It is beyond doubt that Deng Xiaoping was the chief architect and promoter of China’s reforms and opening up to the outside world. In other words, Deng was the crucial driving force behind China’s modernisation and rejuvenation.

As Karl Marx pointed out, ‘Every era needs its own great person. If there is no such person, it is necessary to make one.’ A great leader is one with foresight and sagacity who stands ahead of the tide and promotes development through guidance and/or astute policy making. Deng Xiaoping was undoubtedly such a person. He not only directed China’s development but was also a key designer of the associated strategies and policies.

In China, Deng was considered an outstanding leader and he enjoyed high prestige throughout the country. He was praised as a great Marxist, proletarian revolutionary, statesman, military strategist, diplomat, reformist and founder of the theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Moreover, his extraordinary role in China’s rejuvenation was widely acknowledged internationally. When he passed away on 19 February 1997, heads of states, governments and international organisations around the world praised his remarkable achievements. For example, Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, referred to him as ‘a primary architect of China’s modernisation and dramatic economic development.’ He would ‘be remembered, not just in his own country, which he so faithfully served for so long, but also in the international community at large’. Similarly, President Boris Yeltsin of Russia spoke of him as having brought about historic changes in China, British Prime Minister John
Major said that ‘Deng’s initiative played a crucial part in creating today’s economically dynamic and successful China’.  

In emphasising Deng’s role in promoting China’s rejuvenation, it is essential to point out that it was his position as the paramount leader of post-Mao China that provided him with the power to direct and organise the historic change discussed in this book. China was a country in which people needed and believed in the concept of paramount political authority. Deng’s status and power from the end of the 1970s was similar to that of Mao in the first 30 years of the People’s Republic, but his prestige and influence came from the fact that his endeavours were aimed at benefiting the Chinese people and lifting the country out of poverty, while the reputation of Mao after 1949 was based mainly on an irrational personality cult that stemmed from his achievements during the communist revolution and the founding of the Republic. Ranking high among Deng’s talents were his ability to prevent other top leaders from becoming embroiled in endless debates and controversies from which they would be unable to extricate themselves, and to counter criticisms of the necessity and conduct of the reforms and the opening-up process by leftist or rightist groups at various political levels.

**Deng’s main contributions to China’s rejuvenation**

As ‘one of the most outstanding politicians of the twentieth century’, Deng Xiaoping was well versed in both civil and military affairs. He not only presided over a very long war as a chief military commander and made a remarkable contribution to the founding of the new regime, but later brought economic prosperity to the world’s most populous country. His contributions to the rejuvenation of China covered the theoretical and the practical aspects.

**Theoretical contributions**

**Ideological emancipation**

Deng led three campaigns of ideological emancipation that were fundamental to the economic development of China. The first was aimed at breaking down the cult of personality and doctrinairism. Deng reintroduced the ideological line of ‘seeking truth from fact’ and pressed for abandonment of the ‘two whatevers’: upholding