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## Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China

Grant F. Rhode

Ezra F. Vogel

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left Boston in late October to seek out and engage British shipping.

Maffeo alternates between the two vessels and their crews, providing an outstanding primer on the workings of a large warship two centuries past. He is adept at describing everything from victualing to lading and storage, rigging, discipline, sail maintenance, and gunnery. In a clever device, the author uses three British Army officers traveling aboard *Java* as props. These men—who were actually present on the voyage—are tutored by Chads on the strategy and tactics of naval warfare. The reader listens in on these chats and learns a great deal.

The climax of the book occurs on 29 December 1812, when the ships meet off the coast of Brazil. The description of the battle itself is masterful. Lambert worries about his largely untrained crew of “landmen,” but Maffeo implies that he had not trained his green crew nearly often or rigorously enough. Bainbridge, a stickler for discipline, had made no such mistake. The sea battle at close range, with heavy cannon disgorging round shot, grape, and canister—as well as the continuous musket fire of the marines on board both ships—takes a murderous toll. Although initially *Constitution* suffers worse and Bainbridge himself goes down twice with wounds, the battle slowly and inexorably reverses. The bigger guns and thicker sides of the American frigate, combined with its more seasoned crew, allow “Old Ironsides” to wreak havoc on *Java*. Dismasted and its bowsprit shot off, *Java*’s ability to maneuver is lost. Lieutenant Chads, taking command from his mortally wounded captain, sees that all hope is illusory—an attempt

to board *Constitution* so as to carry on the fight with cutlasses and pistols is skillfully thwarted by Bainbridge. *Java* is a perfect wreck and strikes its colors.

This ripping yarn fascinates, educates, and entertains. The exploits of the U.S. Navy in our country’s first true war after independence should never be forgotten. This terrific account is a must-read for naval personnel of all ranks.

COL. PHILLIP S. MEILINGER, U.S. AIR FORCE,  
RETIRED  
West Chicago, Illinois



Vogel, Ezra F. *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard Univ. Press, 2011. 928pp. \$39.95

For those seeking to understand China’s place in the world, Ezra Vogel has performed a great service through his meticulous decadelong work on this biography of Deng Xiaoping, who emerged as China’s leader following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Vogel may be overstating the case when he suggests that Deng was the most important world figure of the twentieth century, but it is hard to find a serious rival for the last quarter of that century.

Deng ruled China between 1978 and 1992, when he retired at the age of eighty-eight. Since his retirement, to the present day, Deng’s policies have continued, in contrast to the immediate changes that took place following the death of Mao. No Western scholar of China in 1976 predicted the “rise of China” that resulted from Deng’s leadership. How did Deng come to be central to the transformation of China?

Born in 1904, Deng took the reins of leadership at age seventy-four, long after most give up trying to change the world. Despite many hurdles, he energetically steered China back on track, continually pursuing his vision. He was an unwavering nationalist as well as a communist. His focus was on a competent, proud, and successful China, not the humiliated China into which he had been born, the descendant of literati in Sichuan Province, to which he never returned. His years in France and Moscow in the 1920s developed in him a mind cognizant of the ways of the world, well before his leadership role began. Deng went on to do political work with Zhou Enlai, his mentor, during the 1930s, and he jointly commanded the 129th Division of the Eighth Route Army from 1937 to 1949 in Shanxi. Although he worked side by side with Mao to become general secretary of the Central Committee, Deng was purged by Mao as a “capitalist roader” early in the Cultural Revolution. Vogel offers a vivid account of Deng’s exile in Jiangxi.

The author emphasizes that Deng was very successful in his conduct of foreign affairs. While many scholars consider Deng a student of Zhou Enlai, less polished and capable than his teacher, Vogel turns this idea on its head, using the example of how Deng broke through the U.S.-China normalization impasse during the December 1978 talks with American negotiator Leonard Woodcock. Despite Deng’s red-faced ranting that China would never accept weapons sales to Taiwan, he, perhaps realizing that Woodcock was unable to guarantee subsequent decisions by Congress, in the end simply said “*Hao*,” fine. The deal was finally complete six years after the Nixon-Kissinger initiatives.

Regarding domestic affairs, Vogel outlines a mixed record for Deng. Once in control, he consistently moved China toward the First World and increased the country’s wealth. However, Deng is most remembered for the cloud he cast over what Vogel calls the “Tiananmen tragedy.” The author has come under attack by Fang Lizhi and others for glossing over Deng’s repressive role in crushing the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989.

While Deng was being elevated to the position of power over Hua Guofeng at the Eleventh Party Congress Third Plenum in December 1978, in what the author refers to as “succession without coronation,” Vogel was just publishing his best-selling nonfiction work *Japan as Number One*. Vogel directed the East Asian Studies program at Harvard University, subsequently publishing more on China than on Japan, until his retirement in 2000. Like Deng, Vogel wished to make an impact in his later years and so determined to write a detailed account of the man who had transformed China during his own lifetime of studying East Asia affairs. To prepare himself, Vogel spent a year refreshing his Chinese, so he could conduct his interviews unassisted and read primary sources more easily. He interviewed scores of Deng’s colleagues and most of his family. It took him ten years to complete the project.

This work raises the research and literary standard for political biography. We must thank Ezra Vogel for giving us this detailed and measured look at China’s great man at the hinge of history between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

GRANT F. RHODE  
*Brookline, Massachusetts*