the representative of the key leadership core, but he would not be given the independence to depart from what the top leadership wanted.

There was one other person at that time who had roughly the comparable prestige and power and authority and experience in China, and that was [Chen Yun](#). So they paired Deng and Chen Yun. Here they are in December 1978 at the Third Plenum, the two top leaders who would guide China over the next 14 years.

Deng decided already that the two countries that would be most important for China's future were Japan and the United States. Japan would play a helpful role in science and technology and the United States, of course, for science and all kinds of areas. Those countries' cooperation was most needed.

So in October 1978 he first took a trip, just before that December period, when he could see they were getting ready to march ahead.

In the 2,500 years in which Chinese and Japanese had been having contact with each other, no top leader of China had ever met the emperor. The first time any Chinese leader met the emperor was October 1978 when Deng met him. They talked for a couple of hours over lunch. Emperor [Hirohito](#) apologized for the horrors that they had led in [World War II](#) and said, "We'll never let that happen again," and offered to be of assistance in the modernization. Deng reported that it was a very good conversation.

While he was in Japan that week, Deng visited a few scientific places of high technology. One was a steel plant at Kimitsu. Deng said, "We want a modern plant just like that." So that became the model for the [Baoshan](#), the first modern steel plant in China.

Now, if you read the papers, you'll notice that no country has more mileage of high-speed trains than China. But in 1978 there were zero miles of high-speed trains. The first time a Chinese leader rode on a high-speed train was when Deng rode on this train in Japan. And of course he wanted to begin to introduce modern transport.

Here he is with [Tanaka Kakuei](#), one of the former leaders, who normalized relations with China and Japan in 1974.

Here he is the next month, also just before December, meeting South East Asian leaders, particularly [Lee Kuan Yew](#), who had had so much experience in meeting leaders around the world. A lot of people thought that until that time Chinese civilization had been so full of tradition that it might be difficult to modernize and create a modern country, that maybe there was something about Chinese culture that made that difficult. But Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore had already Chinese ancestry, and he had already introduced modernity to Singapore, which was about 75 percent ethnic Chinese. So that was an inspiration to Deng. They became very important companions.

When I interviewed Lee Kuan Yew about Deng, he said that of all the world leaders he met, none did he respect more than Deng Xiaoping. He said about Deng Xiaoping that he took the country he grew up in which was clearly going in all the wrong directions and tried to find a way to give it a completely different direction and that that was a very difficult prominent task.

When Carter became president in 1977, he decided that he wanted to normalize relations with China. So in May 1978 he sent [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#) to Beijing to begin the negotiations for normalization. You know Nixon had opened up relations with China. They hadn't yet completed a lot of formalities necessary for normalization.

After that, they began the negotiations. Most of the negotiations were conducted by Hua Guofeng, in the middle there, the Chinese foreign minister, and [Leonard Woodcock](#), a labor leader. Carter had selected him partly because he was known as such a good and strong negotiator who had the respect both of labor and management in the United States and also had a lot of political clout in Washington.

When they asked Deng, the United States decided to be somewhat delicate in the way they phrased the question. They didn't say, "We invite Deng." They told him, "We would like a Chinese leader. We invite a Chinese leader to come to the United States to celebrate normalization." At that time, Hua Guofeng was premier and still president. We conveyed it to Deng, who was negotiating foreign relations, and Deng immediately told Woodcock, "I'll be happy to come and I'll be ready to come next month."

So the next month, in January, when normalization was formalized, he came to the United States. When I interviewed Carter about this, he said that Deng's visit was one of the most pleasant tasks of all his years in the White House.

This guy in the middle, [Ji Chaozhu](#), attended Harvard from 1948-1950 and then went back to China and became a wonderful interpreter. There he is.

Here they are in the White House.

Here they are signing the normalization.

After Nixon was thrown out of the White House with [Watergate](#), he had not been welcome to the White House. But Deng said, "Nixon played a very strong role in opening up Chinese-American relations, and I would like you to invite him to the White House when I come." Carter agreed. This is the first time Nixon returned to the White House after he left after Watergate.

This is a messy congressional session of our Congress, as we have learned to understand and love

the messy Congress that we have. In the middle you see this little 4'11" Deng and to your left you see the interpreter Ji Chaozhu.

To his left there is a white-haired old man sitting down there; that's [Tip O'Neill](#), House Majority Leader. After this public session, Tip and Deng went off to a side room and talked for about an hour. Tip entertained Deng with stories of how Congress was fighting the White House. They really hit it off.

Tip went the next year to be Deng's guest in China. At the end of the conversation, after Tip explained all the reasons why it's important to have a divided government, Deng Xiaoping said, "It wouldn't work in China." He wanted a strong, centralized, single party and not the messy kind of situation that we have in our country.

So Deng travels around the United States. Here is in Atlanta at a Ford plant.

Here he is in Texas. This is sort of the lead-up to the big picture, the famous picture.

A cowgirl comes by and hands him a big hat and Deng puts it on. This [picture](#) became in the United States a symbol that "maybe they're communist, but they're humans, and maybe we can deal with them."

But [Orville Schell](#) of the Asia Society here, who is a reporter and China specialist and who was here at the time, said that when this picture played in China it had even more meaning, because people could say: "The country we had been thinking about as an imperialist country was worth after all imbibing." This picture was sort of a symbol of giving permission to the Chinese people to imbibe the American culture and ideas and way of life. Therefore, it had a tremendous impact in China.

It happened in 1975, when Deng was in power that one year and had very broad responsibility before Mao died, that in our liaison office, which became later the embassy, the person in charge of that liaison office that year was [George Bush, Sr.](#) The two of them had met very often in 1975 and really hit it off. So George Bush was available to work with Deng in solving difficult problems. In 1982 they ran into the problems of arms agreements and they agreed to limit arms sales to Taiwan.

[Reagan](#) in his campaign first said that he wanted to normalize relations with Taiwan. But George Bush kind of paved the way for getting over that. Then Reagan stopped saying, "We're going to normalize relations with Taiwan," and he went to Beijing, met Deng, and they had a very good time. As you see, after this session Reagan commented, "He didn't seem like a communist."

It's really remarkable to me the variety of Americans—George Bush, Sr., Reagan, Carter, [Ford](#)—all of whom seemed to have good relations with Deng. He seemed to have a capacity to relate and get down to business with all of them.

Here is the "[Iron Lady](#)" meeting in the steel factory over the [Hong Kong issue](#). When they came out of the building and Deng made it clear that China would resume sovereignty after 1997, Thatcher tripped on a step. That was caught by Hong Kong television and played as if the "Iron Lady" was shocked by the steel factory and that she was so overwhelmed that she was upset.

However, over the next two years the two sides negotiated and worked out an arrangement where for 50 years Hong Kong would keep the same capitalist regime, with no basic structural changes, and would be led by Hong Kong people. And so, two years later when they reached the agreement, the two happily shook hands over that agreement.

Deng wanted to get into international organizations. The World Bank played a very key role. Here he is with [McNamara](#) walking, talking about joining the World Bank, joining the IMF [International Monetary Fund].

I can see there are many in the audience who are old enough to remember the days before Wikipedia. Before Wikipedia many people thought that the encyclopedias provided a very good way to get knowledge around the world.

Here Deng is working with [Frank Gibney](#) of the Encyclopedia Britannica to get it translated into Chinese, to have available the knowledge about the world.

Here he is with a bunch of foreign business people, Chinese business people from Hong Kong.

Here is [An Wang](#), another Chinese, helping Deng understand about computers in the early days when that was considered important.

Here he is with George Bush, Sr.

Although Deng had broken relations with the Soviet Union in 1963, in the early 1980s he said, "We will resume good relations with the Soviet Union if they will pull back troops from our northern border, if they will pull out of [Afghanistan](#), and get Vietnam out of Cambodia." The Soviets agreed. Therefore, [Gorbachev](#) and his [wife](#) came to Beijing in the spring of 1989, the first time since 1963 when relations broke. And so Deng had both broken relations and resumed relations.

Deng felt that by having good relations with all the major powers in the world he would not repeat the Soviet mistake of spending too much on the military, but would rather concentrate on domestic development.

However, there were many people in China who felt they were not moving fast enough to democracy. And there was also huge inflation, so that a lot of people in Beijing were afraid that they would no longer be able to afford things. Their salary was stable and inflation was going up 30 percent or so a year. So the citizens backed the students who were demonstrating.

On May 20th, 1989, when Deng sent in troops to impose martial law, he told them, "Don't shoot," and he sent them in unarmed. But they were stopped and they were not able to reach Tiananmen Square. So two weeks later, on June 3rd, he told the troops to do what was necessary to restore order. A lot of other high-level leaders also felt the country was in danger of falling apart. So Deng moved forcefully and vigorously.

[Tim Brook](#) of Canada, who was there and did a lot of searching around, estimates that 700-800 people were killed in Beijing. The fact is that Deng Xiaoping, for the rest of his life, still felt he did the right thing. And [Jiang Zemin](#), his successor, also felt that Deng did the right thing, that when confronted with the danger of falling apart and getting the same kind of mess there had been during the [Opium Wars](#) and again during the Cultural Revolution, that he moved to clamp down.

All of those of us who saw that realized what a cruel and terrible thing it was. Deng did not relish clamping down, but he felt it was necessary to keep order.

Here he is sending in the tanks.

George Bush, Sr. sent a very touching letter to Deng immediately after that. He said, "The reason we are criticizing China and imposing sanctions is not because we want to hurt your country but

because we believe in democracy and we believe there are better ways of doing these things, and we feel that very deeply. At the same time, I realize how hard it has been to get our two countries working together. From 1949 to 1971 we were not working together. And we need to work together. I would like to send an emissary to Beijing to keep open relations." So he sent [Brent Scowcroft](#), and they were able to maintain some relations even while they were imposing sanctions.

Deng said at the time—with all the sanctions coming in and a lot of Chinese were terribly worried, especially about the things that were happening at [inaudible] Airport, things were falling apart—he said, "Foreign business people will want to rejoin China's market and before many years Westerners, who have short memories, will be going to their governments and will be resuming relations and we will again have strong economic relations. In the meantime, the oceans were here before, the oceans will be here still."

Here he is in this picture [photo of Deng swimming], which was portrayed to the Chinese people to show that "we will remain calm and not get excited and wait until the foreigners begin to weaken their sanctions."

Here is Deng's successor, Jiang Zemin.

In 1982, Deng, the year he turned 88, stepped down completely from the political stage. Here he is up close, I think a very poignant picture, waving goodbye to the political stage.

Here he is afterwards, an old man walking around his garden.

In 1997 he passed away at 92 years old.

Here is the memorial service. Here is Jiang Zemin giving a memorial service.

The United Nations, where he spoke in 1974, considered him important enough so that they observed a moment of silence on Deng's death.

Thank you very much.

JOANNE MYERS: When you think that it was just 40 years ago this month that Nixon first went to China, I thank you very much for opening this door to history and taking us back on this long journey.

EZRA VOGEL: We will have in March, Kissinger and a few others, and I will be on the stage, in Washington, D.C., celebrating the 40th anniversary.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Professor Vogel, thank you very much. I have two questions.

First, I read that Ho Chi Minh was also in Paris in the post-World War I years, studying and working as a waiter. Is it impossible that he met Deng Xiaoping at that time? Would they have had political discussions possibly?

Secondly, can you trace just briefly Deng's political development to the point where he became a convinced communist? I don't know if you know those things.

EZRA VOGEL: First, on Ho Chi Minh, he was there at the same time, and Zhou Enlai met him in France. But there is no indication that Deng ever met him. The first time we know that Deng met Ho

Chi Minh was in Yan'an in the 1940s. They shared similar circles in France, but there is no indication that they ever really met at that time.

One time when Ho Chi Minh came to the airport in Beijing and had discussions, Zhou Enlai and Deng accompanied him back to the airport. All three had been in France in the early period.

Then, the second question you asked was?

QUESTIONER: His political development. At what point did he become a communist?

EZRA VOGEL: It was in the early 1920s in France, when they felt that the Soviet explanation of what was happening—that the authorities in France, the rich people, were exploiting the workers, the workers were exploiting foreigners. The leadership groups of the French Chinese, the Chinese in France, really believed that they needed to have a strong group, the Chinese government was way too strong, and that they would build on the support of ordinary workers to build a revolution that would take over. So it was in that period between 1920 and 1924 that he really became a committed communist, and he never wavered in that, even when purged.

QUESTION: Susan Gitelson.

Thank you for this extraordinary history that shows evolution. But then there is what happened afterwards. Today we are so aware of China as an enormous economic power. So much probably can be traced to Deng. This is what I hope you will elaborate. You mentioned science and technology. But what about economic development, and how did it happen so quickly so that China is the number two economy?

EZRA VOGEL: I think Deng was not the most knowledgeable about economic matters. That other man, Chen Yun, who was on the stage with him, was the specialist on the economy.

Deng had been finance minister in 1953-1954 in Beijing, so he had been familiar with some economic issues. In December 1978, surprisingly enough, instead of pushing ahead and importing a lot of foreign goods, Chen Yun said, "We have to go slow." He was afraid they were going to get in debt to foreign countries [laughter]. So the first thing they did for a couple of years—I can see the irony of that comment—the first thing they did was to retrench.

I think some of the key things they did were:

Number one, they would allow foreign companies to come in in a big way and to work with Chinese companies. Unlike Japan and Korea, which are concerned that their countries be overwhelmed by foreign companies, China felt that they were so big that even if foreign companies came in one place they would not overwhelm the country. So they started in the southeast near Hong Kong and let a lot of foreigners come in very quickly and build industrial plants. It took two or three years before the workers began to export.

They were way behind in industrial technology. So they left the foreign companies in charge of that. And so over half the exports were really through foreign companies that were building in China. That was extremely important.

Another key factor was once they carried out land reform again and had broken up the communes in 1981-1982, there began to be rural markets, and people began to save money, and they began to start what we call rural town and village enterprises. A lot of the entrants in the market came from

those small independent companies.

Deng felt that to tear down the state factories right away would create too many problems. So he allowed the state factories to stay employed. He didn't push them. He was afraid that unemployment would overwhelm the country. But he allowed the growth of those independent enterprises in the countryside. That's where the initial spurt came in addition to the foreign-led factories in China.

QUESTION: My name is Robert Adler.

Deng Xiaoping appears to have set in motion reforms in both the economic sphere that Ms. Gitelson just referred to, and the political sphere. The economic sphere seems to have continued apace, to say the least, with occasional flattening out. But the political sphere appears to have, at least recently, halted and even retrogressed.

Do you feel that this is because of, let's say, the [Arab Spring](#) and some fear, the leadership feeling threatened? Is it a fundamental change in leadership attitudes toward politics? And what do you expect the new leadership later this year to be like in the connection under [Xi Jinping](#), whether he is likely to be an agent of change in the political sphere?

EZRA VOGEL: Deng's view about political change was that if the political conditions permit, then you can have political reform. In 1978 he allowed what we call [Democracy Wall](#), people to post things on the wall. In 1980, in August, he made a very forward-looking speech talking about political reform. In 1986 he had a big study on political reform. So he was not completely opposed.

But as the person in charge, where the buck stopped, he was always very cautious. If things seemed to be getting out of hand, he felt that a firm hand was necessary.

He spent 12 years in the military. When things got too loose, he remembered the [Sun Yat-sen](#) days, that China was "a sheet of loose sand" [quote from Sun's "[Three Principles of the People](#)"] with no organization, and he was ready to crack down.

My own hunch is that Xi Jinping and a lot of other people would like to have more political reform. There is now a very big debate.

Part of the reason I am somewhat optimistic about Xi Jinping is his father was such a strong reformer. His father played a key role in setting up the special economic zones near Hong Kong.

In 1987, when [Hu Yaobang](#), the most liberal leader, was under criticism, there was only one top leader who really stood up for Hu Yaobang at that point, and that was Xi Jinping's father, [Xi Zhongxun](#).

I think the visit to Washington next week and the visit to Ireland will be very important. I think there is at least some hope that Xi Jinping will move things forward. I'm afraid that [Hu Jintao](#) was so cautious and so careful that he wasn't really able to move it ahead.

QUESTION: I'm Jeff Laurenti with the Century Foundation.

Mr. Vogel, you had noted that in the early 1960s Deng Xiaoping was on the front line of the ideological split with the Soviet Union, and at that point China competed actively with the Soviet Union for leadership of the world's communist movement. There was, at least partly if not almost entirely, a strong ideological component much more extreme. Fast-forward to the late 1970s and Deng Xiaoping appears to have no interest in propagating any kind of ideology, communist or

otherwise, for anyplace else in the world.

What led to the kind of change in his and in the Chinese Communist Party's self-image as a vanguard of revolution for the rest of the world, because by 1978-1979 he's starting a war to teach Vietnam a lesson, a fellow communist country? What led to that change in orientation about where China's leading role was?

EZRA VOGEL: I think under Mao's days Mao was so powerful that no one could express different views and get away with it. I think when the Great Leap Forward began causing so many problems, Deng tried to separate himself and get a little more room for Mao and not report as much.

Deng for 12 years was a soldier and was a wartime commander. He described how after a battle they would recoup and get ready for the next battle. I think that more than anything else influenced him. He's pragmatic.

Mao in Hunan was in an isolated area where they could talk philosophy and have political essays. Deng from 1937-1945, while Mao was there, was on the front line and had to get ready for the next battle.

When he was general secretary of the party from the early 1950s until 1966, he was the one, he was the chief operating officer, and Mao was a theorist and "grand poobah" behind the thing, but Deng had responsibility. So I think he was always pragmatic.

At the time when he was trying to overcome Mao's ideology, he had decided, because of his experience at the Twentieth Party Congress, he wouldn't smash it directly. He just said, "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white as long as it catches the mouse." Now, that sounds like a simple aphorism, and it was used widely in China. But what it meant is if Mao's theories work, go ahead, use them; if they don't, we'll try something else. By that very indirect way he was able to get around that ideological thing that he inherited from Mao.

QUESTION: What differences would it make now if he had not suppressed the uprising in Tiananmen Square? Over this long a run, looking back, how would things be different if it had taken its course then?

EZRA VOGEL: Even the Chinese who were close to the scene and in the front lines were not sure, and there is disagreement among those. My own hunch is that things really were that serious, that they could have fallen apart if they had not clamped down. Those were huge demonstrations and the mood around the country was somewhat loose.

At the time there was a famous Chinese dissident, [Liu Binyan](#), who was staying in my second-floor apartment upstairs. About a week or two before the clampdown, he said, "I'm afraid we will have a clampdown, that Deng and other high-level leaders felt things are too loose and falling apart, and that the only way they could pull things back together was by force at that point."

So I think, if anything, what I see among the Chinese students in the United States that I talk to is a growing recognition that as much as they hate Deng for clamping down, that in terms of national policy that may have been necessary. I think there is a growing group that says that. It's by no means all. A lot of people felt that if he had been willing to have more political reform faster, with all the power that he held, that the country would be much stronger because of it.

So it's a very divided issue. I think the counterfactual things are hard to prove one way or the other.

What we do know is they clamped down and they kept order for at least the first two decades after that.

JOANNE MYERS: Professor Vogel, I know there are so many more questions. What I want to first say is how grateful we are for your being here and sharing your knowledge with us.

Thank you so much.

2/27/12: Ezra F. Vogel Wins the 2012 Lionel Gelber Prize for His Book *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*.

Audio

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Video Clip

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