

## The Changing Face Of Chinese Socialism

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In 1979, the United States transitioned from recognizing the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China as the "official" China. Following the death of Mao Zedong, premier of the People's Republic of China and Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, in 1976, the Cultural Revolution came to a screeching halt. Hua Guofeng became the chairman of the CCP while Deng Xiaoping eventually rose to the rank of Vice-premier, although Deng's role would prove more important than his title would suggest. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee in 1978, Deng Xiaoping laid the groundwork for what would become his political philosophy as well as the roots of what would become his economic policy, including modernizing China's economy. This paper will largely use *The Beijing (Peking) Review* to argue that Deng Xiaoping used foreign-facing propaganda to sell his policy ideas to the United States and change the face of China. His goal was to abolish the Maoist policy of continuous revolution which had caused such a lack of confidence in China; Deng's policy was to move forward to a more predictable China, one in which foreign investments would be safe.

The economic reforms instituted by Deng during the 1980s served primarily to modernize China's economy and transition from purely agrarian-centered economic policy to a hybrid economy that emphasized a balance of all aspects of the economy. However, there was also a foreign policy aspect to Deng's new economic policy. The United States and the PRC officially normalized relations in 1972, but Deng wanted to maintain the warming relationship between the PRC and the United States, and he emphasized the capitalist elements within the new policies. This concept is quite prominent in the *Beijing Review*, a weekly publication originally published in Chinese as well as English, among other languages. Published since the 1950s, the *Beijing Review* has changed over the years, and by the 1980s,

its readers were not just Chinese Communists, but also Europeans and Americans. This is apparent due to the simple fact that the CCP chose to set aside resources for a specific foreign-language publication focusing on mainland Chinese news. The English version of the *Beijing Review* was geared toward the West in general, namely an audience of decision makers, whether in government or in business, familiar with Chinese foreign policy.

During the Mao era, especially during the Cultural Revolution, foreigners were viewed with intense suspicion. The chaotic political climate and Cult of Mao brought with it the idea that any outsider was automatically trying to undermine the authority of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong.<sup>1</sup> This sentiment was present in everything from billboards to newspaper articles, although big-character posters were usually the favored means of communication. Big character posters were something like a mix between the village message board and a billboard and as the name suggest, utilized large, Chinese characters that could be seen by a crowd.

In a speech in 1978, Deng Xiaoping effectively established himself as the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, although he was not the premier (nor would he ever be). In addition, the speech was a move away from the teachings of Mao following his death just two years prior, yet Deng made use of Mao as a cultural icon. "Only then can we, guided as we should be by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought," Deng said, "find correct solutions to the emerging... problems." He went on to state that "the emancipation of minds has not been completely achieved among our cadres, particularly our leading cadres."<sup>2</sup> While the speech is purposefully vague and might

1 The Cult of Mao refers to the aura surrounding Mao Zedong during his reign as Chairman of the CCP and contributed to enshrining his memory as something more than human, even during his own lifetime.

2 Deng Xiaoping, "Emancipate the Mind, Seek Truth from Facts and Unite as One in Looking to the Future," in *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Ed. by Janet Chen, Pei-Kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, Jonathan D. Spence (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 493.

even seem to be in line with conventional CCP doctrine, Deng was subtly redefining that doctrine to put himself at the helm of policy making, while Mao remained the focus of Party memory.

After Deng Xiaoping effectively took power in 1978, he changed this policy to one of openness. Scholar Anne-Marie Brady states in her book, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*: "In the late 1970s and up until the mid-late 1980s, the basic assumption for foreign propaganda work was that almost all foreigners were potential friends of China and should be treated as such. In the last ten years of the Mao era, xenophobia escalated to such a point that China was almost completely isolated internationally."<sup>1</sup> One might think that this stark contrast in policy over just a few years would have come as quite a shock to many average Chinese citizens during the period. Although there were undoubtedly some wary of the change, the vast majority still went along with the wishes of the Chinese Communist Party. It should be noted that there was still a risk, especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s for the party to become delegitimized. Deng Xiaoping made careful use of many types of propaganda such as the *Beijing Review* to frame the new policies in such a way as to maintain the party's legitimacy.

This acquiescence to the new policy towards foreigners was in no small part due to Deng Xiaoping's and his administration's ability to utilize the propaganda apparatus to sell this idea to the people of China, while at the same time selling Deng's new China to the West. In other words, Deng knew full well that while he was targeting a new audience in the West, one with money, his domestic audience would still be listening to what he had to say. He could only frame his new policies as so radical, otherwise he risked delegitimizing the CCP. This was especially true when Deng first took power as many in China were wary about the direction of the government since the death of Chairman Mao in 1976.

In her book, *China and Global Capitalism: Reflections on Marxism, History and Contemporary Politics*, scholar Lin Chun examines the complex and sometimes combative relationship

1 Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), 153.

modern China has had with capitalism. She specifically discusses the Chinese model of capitalism and what that means, "A true Chinese model cannot emulate capitalist ones, and the uniqueness of China lies in its anti-capitalist posture and the potential of an alternative it offers."<sup>1</sup> In other words, what it means to be a Chinese capitalist is to be anti-capitalist, or at least anti-capitalist in the traditional, Western sense. This allows China to maintain its own separate identity from the West, something the CCP prides itself on, while also reaping the benefits of modern capitalism. This brings up the question that if China was willing to closely model itself after the Soviets during the early Mao era, why not model its economy after Western-style capitalism? One simple, unsatisfying answer is that there is no such thing as one "Western-style capitalism," but Chun provides another answer. "Chinese socialism with its egalitarian and collectivist traditions and nonconventional development methods," she says, "defies the standard models of modern transformation."<sup>2</sup> Both answers require either sweeping generalizations or immense, nuanced knowledge of Chinese economic development and Western economic history.

Chun has a point in that it is China's history that makes its attitude towards capitalism quite different from that of many Western nations. The differences in population, economic trajectory, and many political struggles, especially Marxist interpretations, all contribute to China's love-hate relationship with capitalist policies. Indeed, it is this love-hate view towards capitalism that helps to define Chinese capitalism. Furthermore, it was during the Deng era that this love-hate relationship with those policies blossomed. Prior to Deng Xiaoping, the CCP was unquestionably anti-capitalist and China as a whole had never been a bastion of the free-trade market. Deng did not throw China's lot in with the West in terms of economic policy; instead, he adopted a sort of hybrid capitalism, a Chinese socialism, capitalism with Chinese characteristics. It differed from the West in that it was largely state-run, yet paradoxically retained some free-market aspects familiar to a Western

audience. It could perhaps be said that Adam Smith's invisible hand became quite visible in China with the adoption of state-sponsored Special Economic Zones introduced in 1980-81 and a hallmark of Deng Xiaoping's economic policies.

In a 1981 issue of the *Beijing Review*, Xu Dixin explained to both a foreign and domestic audience the intention of the CCP in introducing Special Economic Zones. Xu concisely laid out what the SEZs represented. "Politically, the special economic zones are based on assurance of China's state sovereignty and governing authority is entirely in China's hands," he said. "Economically, they are essentially based on state capitalism."<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that Xu was speaking to a public audience, so this quote may or may not accurately portray what the CCP truly thought of the SEZs, but he was careful to alleviate any worries that the introduction of these four new Special Economic Zones departed from traditional Chinese socialism. "Although they represent a minor change in state economic policy," he insisted, "the special economic zones are not in basic conflict with China's socialist economic system."<sup>2</sup> By speaking out of both sides of his mouth, Xu assured his Western audience about the potential of free-market Special Economic Zones, while at the same time, he reassured a domestic audience who no doubt would have been a bit worried about China's new direction. This example of Xu giving an interview to the *Beijing Review* was by no means unique; Deng Xiaoping provided a five-part interview in 1985 to the *Review*, spreading the word about the new economic policies.<sup>3</sup> Xu's article, though, provided the best example of that the CCP had to "obscure" the full depth of how capitalist it was becoming, at least to obscure it from its own people.

This returns to Chun's point that perhaps Deng was also attempting to obscure or mitigate the economic policies being instituted. Deng made use of cultural positioning by using Mao Zedong

1 Lin Chun, *China and Global Capitalism: Reflections on Marxism, History and Contemporary Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 85.

2 Ibid. 83.

1 Xu Dixin, "China's Special Economic Zones," *Beijing Review*, no. 50, (1981): 14.

2 Ibid.

3 Deng Xiaoping, *Beijing Review*, "Current Policies Will Continue," January 28, 1985, 15.

as a cultural icon to formulate his (Deng's) own policies rather than further the Party of Mao.<sup>1</sup> In this sense Deng made dramatic reforms quietly. That is not to say his reforms were secret, at least not to those party officials who knew how the party line worked. It is important to remember that when Deng was crafting a new and lasting party line, he had to do so with both an international and domestic audience in mind.

Some concrete examples of the economic reform can be seen in how the CCP decided to incorporate foreign investment into the new, open China. In September of 1983, the CCP State Council released the "Regulation for the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Joint Ventures Using Chinese and Foreign Investment," and Article 3 of the "PRC on Joint Ventures" lists many specific industries that foreign and Chinese joint ventures should focus on industries relating to electronics and communications, medicines and medical technologies, textiles and tourism.<sup>2</sup> These explicit plans illustrated that the CCP was driving full-force with the economic reforms instituted when Deng took power in 1978. Indeed, the decision to focus on making more electronics was, no doubt, directed at Japan and to present the PRC as a better alternative than their East Asian rival. Deng's end goal in this regard was probably to make China the only choice in East Asia in terms of manufacturing electronic goods. While he did not succeed in this regard, few can argue that China does not play a dominant role in the world of electronics manufacturing. This shows that the CCP had its finger on the pulse of the economic trends of the world and had made an about-face in regard to the Maoist policies of just a few years prior.

An issue of the *Beijing Review* from early 1972 demonstrates just how the media portrayal of industry in China had changed during the Deng era; even the title of the publication had been updated.<sup>3</sup> The

January 7 issue is a good example simply because it contrasts well with some of the other issues provided. Further, the economic developments discussed are not at all free-market, but traditional Maoist Communism: "New Success in Coal Industry," "Peking Fulfills Plans Ahead of Time," and "Tenth Rich Harvest Year" are all headings that square perfectly with the media narrative at the time.<sup>1</sup> It would indeed be quite jarring to the average person at the time to undergo such a change in the late 70s-early 80s under Deng's leadership. It is no wonder that he had to be careful in crafting his narrative to not rock the boat and delegitimize the party itself.

Further evidence of this comes from another *Beijing Review* article, written in 1984 by an anonymous author discussing the importance of Silicon Valley and the benefits of developing the Haidian district of Beijing. "At present, [Haidian] is making the most of its advantages to develop new products and techniques and form new enterprises" the article notes. "It is well on its way to becoming China's Silicon Valley—a new kind of economic zone."<sup>2</sup> The author explained American success and emphasized that China could do the same: "The unparalleled scholastic and technological strength [in Haidian] makes it similar to the US Silicon Valley, which has the highest density of scientific personnel in the United States."<sup>3</sup> The fact that a staff writer of the *Beijing Review*, and not a member of the Deng administration, wrote the article demonstrates that the pseudo-PR campaign that Deng had undergone at the start of his administration had taken hold and seemed to gain the critical mass within the propaganda apparatus. There were still certainly CCP officials making their rounds in the news and keeping the public up to date on the policies, but the fact that *Review* published a major article without the prompting of a high official demonstrates that the CCP had effectively moved the party line, and the media had learned where it was and what to say without direct guidance.

Lest one thinks this was a one-off article, there are many examples from that period. In fact, two additional mini-articles from

1 Elizabeth J. Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4.

2 State Council, "Regulation for the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Joint Ventures Using Chinese and Foreign Investment," Sept. 20, 1983. 1.

3 NA, *Peking Review*, "First Year's Successes," January 7, 1972, Beijing.

1 Ibid.

2 NA, "A Silicon Valley In Beijing's Haidian?" *Beijing Review* Oct. 29, 1984.

3 Ibid.

the same issue of the *Beijing Review* tie together the burgeoning capitalist policies while maintaining some old-fashioned party lines. This might seem confusing at first, but it further emphasizes the point that the idea of a hybrid, Chinese-style capitalism was finally being understood by at least some in the mainstream Chinese media. One of the articles, titled "Five-Year Plan Targets Outlined," sounds like title from a more traditional era in the Soviet or CCP timeline. The content, however, is quite different. "There will be greater efforts to promote the production of consumer goods," it states, "especially the food industry, electrical home appliances, motor vehicles, motor cycles, and the construction industry."<sup>1</sup> This passage perfectly echoes mandates the State Council outlined in 1983 in their document on joint ventures. Now it would seem that the CCP jumped in with both feet and did not just use joint ventures to promote consumerism, but also mandated that consumerism be encouraged throughout China.

The fact that this was part of a five-year plan remains important. This was the CCP demonstrating to the people that they were still wholeheartedly communists, and in fact, they were the only true communists. Even if the CCP was just paying lip service to its five-year plan in 1984, the ultimate political message was that the PRC was the only true communist nation on the bloc. This does go back to the point of Deng playing both sides of the table; he knew how to talk to his "constituents" while at the same time selling his message to a foreign audience. It is easy to underestimate how difficult it would have been to gain the trust of a foreign business after the catastrophe that was the Mao Era, especially the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, Deng was committed to distancing his China from that of his predecessor by showing the world his was a China that moved forward and was economically predictable. He began in 1978 by laying out the vague plans for economic improvement and continued to build upon those plans, making them a reality in the form of Special Economic Zones and emphasizing building consumer goods.

This would have been encouraging for those foreign companies still wary about investing in China, and not knowing if there was another revolution around the corner. In another article in the *Beijing Review*, an anonymous author describes the new reforms

to be incorporated into the planning system: "The State Council has approved the decision to cut the number of industrial products of a mandatory nature from 120 to 60 and the number of agricultural and sideline products to be purchased by the state from 29 to 10."<sup>2</sup> The pullback from the traditional Maoist stance that prized ideas like agriculture and heavy industry demonstrated a concerted shift in economic policy that signaled what China's intentions were to the Western world.

This would have provided just a bit of some of the solace that many Western companies would have been looking for. While certainly not laissez-faire as some capitalist companies wanted, the proposal certainly helped sell goods, especially since the proposal of joint ventures had passed not too long prior to the reform to the planning system. This coincides with Brady's point about China's attitude toward propaganda in the 1980s: that most foreigners were potential friends.<sup>2</sup> The series of *Beijing Review* articles is a byproduct of that policy, and this one in particular illustrates that China is open for business.

While it might seem that China wanted the West on its side during this period, all was not well. At this time, Hong Kong (Xianggang) remained a British possession, but the time was quickly approaching when the Crown would have to relinquish its dominion over the prosperous trading port. There had been some concern as to whether Great Britain would keep its word to transfer authority of Hong Kong to the PRC. The *Beijing Review* latched on to this issue and proceeded to tear into Great Britain's foreign policy decisions. "The prosperity of Xianggang in the past 30-odd years is the result of the diligence, wisdom and meticulous management of the more than 5 million Xianggang residents, of whom over 98 percent are Chinese compatriots," commented the *Review*. "Another very important factor in Xianggang's prosperity has been the long years of vigorous support given by the Chinese mainland in

1 NA, "Five-Year Plan Targets Outlined," *Beijing Review*, Oct. 29, 1984.

1 NA, "Planning System to be Reformed," *Beijing Review*, Oct. 29, 1984.

2 Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), 153.

various fields.”<sup>1</sup> This was a clear echo of the Mao Era and not in line with Deng’s modernization efforts.

The zealous nationalism was practically palpable, and the author failed on all fronts to incorporate any of the modernizations, or any aspects of the new policies that were at the helm of the CCP political apparatus at the time. The author instead drew upon the tried-and-true method of demonizing the West and making it seem as if China had been doing everything correctly all along. In the author’s defense, this aspect of Chinese history is quite a sore one and goes back to a time when Britain took complete advantage of a weak and desperate China, but the Qing ceded Hong Kong to the British in 1841.<sup>2</sup> That the *Beijing Review* was quite willing to make an impassioned argument for Xianggang demonstrated that while undergoing dramatic economic changes, the people maintained a similar idea of what it meant to be Chinese and remembered the Unequal Treaties with great passion. While Hong Kong was eventually returned to the PRC (more or less), the article showed that an air of suspicion remained towards the West even if the Deng administration was working on a policy of openness.

Despite some resentment towards the West for the colonial era, the PRC led by Deng Xiaoping was firmly committed to driving ahead with its modernizations and relied upon cultural positioning much less than Mao, or at least Deng used it in a completely different way. Furthermore, Deng was able to make excellent use of the propaganda apparatus to sell his revolutionary ideas. There was a threat that the CCP would be delegitimized if the radical reforms were presented as radical so the initial attitude of the CCP needed to follow the party line. The party redefined Mao Zedong Thought by its new, modernized standards and ensured that Deng’s economic reforms would be one of the hallmarks of those new standards.

Deng Xiaoping’s talent rested in his knack for doublespeak. He was able to communicate to both Western, capitalist nations as

well as to a domestic audience through publications such as the *Beijing Review* as well as official State Council publications outlying the specifics of his economic reforms. This ensured his ultimate goal that China would be seen by both a domestic audience and a foreign one as a nation that could be economically relied upon, and a nation that was open for business.

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1 Xinhua, “Britain’s Argument is Untenable,” *Beijing Review*, Oct. 10, 1983, 10.

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## Lasting Uncertainty: War And Peace As Portrayed in Film

McKayla Friskney

History seems to fluctuate between periods of war and peace. It is a ruthless storm of conflict only temporarily broken. However, even in these moments, it is a disturbed silence. One wrought with unease and building tension because no matter the situation, history is rarely ever so quiet. Hollywood takes pleasure in exploiting this history. It is no secret that films depicting these wildly intoxicating tales of hardship and determination pay well. These war films evoke emotion from every spectrum that captivates its audience. The subject of war and peace is often one that seizes such devoted interest. From early films such as *The General* of 1926 to later films like *Saving Private Ryan* of 1998, Hollywood has been presenting its audiences the tribulations of war and complications with peace for decades. Hollywood depicts these times from start to finish; from the time a soldier enlists to his arrival back home.

There seems to be a preconceived notion that with war comes prestige. Young men and women can find valor in fighting alongside people of the same likeness. This idea, whether intentional or not, seems to present itself best in the comedic film, *The General* of 1926. This silent film by American actor and director Buster Keaton is largely renowned for its stunts and regarded by some such as Orson Welles, director of *Citizen Kane*, as the greatest film ever made.<sup>1</sup> In it Keaton plays Johnnie Gray, a train engineer of the Western & Atlantic Railroad and longtime admirer of his fiancée, Annabelle Lee. The film is set during the American Civil War and, before Keaton's

1 "Orson Welles Introduces Buster Keaton's 'The General' \* FilmmakerIQ.com," FilmmakerIQ.com, June 27, 2013, Accessed February 19, 2018, <https://filmmakeriq.com/2013/06/orson-welles-introduces-buster-keatons-the-general/>