

The Promise and Peril of China After Deng Xiaoping

Panelists

Dr. Harry Harding
Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Dr. Ronald Montaperto
Senior Fellow, Institute for National Strategic Studies

Dr. Anne Thurston, Peace Fellow
The United States Institute of Peace

Moderator

Brett C. Lippencott
Policy Analyst, Asian Studies Center

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Brett C. Lippencott

Today we are here to talk about the fate of China after Deng Xiaoping. The question of China's future is being asked by Communist Party research committees in Beijing, anxious reformers and capitalists along China's Golden Coast, and of course, here in the United States.

Today's large attendance indicates that the interest in Asia, particularly China, is quite keen. It also indicates that there are many differing opinions as to the direction and fate of China after Deng Xiaoping.

It is my honor to introduce our panel. Dr. Harry Harding is a distinguished visiting professor at the Sigur Center for East Asian Studies at The George Washington University here in Washington. He is on leave from his permanent position as Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies program at The Brookings Institution. Dr. Harding's most recent book, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China Since 1972*, was named an outstanding academic book for 1992 by *Choice Magazine*. Dr. Harding is a trustee at The Asia Foundation and a consultant to numerous multinational corporations.

Our second panelist, Dr. Ronald Montaperto, is a senior fellow with the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University. Dr. Montaperto was a member of the political science faculty at Indiana University at Bloomington. He also served there as Director of East Asian Studies. His other appointments include the Henry L. Stimson Chair of Political Science at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and Chief of Estimates for China at the Defense Intelligence Agency. His critically acclaimed book, *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-ai*, published with Gordon Bennett, was nominated for a National Book Award.

Our third and final panelist, Dr. Anne Thurston, is currently a Peace Fellow at The United States Institute of Peace here in Washington. Dr. Thurston is an independent writer whose personal connection and scholarly efforts in the areas of Chinese politics and society have drawn praise. Dr. Thurston's books include *A Chinese Odyssey: The Life and Times of a Chinese Dissident*, and a personal favorite of mine, *Enemies of the People: The Ordeal of Chinese Intellectuals During the Great Cultural Revolution*. Dr. Thurston also has served as Director for China at the Social Science Research Council and currently serves on the board of Human Rights in China.

Dr. Harry Harding

As Brett has said, there is not only a great amount of interest in the future of China, but a great deal of uncertainty. And I am certainly going to reinforce that uncertainty today.

Before indicating what I think are the several possible courses that China could take in the years ahead, let me just spend a minute explaining why I think there is such uncertainty in our thinking about the future of the country. China has an uninstitutionalized political system. We see a looming individual and generational succession. China's enormous economic dynamism is leading to a much more vociferous society. And looming ahead for

China are some daunting economic problems. I think that combination of factors helps explain why it is so difficult to give any clear or confident forecast about the future of China.

What I would suggest today is that there are three broad directions that China could follow in the years ahead. In each case, the extreme scenarios, including some that are discussed quite commonly in China and in the Western press, are relatively unlikely. But lesser versions of those three scenarios provide a more realistic survey of the varying prospects for the People's Republic of China. I will call these three directions "the road to further reform," "the road of retrogression," and "the road of political decay."

The most optimistic scenario is that China will move rapidly and smoothly toward economic and political reform in the post-Deng era. The argument for this is that there will be a new generation of leaders assuming power in the near future, leaders who are better educated and more exposed to the outside world, and that there will be pressures for both economic and political reform from a more active and independent civil society. Above all, the external example of the rest of East Asia, particularly South Korea and Taiwan, will put great pressure on the PRC to move rapidly away from its present halfway house toward a more complete democratic market economy. If I had to use a metaphor for this first scenario, it would be a big Taiwan; the mainland follows the Taiwan example and moves rapidly and relatively smoothly toward political and economic reform.

In fact, I think that this extreme version is a relatively unlikely scenario. We may hope for it, we may try to bring it about, but I don't think it is likely to happen. China, I think, is simply too big for the process to be so rapid and so smooth as these optimists would suggest. The problems—economically, socially, and politically—are too great. The political culture of most of the country is simply too unfamiliar with, and one might even say unsupportive of, democracy. And above all, institutional reform in the political sphere has been too slow for the process to be smooth.

The best we can hope for, in my view, is something that is more gradual and much bumpier, a reform that has its ebbs and flows, in which economic reform probably leads political reform for a considerable period of time and where there is turbulence, disorder, and periodic crackdowns. In other words, the most plausible of these more optimistic scenarios would be a big South Korea, rather than a big Taiwan. If we compare the two, the South Korean process was much bumpier, but still ended up with both a market-oriented economy and a more pluralistic and democratic political system.

The challenge for the United States in this scenario will be to decide what are simply bumps in the road and what are more permanent reversals and how to respond to them. Even if the process succeeds, I suspect that the pressures put on the international economy by a successfully reformed China will be one of the greatest challenges that we will face.

The second set of scenarios involves retrogression. Here the fear has been that China will move backward in the direction of a more administered economy and more tightly controlled society. Reform, it is pointed out, has its opponents, both in the leadership and in society. There are people who believe, either for practical or for ideological reasons, that much of what has been done over the last 15 years has been a mistake.

Problems will mount socially and economically as China moves into the second stage of reform and the bottle-neck sectors become more and more apparent. There is, therefore, the possibility that there will be a leadership, either inside or outside the party, that will try to mobilize popular discontent with reform to try to create what might be called either a neo-communist or a neo-fascist movement that would exercise renewed totalitarian con-

trols. In this extreme version of the retrogressive scenario, China moves backward toward totalitarianism and central planning and becomes a big North Korea.

Now, of all the scenarios, this is the one we hear the least about these days, and I think that is for a very simple reason. I think it is simply impossible now for China to move very far back in the direction of an administered economy and a totalitarian political system. The technical problems of administering so large and complex an economy and society are simply too great. It is also unfeasible for the present regime to mobilize enough power to suppress the economic interests that have been created by reform.

However, there is a less extreme version of the scenario that I consider to be much more likely, and that is what many Chinese themselves call "neo-authoritarianism." This would include a protracted period in which China attempts to maintain a relatively pluralistic and outwardly oriented market economy on the one hand, while trying to maintain an authoritarian political system on the other.

Why is this scenario possible? First, not all of the new leaders of China are democrats. There is a notion abroad that this new generation of Chinese is necessarily going to be democratically or pluralistically oriented. I am not at all convinced of that, at least among those who will be the next generation of leaders. There is a fear wide-spread in China, both among the elites and among society, that political reform will lead to chaos and turmoil; and the example of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia is of course increasingly being brought out in support of this proposition. If we want another analogy from the past, I think again it would be a big Taiwan or a big South Korea, but it would be the Taiwan and the South Korea of the 1960s and the 1970s, rather than the South Korea or Taiwan of today.

At a minimum, the dilemma for the United States in this scenario will be how to balance our interests in human rights with our desire to preserve economic opportunities in China and to avoid strategic confrontation. At a maximum, the challenge is that a neo-authoritarian China could also be a highly nationalistic China. That could pose a threat to the security interests of the United States and its allies if it became assertive internationally, especially if it continued to enjoy high rates of economic growth.

Finally, the third broad path for China is the one that I call decay. In this scenario China will collapse into warring states, or warlord states, as has previously occurred many times in China's history. The assumption here is that tensions between the center and the provinces, between state and society, between Han and minority populations are all increasing; that the central government is weakening steadily relative to society and to the provincial authorities; and that the central government likely will become increasingly fragmented and ineffective when Deng Xiaoping and the elders die and a new generation of weaker leaders come to power.

Once again, I think that this extreme scenario, while not completely impossible, remains highly unlikely. The center remains in possession of significant levers of power over the provinces. A widespread fear of chaos, fear of the Yugoslavian example, will help hold things together to a degree in China. But above all, the growth for the first time in Chinese history of a large national economic system is giving provinces, both rich and poor, a growing stake in national unity. I think that all of these factors would tend to prevent China from descending too far along this particular dimension.

However, a less extreme version of decay is highly likely. This would not involve the breakup of China, but it would involve extensive corruption, turbulence in both rural and urban China, immobility and inefficiency at the center, and very confused and strained re-

lations between the center and the provinces. China would become something like a big Philippines rather than a big Yugoslavia.

For the United States, the challenge in this scenario would be that China would be much less coherent. There is a paradox here. Although we often argue that the promotion of human rights requires restrictions on the power of the central government, we also want a central government that can prevent things that we don't like. We want a coherent government that can control illegal exports, that can control drug trafficking, that can control arms sales, and that can control environmental pollution. A China that becomes less coherent will mean that the central government will be less and less able to do these things.

What I am suggesting here is that there are three broad paths for China. I see the extreme versions of each path as being unlikely, but I would suggest that decay, neo-authoritarianism, and bumpy reform all remain very real possibilities.

Which of them will actually come about? Basically, I think it depends on two factors: first, whether new generations of Chinese leaders are prepared to move in a concerted way toward political reform and secondly, if they do so, whether that process will be overwhelmed by social and economic problems.

A few words in conclusion about the implications for the United States. My sense is that, more than at any other time since I began studying China, there is a real disconnection between our analysis of domestic affairs and of foreign policy in China. As I have just suggested, there is enormous uncertainty about China's future, an enormous concern that there is a process of decay underway that could have very serious ramifications. And yet increasingly we hear from strategists, most of whom are not China specialists, that China is a rising power that is going to pose a major threat to the security of the region and to the United States. I would suggest that there is a real contradiction here. If one real danger for China is decay and confusion, then I am not sure that China will necessarily pose a concerted threat to the United States in the way that so many people are talking about.

I would suggest that our analysis of the international implications of China's future should acknowledge as much variety and uncertainty as our domestic scenarios do. It is certainly possible that there could be a classic security threat from China if China experiences some of the more nationalistic versions of neo-authoritarianism, but there are other scenarios that we should consider. One is that decay would lead not to aggression, but to incoherence. And further decay could lead to the same massive humanitarian problems and uncertainties about command and control of nuclear weapon systems that we are seeing in the former Soviet Union or in Eastern Europe.

Obviously, reform is the best scenario for the United States, but even here there are complications. Some arise from what I think will be a bumpy process of reform. Others are reflected in a growing concern among the business community, both in the United States and Japan about the rising economic competition from a China which many—not me—see as a "low-wage, high-tech" economy.

My bottom line is that I don't know what is going to happen in China. I suspect the extreme scenarios are relatively unlikely, but that still leaves a wide range of possibilities. That suggests to me that, in thinking about the future of China's international role and position, we need to have a much wider range of scenarios in mind and not prematurely focus, as so many are, on the notion that China will inevitably become the next strategic rival of the United States in Asia.

Dr. Ronald Montaperto

I am impressed that some things never seem to change. It was in 1981 that I was dragged, sort of like the lamb to the slaughter, from a comfortable academic environment to that of the Defense Intelligence Agency here. My first job at that time was to work on a national estimate, the title of which was "China After Deng." It is now 12 or 13 years later, and I can think of no question that has so dominated our concerns for all this time.

Like Harry, I do not know what is going to happen in China. But unlike Harry, and for purposes of stimulating some discussion, I am going to pretend as though I do. And I am going to offer my own scenario for what I think will happen. I will do this in a couple of different ways.

First, I would like to talk about what the succession in China means and what issues are involved in the succession. I think, and I will try to establish in a moment, it is considerably more than finding new leaders.

Secondly, I would like to talk about the People's Liberation Army's role in the succession process.

And finally, if there is some time, I would like to address the three questions this symposium proposed: How will the post-Deng Xiaoping succession affect the Chinese internal political scene, China's relations with the West, and China's regional goals?

First, the succession means finding a new paramount leader for China. China is a bureaucratic system, and, as with all bureaucracies, it takes personalities to make it work. China seems to need this more than other systems because the system is not well institutionalized; therefore, the role of the strong leadership figure, I think, is extremely important. And this is what we mean when we talk about the paramount leader.

The new paramount leader will not be paramount in the sense of Mao Zedong. He will probably not even be paramount in the sense of Deng Xiaoping, who is considerably less powerful than was Mao. There will be a new definition, a new kind of leader who will not have at his disposal all of the resources that Mao before him, and Deng before him, had.

But I think it is important to note that this process of finding and defining a new paramount leader is going to occur within the context of a set of difficult policy problems. I think there are six major problems that have to be resolved.

First, there has to be a new relationship between the center, the regions, and the provinces. New mechanisms of control have got to be developed in order to accommodate the pressures from the regions and from the provinces that are the result of rising economic development.

Second, Beijing must deal with the imbalances that exist in the levels of livelihood within various sectors of China. It is fashionable these days to talk about the Center and the Coast—the Golden Coast. I think we cannot ignore that. However, I think I would also argue for a more discriminating, more sensitive kind of analysis. I suggest that the idea of the coastal provinces and the interior as the major contradiction is probably a bit simplistic.

We are getting some data now that suggest a number of other things. While we need to talk about imbalances in livelihood standards between and among different regions, we also need to look within regions, and within regions we need to look at different sectors, and within sectors we need to look at urban and rural splits. I think that probably we will find as time passes that the real imbalance, the real fault line, will be urban versus rural.

These have the potential to cut across center/province or, if you like, interior/coastal boundaries. And we need to look at that. That is a different question.

A third problem is that the regime will have to build a new social safety net. As the economy moves toward the institution of market mechanisms, the things that enterprises now do in terms of providing housing, medical care, education, all of these social support services will have to be assumed by some other institutions, that is to say by the state and by private companies. That will be a third problem.

The fourth problem grows out of the third. China must complete the process of moving toward market regulation.

Fifth, there must be a way of accommodating demands for a greater pluralism. Tiananmen was, I think, one stage in a process that really began a long time ago. It began early in this century, or even toward the end of the last century. There is a desire among the Chinese people, linked always to economic development and reform, for a greater pluralism in daily social life and for wider latitude in making political decisions.

The sixth challenge relates to all of the preceding five because the new successor, or the new regime, will have to find some way of filling what I refer to as the gap in social values. Marxism in China is dead. It has no relevance of any kind. It has no appeal of any kind. The Chinese Communist Party is seen as a stepping stone to advancement, and little more than that. There is simply no respect for the concept of Marxism. Something will have to fill that gap. Right now we hear reports of people doing martial arts. We hear about a revival of religion and Christianity that reflects a desire within the populace to find some kind of crucial values that will give them some light.

Solving these sets of problems will require much time—perhaps two to four years. The process is going to involve a great deal of tension and stress. I would expect to see more demonstrations in the streets. I expect we will also see perhaps violent suppressions of such demonstrations. We are not out of the woods on this by any means, because the impulses that lead to these demonstrations have an historic root, they have a cultural root, they have a root in nationalism, and they will simply not go away until they are addressed.

So having said all of this, I will get back to the succession. The test of the new paramount leader, the criterion by which the new candidate will be judged, will be his ability to deal with this whole range of problems. The present leadership, in my own view, is not up to this task. So I think we are going to see a lot of change at the very top. But the process of producing the new leader, I think, will contain within it a new definition of Chinese political life, and we will then have a new leader who will personify these new values, as Mao did for his time and as Deng is now doing for his time.

Now let me talk about the People's Liberation Army. The PLA is bound to be an extremely important player in this whole process. I would even say it will be the crucial player. The PLA has its own set of priorities, its own prism through which it views these six problems that I have set forth. Some of them are rather broad, and some are narrow and quite professional.

The PLA's broadest political concern, in my own view, is expressed in its nationalism. I believe the Chinese People's Liberation Army is today the repository of nationalism in China, and that this nationalism is old fashioned. It is Victorian 19th Century, basic, harsh, strident, difficult to deal with, and very difficult to apprehend. It is very much in conflict with what you might call neo-realist notions based upon interdependence. Out of that comes a desire to see China take its place as a leading regional and global power.

The basis for all of this is seen in two things: continuing economic development, an economic base to support the second aspect of it—a world class military system.

Then we come down to a number of other more instrumental things which involve professionalization of the PLA. We hear much about it. I am just back, as a matter of fact, from a week in China. I hope most of you will be happy to know that we now have a renewed relationship between their National Defense University and ours, and that the prospects for developing military-to-military relationships seem to be fairly positive.

But during one visit, I learned that progress within the PLA toward professionalization is slow. What the PLA is most concerned about is regulating its budget. They have for years been in business, making quite a pile of money, but the management of businesses runs up against the requirements of training and professional development. We hear much in terms of PLA doctrine about active defense and about regional wars of limited duration. We hear much about combined arms operations. We hear much about high technology warfare. My own position on this is that there are decades ahead before the PLA achieves what even it feels it must achieve in this regard.

We asked constantly, "Tell us about active defense. Tell us about people's war under modern conditions. Tell us about combined arms warfare. What does it mean to you?" There was no answer. Not because it is a secret, which of course it is, but also because it simply hasn't been decided yet. Desert Storm was a wake-up call to the PLA. They understand how they have to do it. They understand what they need. But there are not the resources, material or human, yet to bring that into being. And so I would posit that as being a major, primary concern of the PLA.

All of this is a way of saying, in the words of a former Chief of Staff of the United States Army, that the PLA is a hollow shell. There are some units that can do a very good job indeed, but these are very few and very far between.

So what it all comes down to is this. As the PLA approaches the succession process, its concerns will be framed and shaped by the kinds of issues I have just raised at the two levels. There is the level of nationalism in the sense of China's destiny, and then there is the idea of military professionalization and modernization, which seems to be linked to the first.

How will the PLA participate in this succession? I think that the PLA's participation is likely to be "normal." It is difficult to apply the term "constitutional" to anything in China, and I would like to avoid that. But I think we all understand that by statute, by custom, by tradition, the PLA has a large number of points of access to the political system. And furthermore, it is my own view that as time passes, the military is getting increasingly sophisticated in terms of its ability to aggregate its interest and to articulate it.

Many years ago one of the biggest jokes in the world was a PLA think tank. It was a true oxymoron. That is no longer the case. What I have found in two-and-a-half years of visiting back and forth is an increase in the level of knowledge, sophistication, and the ability to present a point of view in the larger policy process.

The policy process at this time is by no means institutionalized, but it is more so than it was five years ago. And part and parcel of that has been, I think, derived from the PLA's ability to organize itself, to identify the critical modes, and to act upon those critical modes.

Nor is the PLA without other supports. Just over 20 percent of the membership of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party are serving PLA officers. Liu

Huaqing, probably the most powerful military man in China, is the leader of the Central Military Commission. More important in some ways is General Zhang Zhen, a former president of the NDU, who is the funnel through which PLA positions are articulated to the Central Military Commission and out again. This is something that needs a great deal more research, but to me it points out the need to engage the PLA. What I am saying here is that there is no need for the PLA to intervene in this succession in extraordinary ways.

The military already has at its disposal a whole range of mechanisms, devices, and structures by which and through which it can influence the policy process. And further, it shows increasing sophistication and effectiveness as it does so.

Will China remain a unified state? I think the answer is yes, but not in its present form. I perceive a new relationship between the center and the regions based upon different sets of control mechanisms. At present, control is mainly administrative. Provinces and the center have to bargain. And they find some kind of consensus, and then the provinces simply evade it. If the present mechanisms that are being discussed are implemented, the provinces will not have that capability, because the value of money, exchange rates, and other things will be set. They will deprive the provinces in large measure of the devices they now hold in competition with the center.

I think the new relationship will also be more Chinese, if you will permit that, because a strong central government is frankly not very Chinese. It never has been. Also, I think a third reason why the unified state will remain is the concept of nationalism. The entrepreneurs and officials of the Golden Coast, I believe, are well aware that any hint, the slightest hint, the slightest intimation of instability in China will mean an end to all of the investment that they prize so dearly. It is in their interest to get together to maintain stability. Also, we need to say that the PLA, when all is said and done, will attempt to provide the unity that could be lacking.

So, in building toward a model—we have heard about the Philippines, we have heard about Taiwan and Yugoslavia and North Korea—the one that I prefer is the Singapore model. There is a great deal of interaction between China and Singapore. Beijing is trying to discover the secret of Singapore's success. The Chinese hear such things as "You have got to be efficient. You have got to be honest. And you have to deliver." And this, I think, clearly gives the Chinese authority some difficulties.

As for relations with the West and with the region, I believe that great power status will continue to be China's overarching goal. But given all that we have said, all of that pushes China toward a policy position, toward a standpoint which says that domestic stability, regional stability, and global stability are the most important things for the next 10, 15, 20 years. And so I think that that push for stable international relations, a stable regional and global security environment, will remain overarching imperatives for Chinese policy makers. Moreover, in the next 20 years China simply will not have the wherewithal to adopt military methods. It will probably take that long before China is anything like a military threat to the United States, or really to any of its neighbors.

It then comes down to nationalism. When it comes to foreign and national security policy, I see a kind of dialectic, a tension, in Chinese foreign policy. There is, on the one hand, the raw, strident, harsh, sort of bitter nationalism of the PLA. And that is a vital, vibrant strain. On the other hand, there is another view within China that embraces new concepts related to interdependence. There is a broader concept of national security, which is more comprehensive. It holds that enmeshed political and economic ties are crucial to national security. I think we should all agree that, to this point, the latter has taken precedence over

the former. Whether that mix remains as it is, I think it is in large measure up to us, up to China's neighbors within the region. But with that caveat, I remain fairly optimistic about the future.

Dr. Anne Thurston

In preparing this presentation, I was reminded of why I stopped teaching. After four years teaching the same courses, I got bored hearing myself say the same things. I share Ron's problem with the succession to Deng Xiaoping. I, too, have already talked about the topic. Since there are a finite number of people in Washington who come to listen to us, some of you may already have heard me, so today I will try to say something different.

I knew that Harry could be depended on to lay out a set of scenarios about what might happen politically following Deng's death. I knew that Ron could be depended on to tell about the possible role of the military in the succession. Since my role in life is to listen to Chinese people tell their stories, I want to try to understand what Deng's death will mean for the Chinese people.

The interviews I conduct in China are of limited use in trying to answer this question. All of us who go to China have been asking the Chinese for years what will happen with Deng's passing. The answer is usually pretty much the same. It was Harry Harding's bottom line: *Buzhidao*. "I don't know." A few months ago, when I pressed one of my friends, he said, "Things may get better. Maybe they will be worse. But they won't be the same." A couple of days ago, I called a Chinese friend here in the U.S. and asked him what he thinks. Again he didn't know. I pressed, and he said, "It's sort of like a refrigerator. If you pull out the plug, the ice will melt." This doesn't give me much to go on.

At times like this, China needs someone who is a combination of Vaclav Havel, Andrei Sakharov, and Maxine Hong Kingston. A Vaclav Havel because he is able to take a simple daily act, like a green grocer putting a sign in his window that says "workers of the world unite," and explain the meaning of the act. And Havel is able to explain so simply and so persuasively the moral corrosiveness of a "totalitarian" system.

We need a Sakharov to explain what will happen in China because my Russian friends and specialists on the former Soviet Union tell me that when Sakharov was finally allowed to return to Moscow and his voice was heard by the Russian people, he spoke eloquently. He spoke a language devoid of all ideology, all slogans, all cant. It was a language that people in the Soviet Union had not heard in decades. Yet what he said made more sense than anything people had heard in all those years.

We need a Maxine Hong Kingston because she understands the power of myth, and so much of the functioning of Chinese society depends on myth—both myths that do make sense and myths that do not.

China has no one who combines a Havel, a Sakharov, and a Maxine Hong Kingston. I am no substitute. But I will try a rough approximation of what the passing of Deng might mean to the Chinese people.

I see Deng Xiaoping as the thread of legitimacy holding China together today. It may be true that he plays only a minor role in the day-to-day administration of the country, but he has enormous symbolic significance on three levels:

First, he is the exemplar of China's reform policy. He is the man credited with having returned land to the peasants, who opened up China to the West, who began the series of economic reforms that have resulted in the startlingly high rates of economic growth that

China has been witnessing in the past decade or so. It is true that he nearly lost the Mandate of Heaven on the night of June 3-4, 1989, when he ordered the People's Liberation Army into Beijing, but he regained the Mandate when he went south in early 1992 and called upon all of China to emulate Shenzhen. Deng's southern trip unleashed the tremendous economic energy we see today and reestablished his right to rule.

It is true that there are many other reformers in China, and they will be committed to carrying on Deng's reforms after he is gone. But they are not Deng Xiaoping. None of them will have the authority that Deng Xiaoping has had.

Second, Deng Xiaoping, symbolically, is the last of the Long March generation, the last of the revolutionaries who established "new China," the last of the generation who, on October 1, 1949, stood atop Tiananmen to declare the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Every Chinese to whom I have spoken over the years who was either present at the event or who heard of it later reports the thrill, the pride, the exultation they felt—the tears streaming down their faces when they witnessed or heard Mao Zedong say that today "the Chinese people have stood up."

Talking to Chinese recently about the revival of the Mao cult, even the most disaffected—such as intellectuals who suffered grievously under his rule or people who would date the beginning of Mao's mistakes far earlier than the official party history—still credit Mao, and by implication those who stood with him, with having allowed the Chinese people to stand up, of having imbued them with new pride, new hope. He united them again.

Deng Xiaoping, whatever his differences with Mao, is still a part of that group. He still stands in the light of Mao, as they say. Much of his legitimacy derives from this. With his passing, that legitimacy will also be gone.

Finally, metaphorically, Deng Xiaoping is the emperor. Most Chinese believe he will be the last. There is simply no one in China who has his authority—or at least anyone we now know. I cannot explain why Deng has this authority. The sources of legitimacy in China are complex. Myth is important, and perhaps a Maxine Hong Kingston could help us understand. I am reminded of my book about Ni Yuxian, a controversial dissident from Shanghai, and the stories his grandmother used to tell him about how to tell the difference between a real emperor and a pretender to the throne. Yuan Shikai was a pretender, Ni's grandmother believed, both because he was a foreigner and because when he tried to assume the dragon throne, the dragons that served as arms to the throne suddenly came alive and wrapped themselves around the usurper, crushing him to death. Yuan Shikai was not a foreigner but Chinese, and he died a natural death. But these are the myths that Chinese, particularly rural Chinese, tell.

Ni Yuxian's grandmother also predicted that Mao Zedong would become the emperor because while he was a southerner by birth, he had a northerner's face. And the mole on his chin united heaven and earth. I do not know what myths have been built about Deng Xiaoping, or what makes him the emperor, but metaphorically, symbolically, he is an emperor to the Chinese people, and there is not another waiting in the wings. Many Chinese say that Communist Party or no Communist Party, the Chinese people are still Confucian. They need a father. They need an emperor. Deng Xiaoping is their father and emperor.

If I am right about what Deng Xiaoping means to the Chinese people, then symbolically, in terms of the meaning Chinese people give to their lives, the loss of Deng Xiaoping will be profound indeed.

I am also reminded of a woman I did not interview but whom Arthur Kleinman, a psychiatrist and anthropologist at Harvard University, did. The woman's husband had been declared a rightist in 1958, and he had been separated from his family for more than 20 years. During that time, the woman had kept the family going—kept herself and her four children going. In 1978, her husband was finally rehabilitated, and he returned to his family to live. After 20 years of struggle, and finally succeeding, the woman became clinically depressed. This is what she said to Arthur Kleinman when he tried to find out why she had become depressed.

Suppose, she said, looking at the ground, you were climbing a mountain and this mountain was very steep and terribly difficult to climb. To the right and the left, you could see people falling off the mountainside. Holding on to your neck and back were several family members, so that if you fell so would they. For twenty years you climbed this mountain with your eyes fixed on the handholds and footholds. You neither looked back nor ahead. Finally, you have reached the top of the mountain. Perhaps this is the first time you have looked backward and seen how much you had endured, how difficult your life and family's situation had been, how blighted your hopes.

She ended by asking if this was not a good enough reason to become depressed.

The death of Deng Xiaoping may provide the Chinese people the opportunity to pause for a moment, or for many moments, and look back over their lives and over what the last 40-plus years under communism have meant. In many respects, the Chinese people have made it to the top of the mountain. The economy is booming. Many people are full of hope. But if they are able to use the occasion of Deng's death to pause, to look back down that mountain, to see how much they have endured, and how hard those 40 years have been, I wonder what they will feel. I wonder whether this will be a time for collective depression in China.

When I do press the Chinese about the meaning of Deng's death and what they fear most about it the answer is *luan*—chaos. They fear chaos. At one level, that means the chaos that Harry and Ron have talked about—the decentralization, the multiplication of local power holders, the turmoil of development, the dislocation of peasants migrating to the cities, the traffic jams, and the corruption, even the possibility of sporadic violence.

But at another level, the Chinese people are talking about a more personal *luan*, a moral *luan*, the *luan* of disorderly personal relationships. Both traditionally and in China under Mao, morality has been defined in terms of orderly human relationships, a proper hierarchy of human relations. Under Deng's new reforms, those orderly relationships have collapsed. China is in a state of moral disarray. Old values have crumbled, and new ones have yet to take their place.

Richard Soloman, the new president of the Peace Institute, points out that the *luan* of political struggle under Mao has been replaced by the *luan* of the marketplace. While the nature of chaos has changed, something else has not. Before, under Mao, the end of socialism justified the means of political struggle, of ceaseless political campaigns—including land reform, the anti-rightist campaign, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution—and the millions of deaths that ensued.

Now the end is economic development, growth, and prosperity; but the means include widespread corruption, prostitution, cheating, unbridled competition, the selling of women and children, the taking of second wives, and sexual promiscuity. Open the door, as Deng Xiaoping says, and the flies come in. Despite periodic campaigns against corrup-

tion, this immoral economy is seen as necessary, inevitable to the course, the end, of development.

More fundamental than this is the *luan* of human relationships. Some people in China say that the chaos of personal relationships is worse now than during the Cultural Revolution. No matter how many millions may have suffered, they say, the numbers were still limited, and there was a certain order, a certain logic in how victims were selected. Everybody had a label. You were a counterrevolutionary, a worker, a peasant, a rightist. As long as you knew what your label was, you knew how other people were likely to treat you.

Today, though, nothing makes sense. A lucky guy with no education can make millions in the stock market. A friend recently told me about a 25-year-old woman who graduated from a Chinese university only a couple years ago who has recently come to graduate school in the United States with \$50,000 in the bank. My friend wonders how she got the money and what it means. I think of a 23-year-old friend of mine in Beijing whom I first met as an innocent 18-year-old. In the past five years, she has become a millionaire running her own taxi company. Or one thinks of Daquizhuang, the village outside Tianjin that raked in so much money that the leaders drove around in Mercedes Benz cars—while the average Chinese villager still earns around \$200 a year and a third of rural Chinese families do not have access to clean drinking water.

A few months ago, I had lunch with an old friend of mine, a senior engineer who is now retired and, for the first time since I had known him, he ordered a beer. In more than a decade, I had never seen him touch alcohol. I asked him why he was drinking. He said he always drinks now because he is depressed. He is depressed because he had been extremely well educated, and once he had been an idealist. He had wanted to serve his country, to help with its modernization. But his entire working life had been consumed by one political campaign after another, and he had spent some time in jail. He had never been able to make his contribution, and now he was retired. His daughter, who had nothing like the education he had, had recently started working for a joint venture firm and was making lots of money. She had just given him an expensive bottle of brandy that cost over \$100, more than double his monthly salary.

As I sat with my friend listening to him look back over his life, I knew that he did not know what sense to make of it. He was at the top of his personal mountain, looking back, his productive life over, and he did not know what it all meant.

Finally, I want to say something about the problem of expiation, of retribution, and of reconciliation once Deng Xiaoping is gone—expiation not only for all the political campaigns of the Maoist period, but also expiation for the more recent tragedy at Tiananmen in 1989. I want to quote from a prophecy about another revolution, the French Revolution, that ended in failure. It appears in the final pages of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* as the narrator imagines the thoughts of Sydney Carton as he prepares to meet the guillotine:

I see Clyde, Barsad, the Juryman, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the ranks of the old perishing by this retributive instrument before it shall cease from its present use. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss. And in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out.

I see the death of Deng Xiaoping, and the death of what he has symbolized, as bringing with it renewed demands for expiation—and new demands, too, for retribution against the new Chinese oppressors who have risen on the ranks of the old.

I think it would take someone who combines Vaclav Havel's ability to make sense out of everyday acts of complicity, with Sakharov's eloquence that everyone understands, with Maxine Hong Kingston's understanding of myth, to make sense of the past that Deng Xiaoping has played such a great part in making. I see someone who combines all those qualities as necessary to bring about a moral reconciliation that could ensure that the expiation that China still must go through would be peaceful.

I agree with what Harry and Ron have said here. I do not think the worst-case scenarios will come to pass after Deng Xiaoping dies. China will not break up. What worries me is that when Deng dies, and the Chinese people stand at the top of that mountain and begin looking back, there will be no one around to explain to them what happened and to bring them together into a moral community again.