# What Would Deng Do?

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Xi Jinping's ideological proclivities have been variously described as drawing on Mao Zedong, Confucius, and Deng Xiaoping. This article examines this question from the perspective of Xi's volume of speeches and talks on issues in governance and of the party Central Committee's recent Sixth Plenum.

Since coming to power as China's top leader in 2012, Xi Jinping has pursued new policies with a confidence and vigor that, in the eyes of many observers, contrasts starkly with his predecessors as top leader. He has created new institutions to guide national security and Internet policy and to press an ambitious package of reforms that cut across several policy sectors. He has sought to reinvigorate discipline in the Chinese Communist Party and launched a sustained campaign against official corruption that has sacked several high-level leaders and thousands lower down. He has charged intellectual life and education with renewed emphasis on Marxist-Leninist ideology and cracked down on liberal dissent. He has imposed new strictures on nongovernmental organizations, foreign-funded enterprises and companies, and other groups, chilling the broader political atmosphere in China.

Xi Jinping's apparent assertiveness has led many to conclude that he is China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, the man who led the Communist Party to victory in 1949 and who dominated the politics of the People's Republic until his death in 1976. Many observers go further, seeing Xi Jinping as a new Mao. Xi, they say, is adopting Maoist tactics to consolidate his personal power and pursuing policy approaches toward society, education, culture, and the media that carry a distinctly Maoist taint. Xi's campaign against party corruption, for example, is a scarcely concealed purge of his adversaries in the leadership, resembling Mao's ferocious tactics against his political foes. Xi's efforts to politicize academic life, culture, and the media are reversing the deliberate retreat of the party from these sectors in recent decades and restoring the oppressive ideological atmosphere of Mao's day. Despite the harsh treatment accorded Xi and his parents during Mao's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, Xi is said to retain a romantic attachment to Mao that colors his approach to governing China today. Further, some observers see Xi's references to China's classical philosopher Confucius as betraying crypto-Confucian leanings in the top leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

## The Governance of China

At first glance, then, the publication of *The Governance of China* (hereafter *Governance*) might seem one more symptom of an emerging cult of personality around Xi Jinping that recalls Mao's in the 1960s and 1970s. The volume gathers together 79 speeches, reports, and transcripts of talks by Xi over his first 18 months as the Chinese Communist Party's general secretary, a majority of which have been published previously in PRC media.

The book was first published in Chinese in September 2014, and editions in English and seven other major foreign languages followed immediately. In 2015, editions were published in Tibetan, Uyghur, and three other minority nationality languages of China, and thereafter also in Korean and Vietnamese. An updated and expanded Chinese edition was published in April 2016.

The book was announced with great fanfare in China. A CCP circular mandated study of the volume throughout the party, and Chinese media encouraged the broader Chinese public to read it. Internationally, Beijing promoted the volume at book fairs in Frankfurt, New York, and, according to the Chinese news agency Xinhua, at the Washington literary hub Politics and Prose. By August 2015, according to Xinhua, *Governance* had sold more than 5 million copies.

Such attention to a collection of speeches and remarks by China's top leader may invite comparison with *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, the infamous "little red book" that was the centerpiece of the personality cult around Mao Zedong 50 years ago. Originally compiled in 1964 under the supervision of Mao's left-hand man Marshal Lin Biao for indoctrination of China's military, the little red book incorporated nearly 500 snippets from Mao's four-volume *Selected Works*. The book was mandated for nationwide study in 1965, foreshadowing Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched in May 1966. By the summer of 1967, some 800 million copies of the Chinese edition were circulating in the People's Republic. Millions more were published in China's ethnic minority languages, and editions in 14 foreign languages were available for readers abroad. I bought my own English copy at Brentano's in Washington in the summer of 1967.

*A New Mao?*

But comparisons of Mao's *Quotations* and Xi's *Governance* are misleading. For one thing, their nature and purpose are entirely different. Mao's little red book was the badge of his unique ideological genius. In contrast, the preface to Xi's book underscores the collective authority of its contents, stating that Xi's speeches "embody the philosophy of the new central leadership." Mao's book was intended to command absolute obedience to him on the eve of a grotesque mass movement to instill his "revolutionary" vision throughout China and to destroy leadership colleagues whom he had come to believe opposed him. Lin Biao's inscription prefacing the little red book thus called upon its readers "to read Chairman Mao's writings, follow Chairman Mao's teachings, and act according to Chairman Mao's instructions." By contrast, the preface to Xi's book states that its purpose is to respond to interest at home and abroad in the new leadership's foreign and domestic policies, especially those in pursuit of the "China Dream," the overarching goal Xi announced as the central theme of his administration immediately after assuming power in November 2012.

Those expecting affirmation of Xi Jinping's reverence for Mao and his purported Maoist inclinations will find precious little support in *Governance*. Mao is cited only occasionally throughout, most frequently via lines quoted from his plodding, proletarian poetry. When Mao's substantive works are cited, as in Xi's tribute to Mao on the 2013

120th anniversary of his birth, they underscore concepts redefined as the core of Mao Zedong Thought—especially "seeking truth from facts"—by the post-Mao leadership in its highly authoritative revisionist evaluation of Mao's achievements and errors in 1981.

Also absent are any allusions to hallmark Maoist themes: Mao's focus on waging class struggle as the party's foremost goal on the road to communism; his insistence that major economic leaps in development may be made, even where objective material conditions are lacking, through the collective assertion of human will; and his preference for mass movements, especially to discipline a party membership he believed vulnerable to corrupting privilege and political retrogression. Instead, the Xi volume assumes all of the contrary themes set down by Deng Xiaoping and his reform colleagues in the post-Mao period: economic development is the party's foremost task; development must be based on objective economic realities; and a Leninist party dedicated to iron organizational discipline must guide China's development and at the same time police itself.

*Confucius—Really?*

Xi's speeches in *Governance* include a fair share of citations from and references to Confucius. But there are also numerous citations from the Western Zhou classic *Book of History* (尚書), from the Spring and Autumn–period guide to realist governance *Guanzi*, from the Warring States Machiavellian political texts *The Discourses of the States* (國語) and *The Intrigues of the Warring States*(戰國策), from the Hundred Schools philosopher and siege warfare expert Mozi, from the Han general Sun Jing and statesman Kuang Heng, from the Tang poet Li Bo, from the Song scholar-official Fan Zhongyan, and from the Qing poet Yuan Mei and calligrapher Zheng Banqiao, among many others. Such references seem less testimony to Xi Jinping's supposed crypto-Confucian inclinations than adornments by his speechwriters to dress up a communist leader's pronouncements with trappings of Chinese cultural, and not specifically Confucian, traditions.

*Deng Xiaoping*

Cited much more frequently and substantively than Mao Zedong and Confucius is Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's "second revolution" reforms launched in the late 1970s. Xi refers repeatedly to hallmark speeches by Deng at critical turning points in the reform era, citing, for example, Deng's speech at a watershed party meeting in late 1978 that called on the party to "liberate thought" from the strictures of Maoist ideas, laying the ideological foundation for the reform policies that followed. Xi also cites remarks Deng made during his tour of southern provinces in 1992 that asserted the legitimacy of market economics under socialism, kick-starting economic reforms that had been stalled under conservative retrenchment policies and in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen crisis.

The Xi volume, rather than being of a piece with *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, much more closely resembles the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)*, a collection of Deng's speeches, remarks, and interviews published by the party Central Committee in the wake of the path-setting 1982 12th Party Congress. This includes speeches and talks by Deng on major political issues and on a wide range of policy issues during the transition from Mao's rule to the reform era.[1] According to the volume's preface, the

assembled speeches bore witness to Deng's "determined effort to put an end to the turmoil of the 'Cultural Revolution' . . . and to bring order into all spheres of work." Reflecting Deng's efforts "to bring about a historic change" and "to chart a correct course and work out principles and policies for socialist modernization," the preface added, the volume "serves, and will continue to serve, as basic guidelines" for the reforms ahead.

From that perspective, the purpose of publishing the Xi volume parallels that of the 1983 Deng book. Rereading Xi's speeches collectively in *Governance* reinforces the impression gained by reading them serially when each was originally publicized in Chinese media that the Xi leadership is on a mission. That mission is to inaugurate a new seven-year reform movement paralleling the watershed transformation Deng Xiaoping engineered in the late 1970s, this time to make China a "moderately prosperous" society by 2021 and a "well-off" country by 2049. The speeches in *Governance* repeatedly recite these "double hundred" goals (2021 is the centennial of the CCP and 2049 of the PRC), and the consistency and coherence with which they inform *Governance* make reform the central theme of the entire text.

## The Sixth Plenum

The CCP's 18th Central Committee convened its Sixth Plenum on 24–27 October 2016 to address issues of party discipline and to approve two key documents on party processes. One, "Some Guidelines on Inner-Party Life in the New Situation," is a revision of a landmark document adopted early in the Deng reform era to establish rules of inner-party behavior after two decades of chaotic conflict under Mao. The other, "CCP Regulations on Inner-Party Supervision," revised a document adopted in late 2003, early in the Hu Jintao period. The plenum also bestowed on Xi Jinping the status as "core" leader of the Central Committee.

The texts of both documents were published in PRC media on 2 November, together with the text of Xi Jinping's "explanation" of their purposes and drafting processes. The party newspaper *People's Daily* published long articles elaborating on aspects of the documents by party discipline chief Wang Qishan on the 8th, by propaganda chief Liu Qibao on the 9th, by party Organization Department Director Zhao Leji on the 14th, and by party General Office chief Li Zhanshu on the 15th. On 1 January *Seeking Truth*, the party's main theoretical and policy journal, published a long excerpt from a speech given by Xi Jinping to the plenum's 27 October closing session.

In his explanatory speech to the plenum, Xi stated that the decision to revise both the 1980 "Norms" and the 2003 "Regulations" went back to January 2014. He added that the plenum's focus on party discipline completed the sequence of Central Committee plenums under his leadership, each devoted to one of the "four comprehensives," elements of the overarching policy framework under his leadership. The 2013 Third Plenum thus filled out the agenda of "deepening reform," the 2014 Fourth Plenum addressed "ruling the country by law," the 2015 Fifth Plenum—which adopted a new five-year plan that will run through 2020—plotted the course of "building a moderately well-off society" by that year, and the Sixth Plenum focused on "governing the party strictly." "The 'four comprehensives' strategic layout was separately studied and planned

through each plenum," Xi stated, according to the leadership's "top-down design" for Central Committee plenums since the 18th Congress.

Commentary on the plenum's focus on party discipline has drawn a strong parallel between the significance of the 1980 "Guidelines" for the success of Deng Xiaoping's reform effort in the 1980s and the import of the revised "Guidelines" for Xi's "four comprehensives" reforms today. In his explanation to the plenum, Xi recalled that the 1980 "Guidelines" played "a very important role in the special period after the Cultural Revolution in restoring order out of chaos in politics, ideology, organization, and party work style as the party shifted the center of party work, in promoting solidarity and unity in the party, and in ensuring the smooth progress of reform and opening and of socialist modernization." Similarly, the revised "Guidelines" aimed to address new "prominent contradictions and problems" in party life that had emerged in the course of reform in the 35 years since.

These "new situations," Xi continued, mandated a particular focus in the documents approved by the plenum on "leading cadres, and especially senior cadres" at all levels, including the top leadership in the Politburo and its Standing Committee. Among "some party members, including senior cadres," there had emerged:

> ideals and beliefs that are not firm, disloyalty to the party, slack discipline, separation from the masses, arbitrariness, fraud, and laziness. There has appeared to a certain degree individualism, decentralism, liberalism, a mentality of getting along, factionalism, mountain stronghold mentality, and money worship. Problems of formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, and extravagance have become prominent. So have cronyism, craving official positions, buying and selling official posts, and canvassing and buying votes incessantly despite repeated prohibition. And abuse of power, bribery and corruption, decadence, and violation of laws and discipline have spread. In particular, an extremely small number of people among senior cadres have swollen political ambitions and are overcome with lust of power; they have engaged in political conspiracy by pretending to obey, banded together for selfish interests, and formed gangs and cliques to obtain power and positions. These problems seriously have eroded the party's ideological and moral foundation, seriously undermined the solidarity and centralization of the party, seriously damaged the party's political environment and the party's image, and seriously affected the development of the cause of the party and people. The serious cases of the violation of laws and regulations of Zhou Yongkang, Bo Xilai, Guo Boxiong, Xu Caihou, and Ling Jihua have exposed not only their serious economic problems but also their serious political problems, and it is a very profound lesson.

Elimination of such problems in party discipline is thus considered critical not only to the success of the reforms advanced since the 18th Party Congress, but also to the long-term fortunes of the CCP itself. On the latter score, a long *People's Daily* article published on

24 October—the day the plenum opened—under the quasi-authoritative byline "Ren Zhongping" (任仲平) noted that "from bureaucratization to abandonment of democratic centralism to the abolition of the guiding role of Marxism, the Soviet Communist Party's loss of state and party has something to do with the loss of order and norms in its inner-party political life."[2]

The plenum's focus on party discipline is of a piece with the Xi leadership's stress on it coming out of the 18th Congress in 2012. Xi's persistent calls since December 2012 for studying and abiding by the PRC constitution; the Politburo's ban on extravagance, formalism, bureaucratism, and laxity; the successive study campaigns on the mass line, the "three stricts and three earnests," and the "two studies and one action"; and the extensive campaign to root out corruption—as well as numerous speeches and talks in Xi's *Governance* volume—attest to the Xi leadership's ambition to make the party a more effective instrument of reform and to ensure the continued longevity of the CCP. This focus places Xi and his leadership colleagues solidly in step with Deng Xiaoping's thoroughly Leninist vision for the party. The stress on institutionalized discipline could not be farther from the ferocious anti-institutionalism of Mao Zedong in the last two decades of his leadership, which stressed the party as the vanguard of accelerating class struggle under socialism, emphasized "revolutionary" spontaneity and readiness to overthrow party institutions that impede China's advance toward communism, and favored mass attacks on party leaders whom Mao deemed elitist.

*Xi and Collective Leadership*

While designating Xi Jinping as the "core" of the Central Committee, the plenum not only reaffirmed the leadership's commitment to the "collective leadership" system implanted by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s and developed by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao since, but also in some ways the plenum even strengthened it.[3]

For example:

- The plenum communiqué stated that "adhering to the system of collective leadership and the integration of collective leadership with individual responsibility and division of work is an important part of democratic centralism" that "no organization or individual may violate" under any circumstances.
- The 1980 guidelines had warned against overriding the role of the first secretary of a party committee or party group. Thus: "the first secretary bears the main responsibility of organizing the party committee's activities and handling its day-to-day work. The important role of the first secretary must not be downgraded or even written off under the pretext of collective leadership." By contrast, the revised "Guidelines" stressed the opposite. Thus: "The principal responsible comrades of the party committees (party groups) should foster democracy, be adept in uniting and dare to assume responsibility. When studying and discussing problems, they should consider themselves to be equal members of the body, fully promote democracy, make decisions strictly according to the procedures and act according to the rules, pay attention to listen to divergent views, correctly deal with the views of the minority, and refrain from enforcing in an authoritarian and even a patriarchal system.

Members of the body should be supported in assuming sole responsibility in initiating work within the scope of their responsibilities. It is necessary to firmly prevent and overcome the practice of an individual or a handful of people deciding matters in fact but under the guise of collective leadership and of collective responsibility in name but no one assuming responsibility in fact."

- As the 1980 "Guidelines" did, the 2016 version banned various forms and practices of personality cult around individual leaders.
- In his explanatory speech to the plenum, Xi Jinping stated that the "Guidelines" are "second only to the party constitution in authority" and emphasized the role of the Politburo and its Standing Committee in modeling their implementation.

In this context, it is notable that Xi's designation as "core" leader is described in plenum commentary not so much as reflecting his Mao-like unique genius as indispensable leader but rather as essential in sustaining central leadership authority and overall party discipline behind fulfillment of the "four comprehensives" reforms and pursuit of the "China dream." A Xinhua commentary on 28 December 2016, for example, stated that "being the core does not confer on Xi any extra power." The label, it continued, "is key for China to keep itself and the party on the right track of development, and it marks the turning of a new chapter in the long march toward achieving the China dream of national rejuvenation."

## Implications

Much commentary among observers on Xi Jinping as the new Mao in Chinese leadership politics portrays him as ruthlessly asserting dictatorial power by purging political adversaries on charges of corruption and by assuming command over all major policy sectors as the "chairman of everything." Xi has thus overturned the norms of collective leadership installed by Deng Xiaoping 30 years ago to inhibit the rise of another Mao, and he has begun building a cult of personality resembling Mao's, despite a formal ban in 1980 enacted by the Deng leadership. On this view, Xi Jinping has emerged as the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao himself.

As prominent as this understanding of the Xi leadership has become, it nevertheless suffers from serious flaws. For one thing, several of its specific assertions are simply not the case. Judging by available evidence, Xi has not superseded normal Politburo processes as they worked under his predecessor Hu Jintao and, before Hu, Jiang Zemin. As attested to by public appearances of members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the key decision-making body, the division of policy labor—an intrinsic element of the collective leadership system that Deng Xiaoping implanted—remains in place.

Xi does preside over two more leadership groups to coordinate implementation of policy made by the Politburo Standing Committee than did Hu Jintao. Both of them are new. One is a group addressing Internet policy and cyber-security, reflecting the leadership's longstanding concern about vulnerability to domestic and foreign challenges to the party via information technology. The other is a supergroup—the Leadership Small Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform—established in late 2013 to coordinate implementation of reform across several major policy sectors. The group is chaired by

Xi, who as general secretary is by institutional logic the appropriate leader to preside over a super group that coordinates across several policy sectors. But it also includes three other Politburo Standing Committee colleagues as deputies—Premier Li Keqiang, propaganda and party apparatus czar Liu Yunshan, and Executive Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, and together they comprise a sitting majority of the Standing Committee at the top of the super group.

So far, Xi has no innovations in communist ideology exclusively to his credit. Instead, new departures are advertised as the contribution of the broader collective leadership. Media attention to Xi does not remotely constitute a cult of personality resembling Mao's, and enhanced media attention to him tends to focus on his leadership of reform. There are no references to "Xi Jinping Thought," whether as a "spiritual atom bomb of infinite power" or as a "magic weapon" against class enemies, as was commonplace with regard to "Mao Zedong Thought." Nor has Xi been referred to as anything equivalent to the "great helmsman" or as "the reddest red sun in our hearts," as Mao was. Finally, commentary on the Sixth Plenum's designation of Xi as the "core" of the current leadership rationalizes this step not as a reflection of Xi's unique ideological genius but rather as necessary to undergird the authority of the central party leadership spearheading reform.

For another thing, the prevailing view offers no account of exactly how Xi achieved such purportedly powerful stature. Xi was selected to succeed Hu Jintao as China's top leader in 2007, and he worked alongside his Politburo Standing Committee colleagues for five years without arousing any suspicion of his supposed dictatorial ambition, which he then realized with sweeping force in 2012. How did he do that?

Finally, and perhaps more significantly, the conventional account of the Xi leadership offers no insight into its policies. Surely, the genesis of the Xi leadership's policies, as well as their political support and implications, interests readers of the *Monitor* far more than speculation about the intricacies of brutal power struggles, as entertaining as they may be, that tell us nothing about policy.

A more efficient reading of the dynamics of the Xi leadership arises out of the documents of the 18th Party Congress that installed him as top leader in 2012. Much of the agenda that the Xi leadership has pursued since the party congress was explicitly mandated at the congress in Hu Jintao's political report and the other highly authoritative documents it produced. These include, for example, authorization for the campaign against corruption launched immediately after the party congress, the intra-party mass-line study campaign that ran from 2013 to 2014, and the new State Security Commission established in 2014 to replace the ineffective State Security Leading Small Group. Most centrally, Hu's congress report also explicitly mandated "comprehensively deepening reform," leading directly to the November 2013 60-point document laying out 300 reforms to be implemented by 2020 in the economy, the military, in the legal system, in culture and the media, and in the party and its counter-corruption institutions. Many of the specific reforms in the 2013 reform decision had been long debated—in some cases for a decade—but had been stymied by leadership deadlock in the last years of Hu Jintao's

tenure as party chief. But at the 2012 party congress, they received authoritative endorsement.

The upshot is that Xi and his Politburo Standing Committee colleagues received a mandate at the congress to press a broad array of renewed reforms deemed essential both to China's advance toward the "double hundred" goals and ultimately to the party's survival amid a rapidly changing society. To strengthen the ability of the new leadership to press the mandated reforms, the congress downsized the Politburo Standing Committee to make it easier to break the deadlocks that appear to have stymied reforms in Hu Jintao's later years. And to the same end, Xi was given enhanced public prominence as the front man leading the reform movement, though not at the expense of the collective leadership system that Deng implanted.

From that perspective, the actions of the Xi leadership since the 2012 party congress have a coherence that is lacking when they are analyzed from the prevailing power-struggle viewpoint. The push for "comprehensive reform" laid out in the 2013 reform decision follows directly from a mandate at the 2012 party congress and did not spring Athena-like from the brow of Xi Jinping after he assumed power. The creation of a super coordinating mechanism—the Leading Small Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform—makes sense in the complex effort to coordinate reform steps that cuts across several major policy sectors.

The forceful campaign against party corruption has proven far too broad and deep—charging some 750,000 over its first three years—to be simply Xi Jinping's means of taking out factional adversaries. Moreover, it employs the institutional approach characteristic of the Deng era and since of using the party's own disciplinary machinery and processes to prosecute it. There is thus nothing Maoist about the campaign, and Mao's tactics of mass criticism of his party antagonists are the last thing a Xi leadership facing a restive populace wants. The campaign more clearly seeks to break the "vested interests" that have stymied reforms in the past and that will mount opposition to them now.

The mass-line study campaign and other disciplinary steps in the party reflect an effort to recentralize authority in the central leadership over a broader party apparatus that has over the years learned to go its own disparate ways, all for the sake of pushing the reform. And the tightening of the party's approach to intellectuals, the media, non-governmental groups of all stripe, and other elements of broader society is a typical step, judging by past episodes of the reform era, of a leadership worried about political agitation and social unrest as disruptive reforms advance.

Whether Xi and his leadership colleagues succeed in their reform movement is an open question. On one hand, the energy and persistence with which they are pursuing the reforms and the attendant campaigns against official corruption and to recentralize authority are impressive, manifesting the broader elite consensus that authorized their efforts at the 2012 party congress. As expressed there, that consensus rested on the belief that the Communist Party's future rises or falls on the success of the reforms, a

conviction that Xi Jinping himself has stressed over and over since. On the other hand, the array of "vested interests" stacked against reform, and the inability of the party's central leadership to enforce compliance with its initiatives farther down the political system, stymied effective reform in Hu Jintao's last years in power, and the Xi leadership has been blunt about the continuing resistance it faces to its efforts. It is natural, moreover, that differences among the Xi leadership itself over the reforms and related campaigns will dissipate some of the force of their efforts. This is especially the case when political seasons—such as the run-up to the 19th Party Congress expected to convene in the fall of 2017—inject an extra jolt of adrenaline into the ever-present competition among leaders for power.

Observers of the Xi leadership are frequently impatient with the reforms' progress, and express disappointment that not much appears to be happening: "loud thunder, little rain," as Mao used to say. But they should take a long view, bearing in mind that the Xi leadership is working against a seven-year timetable for its reform movement, aimed at completion in 2020. The challenges facing the CCP regime are great: whether it can transition to an innovation- and consumption-led economy and avoid the middle-income trap; whether it can transform a military dominated by ground forces into one capable of joint warfare and enhanced power projection beyond China itself; and whether the political system can develop the capabilities needed to govern an increasingly complex society and economy effectively. And the incentives for the Communist Party are even greater—as Xi and the most authoritative party pronouncements have stated, the party's very survival is at stake.

In this light, the speeches and remarks included in *Governance* help explain the coherence and consistency of the various moves by the Xi leadership since 2012 behind its reform agenda—including the Sixth Plenum—and the determination with which Xi is pursuing them. The speeches also make plain that Xi's model is not Mao Zedong, but rather Deng Xiaoping, the leader who launched the reforms that triggered China's rise and whose transformative impact Xi and his colleagues hope to emulate. Xi said as much in December 2012, on his first trip outside Beijing as China's top leader, when he laid a wreath at a monument to Deng Xiaoping in Shenzhen, the special economic zone near Guangzhou that is in many ways emblematic of the Deng era. From this vantage point, it is easy to imagine Xi Jinping on his way to the office every morning pondering to himself, "What would Deng do?"

## Notes

[1] *邓小平文献 (1975–1982)*, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1983. An English translation was published by Foreign Languages Press in 1984.
[2] "Ren Zhongping" is a homophone for "important *People's Daily* commentary."
[3] For background on the emergence of the Xi as "core" theme, see "'Core Leaders,' 'Authoritative Persons,' and Reform Pushback," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 50 (19 July 2016). For background on collective leadership, see "The 18th Central Committee

Leadership with Comrade Xi Jinping as General Secretary," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 48 (9 September 2015).