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To cite this article: Qingmin Zhang (2014) Towards an Integrated Theory of Chinese Foreign Policy: bringing leadership personality back in, Journal of Contemporary China, 23:89, 902-922, DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2014.882566

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2014.882566

Published online: 04 Apr 2014.
Towards an Integrated Theory of Chinese Foreign Policy: bringing leadership personality back in

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This article tries to integrate the theories of personality type and Chinese foreign policy studies. It finds that theories of personality offer a new perspective on the study of Chinese foreign policy and help to better explain the differences in China’s foreign policy under Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, including their international orientation, the main themes of China’s foreign policy during their respective times in office, their policies towards the major powers, as well as those towards small countries. Theoretically, such integration contributes to the development of a more general theory of foreign policy analysis that would travel better beyond the borders of the American case. Empirically it highlights the necessity and benefit of an integrated approach bringing leadership personality back into the center of the analysis while taking into account other levels of analysis in the study of Chinese foreign policy.

I. Introduction

Leadership transition in China in 2012 has caused unprecedented attention among scholars and policy makers alike around the globe. However, not enough attention has been paid to the role of Chinese leaders in the study of Chinese foreign policy though Chinese leaders in history have played a more important role than they do today. By bridging the Western theories of foreign policy analysis with Chinese area studies, this article proposes an integrated approach bringing leadership personality back into the center of the analysis while taking into account other levels of analysis.

The traditional Chinese explanation of their foreign policy is that Chinese leaders calculate the international situation correctly and make foreign policy choices rationally.¹ This Chinese view echoes those of mainstream studies of Chinese

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diplomatic history in the US during the Cold War. Such explanations provide evidence for structural realism, a mainstream IR theory, which attributes central importance to forces that operate at the international level. This is understandable since the tight bipolar system was indeed a major reason for the newly founded People’s Republic of China (PRC) government to ‘lean to one side’; the power shift in the later 1960s and early 1970s was an important factor in Mao’s decision to invite Nixon to visit China. The drastic changes in power distribution in the late 1970s were indispensable for Deng’s policy of normalizing relations with the US and opening up. This structuralist approach fails, however, to explain some significant and seemingly contradictory changes. The switch of alliances between the USSR and the US during Mao’s time differs remarkably from the change from revolutionary diplomacy to peaceful independent policy in the early 1980s when Deng became the de facto leader of China. Or if the international balance of power determines Chinese foreign policy strategy, how could China’s foreign policy witness a change from ‘leaning to one side’ to a dual adversary strategy toward both superpowers in the 1960s when the balance of power did not undergo any major changes? More revealingly, the demise of the Cold War with the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the biggest power shift after WWII, should have led to profound changes in Chinese foreign policy orientation, but it did not. These changes in Chinese foreign policy demand an alternative explanation.

China’s opening up in 1979 provided opportunities for closer interactions between Chinese domestic politics and external behavior as well as opportunities for scholars of Chinese politics and foreign policy to look into the black box for evidence of how domestic politics impacts on Chinese foreign policy. Former Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen proclaimed in 1990 that ‘foreign policy is the extension of China’s domestic politics’. Scholars on Chinese politics and foreign policy from Barnett, and Lieberthal and Oksenberg in the 1980s, to Zhao, Hamrin and Zhao, Swaine, and Lu in the 1990s, to Lampton in the twenty-first century, have provided an increasingly clear picture of the foreign policy-making structure in China. Their findings almost unanimously held that Chinese foreign policy making was organized hierarchically with Mao and then Deng located at the very top, with the authority to make Chinese foreign policy. While ‘Mao was totally dominant and

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made all of the “big decisions”,\textsuperscript{11} the level of influence in China after China’s opening up ‘is often determined primarily by the informal prestige and power on the individual who heads it’.\textsuperscript{12}

The significant role of predominant leaders in Chinese foreign policy has made it natural for the students of Chinese foreign policy to focus on the individual leaders on foreign policy orientations. However, much of this research stops at describing how leaders made decisions without explaining or analyzing why they did so. As several leading scholars point out, while reviewing the current status of this field, ‘we have tended to do it without the benefit of the literature on personality type, on the leader type, on decision-making unit type, and so forth’.\textsuperscript{13} This observation keenly illustrates the gap between foreign policy analysis theory and area studies (Chinese foreign policy in this case) that students of foreign policy analysis are trying to fill. One leading scholar in personality studies has expressed her concern about the ‘US bias in the decision-making literature’ because it has ‘made it difficult to generalize to other countries and has given researchers blind spots regarding how decisions are made in governments and cultures not like the American’.\textsuperscript{14}

The reciprocal needs of Chinese foreign policy scholars for theories of personality types for foreign policy analysis and the needs of comparative foreign policy analysts for non-American cases call for an integration of these two subfields of international relations, and this article intends to show how this is possible. It will explore the abrupt disjuncture in Chinese foreign policy after Deng became the paramount Chinese leader. As Lampton keenly observes, Mao’s policies reflected a bunker mentality of economic autarky, acquisition of coercive military and ideological strength and strategic balance of power maneuvers … The strategy of his successor, Deng Xiaoping, from 1977 on was a reaction to the enormous human, economic and diplomatic costs of Mao’s policies … The People’s Republic of China we see today reflects this fundamental strategic decision and its logical consequences.\textsuperscript{15}

As a matter of fact, the changes in Chinese foreign policy from Mao’s time to Deng’s time were very broad, including different conceptualizations of the main theme of international relations, China’s overall international orientation, its general relations with major powers, and its regional policies. This disjuncture renders the diplomatic history of the PRC separable into two contrasting periods: Mao’s period from 1949 to 1978 and Deng’s period after 1978.

I argue that Mao and Deng’s personalities played a very important role in the foreign policy disjuncture in Chinese foreign policy. To make such an argument I will employ a popular personality type framework to compare the differences in personality between Mao and Deng and their respective impact on more general

\textsuperscript{11} Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy in China, pp. 7–8.
\textsuperscript{12} Swaine, The Role of the Chinese Military, p. 73.
Chinese foreign policy. The empirical questions include: what are the differences in Mao and Deng’s personalities, or what types of leaders were they? How did these differences relate to the differences in Chinese foreign policies? The first part of this article raised these questions. The second part reviews the different frameworks of leadership types and introduces one of the most popular frameworks this article will employ. The third part examines the similarities of Mao and Deng’s personalities, while the fourth part focuses on the relations between their different personalities and the differences of Chinese foreign policy in their respective times. The article concludes with some theoretical observations on the feasibility and benefit of integrating Chinese foreign policy studies with the theory of personality, and proposes an integrated approach in studying Chinese foreign policy.

II. Theories on leadership types

Though the study of individuals has not been the mainstream in IR studies, it has nonetheless remained a persistent theme. Classical IR thinkers, such as Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli and Hans Morgenthau, all explicitly acknowledged the impact of individuals’ personalities on international relations. In his classic work *Man, the State and War*, Waltz proposes three images in analyzing the cause of war—individual, societal and systemic. However he later became a staunch proponent for the third image. As structural realism dominated IR studies during the later stages of the Cold War, the study of the individual was marginalized. However, research on the individual’s impact on international politics continues. Following Freud’s tradition on unconsciousness or ego-defense of people, psycho-analytical approaches use a psycho-biographical method to examine the life history of leaders, focusing on psychopathology, such as neuroticism, narcissism or paranoia; others conduct detailed, in-depth case studies of individual leaders, tracing their personal, social and political development from early childhood through to young adulthood.

Cognitive studies, by contrast, have focused on how individuals process information, including how they make sense of others and themselves in the context of political issues, how they interpret information and make decisions, and what are the factors that affect their information processing. Cognitive studies are diverse, including enemy image and mirror images, cognitive mapping, attribution theories, perception and misperception studies, operational code studies, affect and emotions studies, and attitudes and motivation studies.

The third and final group of scholars tries to understand foreign policy through the personality traits of pre-eminent leaders.\textsuperscript{20} Scholars in this group address leadership personality according either to how they relate to their work, or to their environment.\textsuperscript{21} Among this third group is one very popular framework developed by Margaret Hermann, which typologizes personality by several intervening variables. Johnston and others cited Hermann’s typology in their call for a more nuanced approach to the study of Chinese foreign policy, and it has also been tested and proved to have more explanatory power compared with other frameworks in studying non-Chinese cases.\textsuperscript{22} This article will employ Hermann’s framework (Table 1).

Hermann, a psychologist by training, has developed a framework to connect the personality of predominant leaders with their country’s foreign policy behaviors.\textsuperscript{23} She writes that only under certain conditions, such as having a predominant leader, under ambiguous situations, and with the leader’s active participation in decision-making processes, does a leader’s personality come into play and exert its influence.

\[\text{Table 1. Leadership style as a function of responsiveness to constraints, openness to information and motivation}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsiveness to constraints</th>
<th>Openness to information</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges constraints</td>
<td>Closed to information</td>
<td>Problems focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becomes a crusader</td>
<td>Expansionistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges constraints</td>
<td>Open to information</td>
<td>Relationship focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is generally strategic</td>
<td>Charismatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects constraints</td>
<td>Closed to information</td>
<td>Directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclined toward pragmatism</td>
<td>Consultative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects constraints</td>
<td>Open to information</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is usually opportunistic</td>
<td>Accommodative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Source:} Hermann, ‘How decision units shape foreign policy’, p. 95.


Three intervening variables act as filters that condition whether a leader’s belief system can exert an influence on their country’s foreign policy outcomes: interest, training and sensitivity to the policy-making environment. Interest acts as a motivating force. Leaders interested in foreign affairs are more likely to be consulted and kept informed about foreign policy and usually participate in the foreign policy decision-making process. Such leaders’ personalities would likely influence their countries’ foreign policy. Secondly, leaders with more training or more experience in foreign affairs have a wider repertoire for policy choices than those with little or no training and/or experience when facing a foreign policy problem. Leaders with no or little training, and less experience, have no personal expertise to draw upon and fewer alternatives to choose from for foreign policy decisions. Thus their natural problem-solving predisposition comes into play.

According to Hermann, the most important variable is sensitivity to the policy-making environment. Less sensitive leaders are likely to be closed to new information and seek information to support their views, challenge constraints according to their belief system and make policy decisions through a top-down process. More sensitive leaders like to accommodate themselves to new information, respect constraints, are open to new information and make policy decisions through a bottom-up process. Building on James Barber and others, Hermann further developed a new dimension in connecting the motivation of leaders to their countries’ foreign policy behavior. She wrote:

Those leaders focused on problems and causes are less sensitive to the political context; they know what needs doing and do it. The leaders interested in building relationships are more sensitive to the political context because it is only through interaction with others that they can be satisfied and fulfilled.24

In this analysis, I will not rely on secondary biographical literature on Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, but on two primary sources. One is *Mao on Diplomacy*, the other is the third volume of the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* 1982–1992, vol. 3.25 The former consists of 173 of Mao’s writings, speeches, talks, comments and telegrams on China’s diplomacy covering a period from before the founding of the PRC to his death, encompassing all open sources by Mao on Chinese diplomacy. Among the 119 entries in Deng’s volume, 26 were specifically focused on international affairs, 97 have foreign affairs content and 73 were Deng’s talks with foreign guests. Unlike most political speeches in China today, which are prepared in advance, most of these works are the verbatim record of Mao and Deng’s impromptu or extemporaneous comments. They best reveal their inner world and are the ideal and most reliable primary materials to study their personality. Remarkably, however, they have yet to be systematically examined. Secondary sources, such as biographies, are only used as supplementary evidence. If these texts and Hermann’s theory can shed light on Chinese foreign policy under Mao and Deng, future work can seek to replicate these findings with a broader sample.

III. Similarities between Mao and Deng’s personalities and continuities in Chinese foreign policy

There are both similarities and differences between Mao and Deng’s personalities that impacted upon Chinese foreign policy. I begin with some similarities.

Both were predominant leaders. According to Hermann, predominate leaders have the ‘ability to stifle all opposition and dissent as well as the power to make a decision alone if necessary’. Both Mao and Deng belong to this category. Lu Ning, a former Chinese diplomat, wrote that during Mao’s time, ‘If Mao still needed to consult members of the top leadership in making foreign policy decisions in the early 1950s, by the middle of 1950s, Mao at the pinnacle of political power would make all major decisions by himself’. Furthermore, Mao ‘not only made all the major decisions but also decisions concerning the implementation of policy changes’. Western scholarship on Chinese foreign policy making during Mao’s rule largely concurs.

Deng also enjoyed similar authority in foreign policy. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen attributed the major diplomatic achievements from China’s opening up to after the end of the Cold War to Deng. For instance, China’s ‘one country, two systems’ policy was not proposed in a formal policy document but in Deng’s casual talk with a Chinese American professor. The formula resulted from a summation of Deng’s talks with members of a Hong Kong industrial and commercial delegation and some prominent Hong Kong figures. He retained the final say on any details of this policy while the policy was later refined and substantiated.

Similar belief systems. Mao and Deng shared a similar belief and value system. Beliefs are defined as associations people create towards objects and their attributes, reflecting what one thinks is true; value reflects what one wishes to see come about, even if it is not currently true. Here I use the two terms interchangeably. Both Mao and Deng strongly believed that communism was better than capitalism and would finally replace the latter. Mao was one of the founding fathers of the CCP, and Deng joined the Chinese revolution as a teenager. The two fought side by side from the 1920s onward. Mao had consistently tried to maintain the purity of communism and even launched the disastrous ‘Cultural Revolution’ to avoid the restoration of capitalism in China. Externally he strongly criticized and opposed the Soviet revisionists when he perceived the Soviets to have betrayed Marxism.

Deng, a member of the first generation of CCP leadership, shared the same experience with Mao in their early days. Later, in the 1980s, he took strong measures to...
avoid bourgeois ‘spiritual pollution’ and maintain the purity of communist ideology in China. Even after the collapse of the Eastern European socialist countries and the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, he still maintained that, ‘I am convinced that more and more people will come to believe in Marxism, because it is a science’. Deng continued: ‘Feudal society replaced slave society, capitalism supplanted feudalism, and, after a long time, socialism will necessarily supersede capitalism’. According to their respective belief systems, Chinese foreign policy should not manifest major differences under Deng as compared with that under Mao.

Both were interested in foreign affairs. Both Mao and Deng paid great attention to foreign affairs, and wanted to be informed and consulted on what was happening in foreign affairs. Mao’s interest in foreign affairs came from his great concern with the viability and security of the PRC in a tight bipolar international structure. Such concerns made Chinese foreign policy appear at the very top of his political agenda. Mao on Diplomacy is a clear manifestation of his interest in foreign affairs. China’s international environment improved during Deng’s rule as concerns about foreign invasion decreased, but Deng himself was increasingly interested in foreign affairs. He was always deeply involved in handling China’s foreign relations with major countries, like the US, and was involved in critical times, like after the Tiananmen incident in 1989.

Neither Mao nor Deng had any training in foreign affairs, nor were they rich in diplomatic experience, but both were interested in foreign affairs and made the major diplomatic decisions of their times. Congruency could be found between these identical aspects of their personality and the continuities in Chinese foreign policy. Deng himself emphasized these continuities by saying ‘We will continue to adhere to Mao Zedong Thought … a treasured possession of the Chinese Communist Party and of our country’. China during Mao’s time was more explicit in saying the combination of patriotism and internationalism was the guideline for Chinese foreign policy, while China under Deng would say that China would make foreign policy in accordance with the interests of the Chinese people as well as the interest of the people of the world at large. Both insisted on the principle of independence in handling foreign affairs, both held that sovereignty as supreme in diplomacy and insisted that Chinese internal affairs should not be interfered with. Finally, both insisted that Taiwan should be reunited with the Chinese mainland.

IV. Differences between Mao and Deng’s personalities and changes in Chinese foreign policy

Differences between Mao and Deng’s personalities can help us understand the drastic changes in Chinese foreign policy that are not well explained by mainstream structuralist theories.

34. Han, Dangdai zhongguo waijiao, p. 3.
35. Ibid., p. 340.
IV.1. Mao’s personality

Closed to information. The term ‘closed to information’ refers to situations in which a leader only pays attention to information consistent with his or her pre-existing views, neglecting contrary information or interpreting such information selectively. Such leaders are cognitive misers always seeking to maintain cognitive consistency. Mao typified such leaders and his conversation talk with Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, about the definition of three worlds in 1974 offers a good example:36

Mao: We hope the Third World will unite. The Third World has a large population!
Kaunda: That’s right.
Mao: Who belongs to the First World?
Kaunda: I think it ought to be the world of exploiters and imperialists.
Mao: The Second World?
Kaunda: Those who have become revisionists.
Mao: I hold that the US and the Soviet Union belong to the First World. The middle elements, such as Japan, Europe, Australia and Canada, belong to the Second World. We are the Third World.
Kaunda: I agree with your analysis, Mr Chairman.
Mao: The US and the Soviet Union have a lot of atomic bombs, and they are richer. Europe, Japan, Australia and Canada, of the Second World, do not possess so many atomic bombs and are not so rich as the First World, but richer than the Third World. What do you think of this explanation?
Kaunda: Mr Chairman, your analysis is very pertinent and correct.
Mao: We can discuss it.
Kaunda: I think we can reach agreement without discussion, because I believe this analysis is already very pertinent.
Mao: The Third World is very populous.
Kaunda: Precisely so.
Mao: All Asian countries, except Japan, belong to the Third World. All Africa and also Latin America belong to the Third World.

Before Mao proposed his ‘three world theory’, there existed in the academic community a consensus on who belonged to which world, and such a consensus was reflected by Kaunda’s initial answers to Mao. But Mao dismissed the prevailing view to advance his own and very different definition of the three worlds, which was later substantiated and elaborated to the world by Deng Xiaoping at the 6th UN Special General Assembly in 1974. The Chinese officially explained that Mao’s ‘three world theory’ was the theoretical guideline for China’s united front strategy in the 1970s.

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Considering the fact that Mao’s ‘united front strategy’ was first put forward in 1973 while the ‘three world theory’ was put forward in 1974, one could say that the ‘three world theory’ was shaped by and put forward to rationalize his own strategy rather than providing guidelines for the strategy. Other examples of Mao’s closure to new or discrepant information include his insistence that nuclear weapons were paper tigers, which clashed with Nehru’s thoughts in 1954, and scared many Eastern European leaders and Nikita Khrushchev, who later decided not to help China develop nuclear weapons.

**Top-down decision-making process.** Late in his life Mao made most Chinese foreign policy decisions in a top-down manner. Liu Huaqiu, former Vice Foreign Minister and director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the CPC Central Committee, offers a typical example. After Mao put forward his ‘three world theory’, the Chinese government decided to dispatch a delegation to the 6th UN Special General Assembly to promulgate Mao’s theory to the world. When the Foreign Ministry began to consider who should head the Chinese delegation, Zhou Enlai asked the Foreign Ministry first to refer to Mao. When asked by his liaison officer on 19 March, Mao ‘pondered for a while and then said it is good if comrade Deng Xiaoping heads the delegation, but do not say this is my idea and the Foreign Ministry should first ask for instructions’. The Foreign Ministry drafted on 22 March a ‘Report for Instructions on Participating in the 6th UN Special General Assembly’, which suggested that Deng be the chief Chinese delegate. This was first sent to Zhou, who passed it up to Mao. Mao endorsed it the same day.

Afraid that heading such an important delegation would increase Deng’s importance and influence, Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, who was later arrested as the head of the Gang of Four, was strongly opposed to ‘the Foreign Ministry’s initiative’. She called the Foreign Ministry four times pressuring it to withdraw its report. Jiang’s action was reported through Zhou to Mao on 25 March and Mao replied that it was his idea to have Deng head the Chinese delegation, but ‘if the majority of the Politburo do not endorse such an idea, let it go (na jiu suan le)’. Receiving Mao’s instruction, Zhou called a Politburo meeting that evening to discuss the issue. Jiang kept asking during the meeting if it was Mao’s idea or that of the Foreign Ministry to have Deng head the Chinese delegation; and she demanded that the Foreign Ministry withdraw its report and insisted her opposition and reservation be included in the resolution of the meeting, which was of course to be reported to Mao for final approval. When the situation was reported to Mao, he wrote a personal letter to Jiang on 27 March saying: ‘It is my suggestion that Deng Xiaoping go abroad. Be careful, do not oppose my idea’. Upon receiving Mao’s letter, Jiang Qing ended her opposition and the

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37. Ibid., pp. 170–171.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 25.
42. Ibid., p. 26.
Politburo held another meeting on 2 April to approve Deng heading the Chinese delegation.

This episode demonstrates that although Mao had the Foreign Ministry go through a bottom-up process, which had entangled with Chinese domestic factionalism, in the end he controlled the decision. Once it was clear that Deng heading the Chinese delegation was Mao’s suggestion, the dissident voices were silenced. The most important decisions in Mao’s time, including bombing the offshore islands in the Taiwan Straits in the 1950s, China’s war with India in 1962, China’s border clash with the Soviets in 1969, ‘ping-pong’ diplomacy in 1970, China’s open door to the US in 1971 and Sino–Japanese diplomatic normalization, were all made through such a process.43

**Challenging external constraints.** Mao had an ‘inside looking outward’ perspective on life, always acting on the basis of his own views regardless of the situation. Premier Zhou Enlai was the opposite, keenly sensitive to the policy-making environment. Their conversation with former British Prime Minister Heath in 1973 offers a revealing example of Mao and Zhou’s different sensitivities to the policy-making environment:44

Heath: I am very glad to meet you. It is my great honor.
Mao: Thank you. You are welcome.
Heath: The welcoming ceremony at the airport was very touching, full of bright colors, active and brisk.
Mao (to Zhou Enlai): Why no guard of honor?
Zhou: Since he is not the incumbent prime minister, we were afraid it might cause misunderstanding and incur unpleasantness with the current prime minister.
Mao: I think it is necessary.
Zhou: We shall arrange a guard of honor at his departure.
Wang Hairong (the deputy director of the Protocol Department of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs): You aren’t afraid of offending Wilson?
Mao (turning to Heath): I cast my vote for you!

This episode shows that Zhou was very sensitive to the policy-making environment and respected constraints. Overseeing the implementation of Chinese foreign policy, Zhou had it in mind when China received Heath, and thus conformed to international norms. Zhou was careful not to offend the incumbent prime minister, Harold Wilson, and did what China was expected to do by diplomatic protocol: he did not arrange a guard of honor when Heath arrived. But Mao did not care about this diplomatic protocol and thought there should be a guard of honor and a welcome

ceremony for Heath. When Mao insisted, Zhou changed his view immediately and followed Mao’s instructions. Mao challenged the international system and tried throughout his life to foster a world communist revolution. Most Chinese political scientists and diplomatic historians agree that Mao and Zhou handled foreign affairs very differently.

Achievement-focused motivation. Mao was born in the late Qing dynasty when China was on the verge of being divided by imperialist powers. He became politically active as a youth with an overriding nationalist concern about the possibility that the Chinese people might lose their state and become ‘slaves without a country’. He was extremely ambitious. In a 1936 poem, included in Chinese high school textbooks, Mao writes after describing the beautiful scenery of North China:

So many heroes thus in homage bowed.
The first king of Qin and the seventh king of Han,
Neither was a true literary man;
The first king of Song and the second king of Tang,
Neither was noted for poetry or Song.
Even the Proud Son of Heaven, for a time,
Called Genghis Khan, in his prime,
Knowing only shooting eagle, over his tent,
With a bow bent.
Alas, all no longer remain!
For truly great men,
One should look with this age’s ken.

Mao was comparing himself with the most successful emperors in Chinese history, and felt that all these emperors had shortcomings and only he was a truly great man. This ambition only gained momentum as the Chinese revolution was coming to fruition. In his opening remark to the first session of the Chinese National People’s Congress, he spoke with great assurance: ‘We are now engaged in a great and most glorious cause, never undertaken by our forefathers. Our goal must be attained. Our goal can unquestionably be attained’.

Achievement-driven personality influenced and was demonstrated in China’s policy as a staunch anti-imperialist warrior in the 1950s. After the death of Stalin, Mao, who felt secure and confident, considered himself more qualified than Khrushchev to be the leader of the Communist movement and believed that the Chinese Communists were in a better

46. The first king of Qin, called Yingzheng (259 BC–210 BC), conquered all the other states during the Warring States period (475BC–221 BC), and founded the first centralized state in China. The seventh king of Han, Liu Che (156 BC–87 BC), was noted for his political and military achievements in Chinese history. The first king of Song, Zhao Kuangyin (927–976), built out of the political and military chaos of the Five Dynasties and Ten States period, a united central power in China. The second king of Tang, Li Shimin (599–649), is well known for his political and military talents of helping his father to overthrow the Sui Dynasty and founded the Tang Dynasty, the strongest in Chinese history. Genghis Khan, the Mongol conqueror and emperor (1162–1227), gained control of Mongolia (1206) and conquered northern China (1211–1215), then vast territories in central and south Asia as well as Asia Minor. This poem was criticized by the Nationalist Government as revealing Mao’s ambition of assuming emporership.
position to interpret Marxism. The two sides engaged in a great debate, which finally led to the Sino–Soviet split.

IV.2. Deng Xiaoping’s personality

Deng Xiaoping differed from Mao in his openness to new information, the way he related to the policy-making environment, the way he processed information, as well as his fundamental motivations.

Openness to new information. Often referred to as the general architect of China’s ‘reform and opening’, Deng was crucial to China’s opening to the outside world. This policy was to a large extent a result of Deng’s openness and receptiveness to new information. During his investigation tour to Jilin Province in September 1978, he said, ‘The world is changing every day; new things are constantly emerging and new problems continually arising. We can’t afford to lock our doors, refuse to use our brains and remain forever backward’. 48 Three months later, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Party Committee of the CCP, which formally reinstated Deng’s leading position within the CCP, adopted the opening up policy.

China’s foreign policy adjustment in the early 1980s also resulted from Deng’s changing perceptions. Deng admitted that China had made mistakes in the 1970s. He said that from the late 1970s

we have made two important changes in our assessment of the international situation and in our foreign policy ... The first change is in our understanding of the question of war and peace. We used to believe that war was inevitable and imminent and many of our policy decisions were based on this belief ... after a careful analysis of the situation, we have come to ... conclude that it is possible that there will be no large-scale war for a fairly long time to come and that there is hope of maintaining world peace ... we have changed our view that the danger of war is imminent.

Deng continued: ‘The second change is in our foreign policy. In view of the threat of Soviet hegemonism, over the years we formed a strategic line of defense ... Now we have altered our strategy and this represents a major change’. 49 With these sweeping changes, Chinese foreign policy entered the era of Deng Xiaoping.

Two kinds of decision-making processes. The Chinese foreign policy-making process in Deng’s time retained many similarities with that of Mao’s time, and important decisions were made through a top-down process. But as Chinese foreign policy agendas expanded, many organizations, whose responsibility had previously been domestically bounded, began to get involved in foreign affairs. No leader was able to initiate and control every foreign affairs issue. Because many foreign policy decisions were initiated by lower level agencies, decision making quite often went through a bottom-to-top process. 50 For instance, as the military saw its budget decline and began to cut back on procurement from domestic weapon manufacturers in the 1980s, both the PLA and arms

49. Ibid., pp. 127–128.
manufacturers were incentivized to increase arms sales abroad. As this occurred, the US became increasingly concerned about the character of regimes that were purchasing Chinese arms. With increased pressure from the US, the Foreign Ministry began to question the wisdom of some arms sales. China’s sale of intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBM) to Saudi Arabia in the late 1980s is a case in point. When the PLA negotiated with the Saudis about the sale of DF-3 IRBMs to Saudi Arabia, neither the Foreign Ministry nor China’s top leadership knew about the deal until it became an issue of international concern. It was finally brought to Deng’s attention, who then asked how much money it would make in the sale. When he was told the deal would earn 2 billion RMB, Deng apparently responded, ‘bu shao’ (literally: not a little), and approved the deal, greatly facilitating the diplomatic normalization process between China and Saudi Arabia.  

Adapting to the policy-making environment. Deng’s belief system was not different from Mao’s, but Deng tried to accomplish his goals through a gradual process, during which he adjusted his objective to the situation at hand. China’s policy during Deng’s time is one of adjusting and readjusting to adapt to domestic and international constraints, as demonstrated by his oft-quoted statement, ‘groping one’s way across the river by feeling the stone’. China’s policy of reform started in the countryside before moving to the cities and his open door policy took shape with the opening process extending gradually from special economic zones to open coastal cities, open coastal regions and then to inland areas. He said in his southern tour speech which added momentum to Chinese reform in 1992 after the end of the Cold War:

> We should be bolder than before in conducting reform and opening to the outside and have the courage to experiment ... Every year leaders should review what they have done ... continuing those measures that have proved correct and tackling new problems as soon as they are identified.  


Afghanistan; Soviet deployment of a large number of military forces along the Sino–Soviet and Sino–Mongolian borders; and Soviet support for the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The most important obstacle, Deng insisted, was the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. To achieve this goal, Deng passed a message to Gorbachev first in October 1985 through Ceausescu, President of Romania, that if the Soviets could urge the Vietnamese to withdraw from Cambodia and the agreement could be implemented, he would be willing to meet with Gorbachev. He reiterated such a desire in his interview with Mike Wallace, a correspondent for the program *60 Minutes* on CBS TV based in the United States:

“As I have said, if the Soviet Union can contribute to the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, that will remove the main obstacle in Sino–Soviet relations ... Once this problem is solved, I will be ready to meet Gorbachev. To be frank, I am over 82, already advanced in years. I have long since accomplished my historical task of making overseas visits, and I am determined not to take any more trips abroad. However, if this obstacle in Sino–Soviet relations is removed, I shall be ready to break the rule and go to any place in the Soviet Union to meet with Gorbachev. I believe a meeting like that will be of much significance to the improvement of Sino–Soviet relations between the two states.”

At first the Soviets refused to negotiate the three conditions while China insisted. When the summit finally happened in 1989, after China’s three conditions were met, Deng proposed to Gorbachev ‘to put the past behind’ and ‘open a new era’ in Sino–Soviet relations.56

Deng’s relationship-focused motivation was also manifested in his way of handling China’s relations with the other superpower. In his meeting with former US President Nixon in December 1989, when bilateral relations were locked in a stalemate following the Tiananmen Incident, Deng also proposed that ‘China and the United States should put behind them the strained relations of the past few months and open up a new era’.57 Discussing Western sanctions against China, Deng instructed the Chinese leaders that ‘we should maintain friendly exchanges with them. We should keep them as friends but also have clear understanding of what they are doing’.58 As to China’s relations with developing countries, he said:

Some developing countries would like China to become the leader of the Third World. We absolutely cannot do that—this is one of our basic state policies ... China will always side with the Third World countries, but we should never seek hegemony over them or serve as their leader.59

With Deng’s emphasis on relationships, China not only survived the demise of the Soviet Union but kept its relations with the big powers on a normal track.

57. Ibid., p. 331.
58. Ibid., pp. 322–323.
59. Ibid., p. 363.
V. Personality type and its impact on foreign policy change

The examples discussed above reveal Mao and Deng’s different personalities: Mao was closed to information, challenged constraints, made foreign policy through a top-down process and was achievement-focused in his motivation. In contrast, Deng differed from Mao in almost every respect. These differences locate them at different positions in Hermann’s personality type matrix and make them different kinds of leaders (Table 2). Mao was a typical ‘crusader’ and an ‘expansionist’ while Deng was an ‘opportunistic’ and ‘accommodative’ leader.

Due to these differences, their belief systems, which were similar, had different impacts on Chinese foreign policy. As a faithful believer of Leninism, Mao held that so long as imperialism existed war was inevitable, and that war would also inevitably lead to revolution. Communist society that resulted from war would end all wars once and for all. The Chinese under Mao believed that they lived in a time of imperialism and that the main theme of international relations was war and revolution. Deng, however, saw new changes in the international political and economic structures, and changed his view of the situation accordingly. He believed that a new world war could be postponed or avoided, and concluded that peace and development were the two big strategic issues in the world.

The changes in their perceptions of war and the main theme of international relations were the basis for all changes in Chinese politics in the 1980s. Mao used historical analogies to enhance his beliefs: WWI resulted in one socialist country, and WWII led to more than ten socialist countries, so more socialists would come into existence if another world war occurred. He was explicit that China should not be afraid of wars, and China was always preparing for war during Mao’s time. Since Deng saw the possibility of war as unlikely, China under Deng placed greater emphasis on economic construction. The central domestic task of China from the 1980s onward shifted from politics in command to economics in command, which in turn brought about a change in the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy from the former serving the latter to vice versa. China began to emphasize that the purpose of Chinese foreign policy was to create a long-lasting peaceful international environment, especially a peaceful peripheral environment.

Secondly, China’s external orientation changed. Mao wanted to destroy the old world and build a new one in accordance with his beliefs. Mao’s strategic thought was that of people’s war, the objective of which was to seize power through military struggle and to strive for China’s national independence and liberation. As one popular Chinese textbook on China’s diplomatic history summarizes, China’s ‘diplomacy in Mao’s time was to oppose imperialism and support revolution; while the main theme of (Chinese) diplomacy in Deng Xiaoping’s time was peace and development’. Mao pushed for his ideologically-based goals forcefully through ‘armed struggle’ and ‘people’s war’. Economic consideration was overshadowed by political and strategic consideration, and China under Mao spurned foreign investment and its trade reduced to become negligible.

60. Mao, Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan, pp. 284, 363.
Table 2. Comparison of Mao and Deng’s personalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predominant leader</th>
<th>Belief system</th>
<th>Interests in FA</th>
<th>Training/ experience</th>
<th>Information processing</th>
<th>Openness</th>
<th>Relation to constraints</th>
<th>Leader type</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mao</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Marxist communism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Up-down</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Crusader/ strategist Opportunism/pragmatist</td>
<td>Power expansionist/incrementalist Relationship Accommodative/ consultative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deng</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Marxist communism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Respects</td>
<td>Opportunism/pragmatist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unlike Mao’s revolutionary and confrontational world orientation, Deng realized that China was still in the preliminary stage of socialism and he borrowed everything but a political system from the West and reversed everything that Mao had stood for in foreign policy: joined the World Bank and the IMF; opened the country to private foreign investment; turned his back on Third World revolutionaries; sent hundreds and then thousands of China’s best and brightest overseas for higher education. China under Deng gradually integrated itself into the extant international system, forming a benign relationship with the outside world.

Thirdly, the ways in which China handled its relations with major powers under the two leaders were also different. China always had a target of opposition during Mao’s time: opposing the US in the 1950s, the two superpowers simultaneously in the 1960s and the Soviet Union in the 1970s. Whoever China opposed was consistently the strongest power of that time, making it the most evident feature of China’s revolutionary diplomacy. To oppose one superpower necessitated China to form a formal alliance (with the Soviet Union in the 1950s) or an informal alliance (with the US in the 1970s) to oppose the other. Deng’s China declared in explicit terms that it would not enter into an alliance or strategic relationship with any superpower to oppose the other and maintained sound relationships with all major powers. During the process of Sino–Soviet normalization in the 1980s, Deng cautioned his colleagues not to do so at the cost of China’s relations with the US. Even when the US and other countries were imposing sanctions on China after the Tiananmen Incident, China still emphasized the principle of ‘reducing trouble, increasing trust, developing cooperation, not seeking confrontation’ in developing relations with the US.

Finally, China’s regional policy and relations with small countries were also different. China under Mao had always opposed the strongest power. It had to rely on poor and weak countries to form a united front to do so, and decided its policy to and relations with non-superpowers according to their relations with the superpowers. China under relationships motivated Deng to abandoned the policy of ‘drawing lines’ and he reiterated that China was willing to develop omni-directional relations with all countries on the basis of the ‘five principles of peaceful co-existence’. Deng strongly advocated not letting differences in ideology or political system impact on Chinese foreign policy. China began to decide its position on international affairs according to the merits of the issue itself. It is these differences that make Chinese foreign policy in Mao and Deng’s times distinct.

VI. Conclusion
This article sheds light on two potential directions for the future study of Chinese foreign policy. One is the necessity, benefits, limits and directions of bridging theory on personality types and Chinese foreign policy studies. The other is that a more systemic and integrated theory of Chinese foreign policy is needed that puts decision makers at the center while taking into consideration both external variables and domestic variables.

62. Tian, Gaige kaifang yilai de zhongguo waijiao, p. 429.
63. Han, Dangdai zhongguo waijiao, p. 340.
Scholars studying Chinese foreign policy, both in the United States and China, have emphasized the necessity ‘to integrate the field of comparative foreign policy more fully into the study of Chinese foreign policy’. This article shows how this can be achieved and the benefits to be gained from it. Theories of personality types provide road maps for analyzing Chinese foreign policy. The framework of personality types not only provides a basis upon which the different personalities of Chinese leaders can be compared, but equips scholars with operationalized tools to make the comparison. Furthermore, the accumulated case studies which led to such a framework have also offered a backdrop for comparison with Chinese foreign policy studies. Such a comparison will bring about a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese foreign policy. From the perspective for foreign policy analysis, it is more imperative than necessary to incorporate Chinese foreign policy studies into developing foreign policy analysis theories that go beyond the Western. Considering China’s rising status and its proactive diplomacy today, any theory of foreign policy that disregards the Chinese situation or fails to explain Chinese cases is incomplete.

This article tells both the feasibility and limit of Hermann’s personality type theory in Chinese foreign policy study. Hermann’s theory explains Deng’s policy better than Mao’s. Deng’s reaction to the policy-making environment made him an opportunistic leader in Hermann’s matrix, however this does not support the conventional view that he was a pragmatist. This disparity could be reconciled by the fact that Deng might have demonstrated different personalities before and after he became a paramount leader. He was an opportunist when he was a subordinate working under Mao and his own personality could not be given full play. He was criticized as a leading ‘capitalist roader’ by Mao during the Cultural Revolution, and he yielded to Mao’s criticism and admitted his mistakes. But he became a pragmatist as soon as he consolidated his power and became the predominant leader following Mao’s death. Contrary to Mao, who would engage in direct political struggle when encountered with political opponents, Deng chose to respect the political constraints and yielded to more powerful leaders until the political constraints ceased to exist. Deng’s experience demonstrates that the extent that leadership personality impacts foreign policy outcome depends on whether he/she is predominant enough.

Hermann’s theory not only helps explain the revolutionary theme of Mao’s foreign policy but his domestic policies. However, Hermann’s framework fails to explain Mao’s abruptly changing course and successful opening to the United States in the early 1970s. Hermann’s model would not expect Mao, ‘closed’ to his environment and a ‘crusader’ focused on power and expansionism, to have done that. This disjuncture reveals the limit of Hermann’s theory in studying Mao’s foreign policy. The formation of leaders’ personality is an evolving social process and politics is always dynamic, while the framework of leadership types is always static. The dynamic nature of politics and personality should be taken into full consideration in bridging the two. The limitation indicates that a more nuanced approach is needed when Western-born theory is to be applied to a none Western situation like China.

From the perspective of Chinese foreign policy studies, this article does not intend to invalidate the theories of other levels of analysis; neither does it make the case for future negligence of them. The balance of power has been an important factor shaping Chinese foreign policy and will continue to exert its influence, as the ongoing power shift in East Asia shows. As China joins the international system, international norms and the hundreds of international regimes China has joined will become equally important, if not more so, in shaping China’s foreign policy.

The external influences on China are unprecedented, as are China’s domestic changes. New developments, such as ‘corporate pluralization’, ‘professionalization’, ‘decentralization’ and other fragmentation tendencies against the background of globalization within the Chinese foreign policy structure, are causing Chinese foreign policy more often than not to react to issues and challenges imposed on it by society and government. As Marxist ideology loses ground in China, nationalism is gaining strength in Chinese politics. Multiple and diverse domestic factors are competing to shape China’s external behaviors.

Starting with Jiang Zemin, China’s leaders onward will no longer enjoy the same level of political capital and charisma as their predecessors. So long as the Chinese hierarchical decision-making structure remains, along with its authoritarian political system, the role of the core leader will continue to be central to the understanding of the major features of Chinese foreign policy. For instance, Jiang’s rich experience and interest in foreign affairs made him closely involved in foreign affairs. His strong incentive to show off his foreign language ability and his frequent travels abroad—he paid 107 foreign visits to more than 70 countries as China’s top leader—led to a constitutional revision in 2002 to legalize top leaders’ foreign travel, leaving a stark personal imprint on Chinese foreign policy. Years of working experience in China’s poorest areas of Gansu, Guizhou and Tibet led Hu Jintao to emphasize the notion of governing for the people while in power, which led to the principle of ‘diplomacy for the people’ in foreign affairs. With a world view formed when China was isolated by the radical Cultural Revolution and a personality of insensitiveness to the policy-making environment, Hu did not make any substantial political reform during the ten years of his tenure.

Moreover, increased players vying for different policy outcomes make it more imperative for the central leadership to reconcile divergent interests and better supervise subordinate agencies, giving the paramount leaders different opportunities and means from those available during the times of Mao and Deng to influence Chinese foreign policy. Such a tendency has been manifested by Xi’s emphasis on


‘holistic management of foreign affairs’ and ‘stronger top-level planning and medium-to long-term strategic planning for China’s diplomatic work’ since he took power in China.\(^{69}\) Foreign policy making during an international crisis and on important strategic issues, especially issues that concern the central leadership’s domestic image and legitimacy, will remain a woefully sensitive domain. The decision to establish a National Security Commission during the 3rd plenary session of the 18th Party Congress indicates such a direction.

It should also be noted in conclusion that neither external systemic nor domestic societal factors can have any significant influence on Chinese foreign policy unless or until they are perceived and acted upon by Chinese decision makers through their own decision-making system. A more nuanced and integrated model is needed that brings leadership personality back into the center of analysis, while taking both external and domestic factors into consideration. In such an integrated framework, the study of leadership will remain a core, if not the core.