

The 1990s Chinese Debates Concerning the Causes for the Collapse of the Soviet Union among PRC Soviet-watchers: The Cases of Brezhnev and Stalin

*Jie Li**

The University of Edinburgh

Abstract

The breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991 has had a profound impact on China. The Soviet dissolution has had a variety of significant repercussions on Chinese politics, foreign policy, and other aspects. However, many myths about post-1991 Chinese research on the Soviet Union have been circulated and perpetuated by a body of secondary literature written by Western scholars. Some issues have been unclear or misunderstood in previous studies, and one of these inaccuracies has to do with Chinese perceptions of the role of the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

A number of the secondary sources argue that, after 1991, because of their impact on China's 1989 pro-democracy movements as perceived by the Chinese communist regime, most Chinese Soviet-watchers considered Gorbachev and his liberalization to be the fundamental catalysts in triggering the collapse of the Soviet Union. The literature seems to agree that those Chinese scholars were univocal in assessing Gorbachev's individual actions and failings, and that they overstated the implications of Gorbachev and his liberal programs for China.

This research reveals that since the mid-1990s, many Chinese Soviet-watchers have traced the roots of the tragedy back to the administrations of Leonid Brezhnev and Joseph Stalin, arguing that the conservative forces and the rigid communist system were the decisive factors in bringing it about – rather than the figure of Gorbachev alone. Their writings confirmed and legitimized the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's post-Tiananmen agendas of opposing leftism and saving Chinese socialism by speeding up the reform and open door policy. By depicting that Brezhnev's stagnation and Stalin's rigid centralization as the primary causes of the collapse, their writings suggested that state legitimacy comes more from economic results than democratic

politics. They justified that economic prosperity, not political reform, which is the reigning principle for the survival of Chinese socialism after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Keywords: *Deng Xiaoping, Chinese Soviet-watchers, Post-Tiananmen, Leonid Brezhnev, Joseph Stalin*

1. Introduction

The breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991 has had a profound impact on the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Soviet dissolution has had a variety of significant repercussions on Chinese politics, foreign policy, and other aspects. However, many myths about post-1991 Chinese research on the Soviet Union have been circulated and perpetuated by a body of secondary literature written by Western scholars. Some issues have been unclear or misunderstood in previous studies, and one of these inaccuracies has to do with Chinese perceptions of the role of the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

A number of secondary sources written by Western scholars (Rozman, 2010: 464-470; Marsh, 2005: 111; Shambaugh, 2008: 48-56; Wilson, 2007: 272) argued that, Chinese Soviet-watchers began making positive comments about Gorbachev immediately after he assumed power in 1985. However, these Soviet-watchers turned against the last Soviet leader soon after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. The existing secondary literature seems to have exaggerated the impact of Gorbachev on China. Previous scholarship also suggests that after the mid-1980s Chinese Soviet-watchers identified Gorbachev's concept of *glasnost* (openness) and his political reform with Western democracy, and used Gorbachev and his ideas to push the Chinese regime towards political democratization on the eve of the Tiananmen Incident. Moreover, some authors (such as Gilbert Rozman and David Shambaugh) indicate that most Chinese Soviet-watchers after 1991 considered Gorbachev and his liberalization to be the fundamental catalysts in spelling the collapse of the Soviet Union. The literature seems to agree that Chinese Soviet-watchers were univocal in assessing Gorbachev's individual actions and failings, and that they overstated the implications of Gorbachev and his liberal programs for China, both in the 1980s and 1990s.

Previously, the author has published two articles in challenging the views of existing scholarship on Chinese debates concerning Gorbachev and the Soviet Union. In my first article (Li, 2016), I argued, firstly, most Chinese academic articles concerning the USSR did not present positive views on Gorbachev in and after 1985. Many of them remained suspicious and wary

of the new Soviet leader, and some of them even challenged the sincerity and feasibility of his policies. Only after about a year with Gorbachev at the helm did Chinese Soviet-watchers begin to review his *glasnost* and political reform positively. This is when three major obstacles (the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; its large troop deployment along the border of China; and Moscow's support of Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia) plaguing Sino-Soviet relations began to resolve and bilateral relations gradually improved.

Secondly, a full-fledged Chinese attack on Gorbachev did not appear either in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident or after the Soviet disintegration. Instead, strong Chinese criticisms emerged in early 1990, when Gorbachev was elected as the President of the USSR and initiated the process of terminating the power monopoly of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in March 1990. After that, China became aware of the negative ramifications of such a move against PRC communist one-party rule.

Thirdly, few Chinese Soviet-watchers used Gorbachev and his programs to put pressure on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to introduce some form of political Westernization. Instead, most Soviet-watchers manipulated the symbol of Gorbachev to support the reformist wing led by the former CCP Secretary General Zhao Ziyang in his factional warfare against the Party conservatives leading up to Tiananmen. In short, Chinese Soviet-watchers did not regard Gorbachev and his programs as having the potential to transform the political landscape of the PRC; rather, they perceived Gorbachev and his agenda as a tool that could be used to define, create, and legitimize a reformed communist system on their own terms. Chinese Soviet-watchers interpreted *glasnost* in a way designed to serve their own purposes, and that this interpretation was quite different from democracy in the Western sense. They embraced *glasnost* as a type of "democracy under socialism," and saw it as being equivalent to the "neo-authoritarianism" of Zhao Ziyang that championed pluralism under a strong government. The Chinese definition of *glasnost* remains circumscribed by China's own mentality and history, reflecting the traditional Chinese understanding of human values and political culture.

Last, in contrast to the secondary literature suggesting that Chinese criticisms of Gorbachev after Tiananmen were to do with his role in embracing democratization and the disruptive repercussions this brought to China, the article has shown that the negative attitude of Chinese Soviet-watchers towards the last Soviet leader after 1989 was largely the result of Gorbachev's failure to use tough measures to prevent socialism in Europe from collapsing. Their criticisms of Gorbachev served to justify the Chinese government's brutal crackdown on civilian protests in Tiananmen and to glorify the Party's role as a bastion of state unity and stability. Many Chinese

Soviet-watchers were seemingly mounting efforts in defence of Deng's iron-fist policies, which had successfully preserved socialist rule and propelled China down the road to prosperity since the 1990s. They compared this with the faltering Soviet state that would eventually lurch into disorder and break down under Gorbachev's liberalization and hands-off approach. The conclusion was that strong authoritarian rule that ensured political stability was far preferable.

In fact, Chinese perceptions of Gorbachev throughout the 1980s and 1990s were quite evolutionary. Views changed in response to domestic and international politics, and Sino-Soviet (later Sino-Russian) relations. For instance, Chinese Soviet-watchers evidently had a good impression of Gorbachev's concepts of humanistic socialism and *glasnost* after the mid-1980s. This positive assessment was owing to the open political climate in China at the time, and the need of the CCP to initiate its own political reform in order to facilitate economic modernization. Some scholars even demanded that the Chinese government learn from Gorbachev in doing political and economic reforms simultaneously. After the collapse of European and Soviet socialist regimes in the early 1990s, Chinese Soviet-watchers changed suit and attacked Gorbachev's method, arguing that economic rejuvenation should precede political reform. However, after Sino-Russian relations consolidated in the mid-1990s, Chinese criticisms of Gorbachev gradually subsided.

In my second article (Li, forthcoming in 2018), I present another issue that has also been rarely mentioned by the existing scholarship on post-1991 Chinese research on the USSR. Apart from Gorbachev, Chinese debates on the Soviet Union were focusing on different Soviet leaders in and after 1991, particularly on the first Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, who featured prominently in Chinese writings and claimed equal importance to Gorbachev.

I indicate that the foreign policy of Lenin started to draw the attention of Chinese Soviet-watchers in and after 1989, when China became a political pariah owing to the ruling Communist Party's brutal military crackdown on civilians during the pro-democratic Tiananmen demonstrations in the summer of that year. Chinese perspectives in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident argued that the PRC might learn from Lenin's policy in War Communism (1918-1921), when the newly-born Soviet Union was besieged by imperialist military encirclement and the country's external environment was similar to China after Tiananmen, when the regime was facing international sanctions. Back then, Lenin adopted a foreign policy that encouraged engagement in formal relations with the West, while concentrating on economic development and maintaining a proletarian dictatorship. Such principles were akin to Deng Xiaoping's post-Tiananmen agendas of buying time and keeping a low profile while finding a way out of the Western sanctions and re-connecting with the world.

Lenin's foreign policy and his rule during the early Soviet Union were selected as examples, as they had gone well with the stance and interest of China after Tiananmen – that is, since both regimes were bound by the shared traumas of Western sanctions and the common aspirations of rising to be global powers amid international hostility. Chinese Soviet-watchers' use of Lenin to promote socialism – like exploiting past foreign humiliation in order to fan anti-Western nationalist fervour – was an effective measure to strengthen the Chinese communist regime when it was experiencing domestic difficulties.

At the time, Chinese Soviet-watchers used the interpretation of Lenin's writings to bring vigour to the weakening legitimacy of Chinese socialism after the Tiananmen suppression and the demise of world communism, and to give a new impulse to Deng's policies and future reforms against the post-Tiananmen leftist offensive. By upholding the work and teachings of Lenin, Chinese Soviet-watchers not only attempted to support the Chinese communist regime after the Tiananmen crisis, they also made an effort to safeguard and legitimize Deng Xiaoping's position in China after 1989, when the Party conservatives launched a series of attacks on his reform and open door policies taken since 1978. According to those Chinese Soviet-watchers, Deng's long-standing policy represented what they saw as the true Leninist legacy of building socialism by combining economic liberalization and the political one-party rule, which was the best way to weather the post-Tiananmen challenges, as well as the future direction of world socialism after the end of the Cold War.

In the forthcoming and third article, the author would like to delve into the last under-researched issue in post-1991 Chinese study on the Soviet Union. As noted above, in reality, Chinese writings never excoriated Gorbachev in the 1990s, and the torrent of attacks had gradually subsided by the middle of the decade. Moreover, Chinese Soviet-watchers presented a much broader historical view and offered a more systemic analysis of the multiple reasons for the collapse, rather than being preoccupied by the so-called "blame game" targeting Gorbachev.¹ Gorbachev and his liberal programs were by no means the only, or even the most significant, factor in the USSR's dissolution, as represented in Chinese analysis in and after 1991.

The coming article will reveal that after the demise of world communism in the early 1990s, many Chinese academic writings appeared to excite debates on the two Soviet leaders – Leonid Brezhnev and Joseph Stalin. Many Chinese Soviet-watchers have traced the roots of the Soviet demise back to the administrations of Brezhnev and Stalin, arguing that the conservative forces and the rigid communist system were the decisive factors in bringing it about – rather than the figure of Gorbachev alone.

Many scholars blame the legacies of these two Soviet leaders as the cause of the collapse in 1991. According to them, after Stalin took power, the

Soviet Union started to deviate from what they saw as true Leninism. These writings contrasted the legacies of the two Soviet leaders with Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism, and served to shore up Deng's post-Tiananmen line of accelerating economic development and anti-leftism, which he promoted during his 1992 southern tour. However, while Chinese Soviet-watchers criticized the negative policies of the USSR, they did not condemn socialism. They targeted the imperfections of the Soviet economic apparatus rather than its political repression. Their conclusion confirmed the CCP's post-Tiananmen policy of liberating economic force while keeping a tight leash on political control. They argued that economic prosperity, not political reform, was the reigning principle for the survival of Chinese socialism after the fall of the USSR.

2. Methodology and Sources

With respect to primary sources, it should be mentioned here that this research is based primarily on the "national core journals" (*Guojiaji hexin qikan* 国家级核心期刊) published in the People's Republic of China (PRC), and mainly on the following four categories of journals.

The first are those journals focusing on research in the humanities and social sciences in general (*Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社会科学研究 Social Science Research, *Shijie jingjiyu zhengzhi* 世界经济与政治 World Economics and Politics). Second are those journals dealing with problems of socialism or communism in the world (*Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti* 当代世界社会主义问题 Problems of Contemporary World Socialism, *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* 社会主义研究 Socialism Studies). The third group forms the core of this study; they concentrate on questions and issues relating to the former Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation and other Commonwealth Independent States after 1991) (*Sulian dongou wenti* 苏联东欧问题 Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, *Eluosi yanjiu* 俄罗斯研究 Russian Studies). Lastly, the research scope also included relevant articles in various university journals (*Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiu shengyuan xuebao* 中国社会科学院研究生院学报 Journal of Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao* 中共中央党校学报 Journal of the Party School of the Central Committee of the CCP).

All the journals selected for this research accept submissions from all over China.² Most (but not all) of the contributors are academics, and the journals maintain acceptable quality standards and have a good reputation in the Chinese academic world. Some of them, such as *Sulian dongou wenti* (Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe 苏联东欧问题) and *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* (Socialism Studies 社会主义研究), are the very best PRC journals in their fields.

In order to clear up previous misunderstandings about Chinese research on the Soviet Union, the researcher has chosen a different approach to re-examine the field. First, the article will focus on the publications in the bimonthly official journal of *Sulian dongou wenti* (Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe or MSUEE 苏联东欧问题) as the primary source for analysis. The journal is published by the Institute of Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies (*Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiusuo* or IREECAS 俄罗斯东欧中亚研究所), which is the largest powerhouse in research of the former Soviet Union in the PRC. The institute is affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) – China's most prominent organization specializing in the humanities and social sciences and under the control of the State Council and Party supervision. The IREECAS journal not only publishes articles written by the IREECAS' employed scholars, but also accepts submissions contributed by other scholars across China. It can thus be used as a medium that reflects the historical development of Soviet studies in China.

Second, the investigator will also examine other PRC humanities and social science publications regarding the research on the USSR, mostly focusing on the four categories of journals previously classified. By engaging these publications (either from the IREECAS journal or others) the study will not be limited to those publications merely learning lessons from the Soviet collapse after 1991. Instead, it will pay attention to various thematic research projects diverging in focus and analysis between the late 1980s and the end of the 1990s. Such a methodology may reduce a certain bias on Soviet research in China and instead direct the audience to review the field from a more objective perspective.

Moreover, the article intends to examine the thinking of Chinese Soviet-watchers against the backdrop of political and social changes in 1990s China. The study will be based not only on the analysis of primary sources already undertaken, but will also attempt to locate the developments of Chinese Soviet research amid the rapid changes in the social and political environment of China. Therefore, in order for this research to be successfully located in the rich fabric of the intellectual activities of contemporary China and in the changing environment, the investigator has also identified the following three kinds of documents that may be beneficial to the research:

- *Articles in PRC official newspapers and journals concerning aspects of the former Soviet Union*: *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报 *People's Daily*, owned by the CCP Central Committee); *Guangming Ribao* (光明日报 *Guangming Daily*, published by the CCP Central Propaganda Department); *Beijing Review* (China's only national English weekly news magazine published in Beijing by the China International Publishing Group), etc.

- *Writings and speeches of PRC officials and leaders on the matters of the Soviet state*: such as those of Mao Zedong (毛泽东) and Deng Xiaoping (邓小平), and other contemporary Chinese leaders' related speeches scattered among the current Chinese newspapers.
- *Chinese and English translations of works and speeches of Soviet leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev*: as Chinese scholars always cite the words of Soviet leaders (such as works of Lenin and Stalin and memoirs of Khrushchev and Gorbachev) to support their arguments in articles, it is important for the researcher to check the accuracy of those quotations.

The use of the term “Soviet-watchers” (or Sovietologists) in this article for those who study and research the state of the USSR is based on Christopher Xenakis' definition. Xenakis defines US Sovietologists broadly, to include “political scientists, economists, sociologists, historians, diplomats and policy makers, working in academia, government, private think tanks, and the media” (Xenakis, 2002: 4). He uses the terms “Sovietologists”, “Soviet experts”, “foreign policy analysts”, “Cold War theorists”, and “political scientists” interchangeably, citing the examples of George Kennan, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Richard Pipes, and Strobe Talbott. These individuals are both Soviet-specialists and policy makers, while Hedrick Smith and Robert Kaiser are also Soviet-watchers and journalists simultaneously (Xenakis, 2002: 4). For the sake of conforming to the Chinese context and the convenience of narrative, the author will use the term “Soviet-watchers” (instead of Sovietologists) throughout the article.

In terms of this elastic definition of the field and the diversity of scholars' backgrounds, the situation in China is generally similar to the situation in the US as described by Xenakis. For example, as we shall see, although some Chinese scholars specialize in either Soviet or world communism, most of those mentioned and quoted in this paper are generalists rather than specialists in Soviet studies. Their articles often express more political zeal than scholarly expertise or analytical insight. Generally speaking, the descriptions by Xenakis of US Sovietologists could also be applied to the Chinese situation. Chinese Soviet-watchers are a diverse group, rather than representatives of a single school of thought or central theory. Their publications never imply a complete homogeneity of views. However, although their academic training is in different disciplines and by no means confined to Soviet studies, their research and publications are relevant to Soviet research in one way or another.³

Almost all Chinese Soviet-watchers included in this article come from the following three kinds of institutions: the first is IREECAS in CASS and it carries a great deal of weight in Soviet studies in China. IREECAS is also

the headquarters of the Chinese Association of East European and Central Asian Studies (CAEECAS), which administers the membership of Chinese Soviet-specialists across the country. Second, the research scope also pays attention to scholars in Soviet studies from other institutions in CASS, such as the Institute of World History and Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Last, the investigation includes Chinese Soviet-watchers from provincial academies of social sciences and other universities (including the party schools), particularly to those with units, departments, and journals devoted specifically to research on the USSR.⁴

In researching this article, the investigator has obtained most of the essential primary sources listed above from a two-month fieldwork in the University Service Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), or it has been downloaded from the Digital Library Service at CUHK. Both sites contain a large quantity of PRC official and unofficial reading materials, as well as a substantial amount of Chinese scholarship on the Soviet Union.

According to the topic of this article, the investigator was meant to undertake fieldwork in mainland China, rather than in Hong Kong. In fact, the investigator applied to CASS in Beijing in the summer of 2014, in order to obtain permission to interview scholars and peruse archives there. However, CASS declined the application and did not provide a written explanation for such denial. Therefore, as a foreign scholar, the investigator was unable to apply for a visa to enter the PRC. It is the investigator's guess that the application was denied due to the project's politically sensitive nature. As such, the investigator has chosen to do the fieldwork in Hong Kong instead, without an opportunity to interview the relevant people. It is worth noting that the CASS administrator warned the investigator in a prior conversation that the Academy does not have any official or secret archives stored within. A researcher would thus be forced to rely on two methods – interviewing the scholars there or reading their journal articles. Besides, many CASS academics indicated to the investigator that they did not accept e-mail questionnaires as an alternative form of interview, due to the strict disciplinary requirement of CASS.

As a result, the author has not had at his disposition all the necessary materials. He has had to study the subject by sifting through the documents, but without meeting the essential people and getting first-hand information. The work has been written outside the country to which the subject relates. A certain degree of limitation is perhaps impossible to avoid, inasmuch as the author is merely an interpreter of the writings of Chinese scholarship, rather than an on-the-spot witness of the events and situations described. Having said this, it is hoped that the research still retains a stamp of originality.

3. Revival of Research on Brezhnev

In 1997, Chen Zhihua (陈之骅), a researcher in the Institute of World History at CASS and a prominent scholar on Leonid Brezhnev, commented that Chinese research on Soviet history had overwhelmingly focused on the periods of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Gorbachev, while overlooking the 18-year rule of Brezhnev, which was “the time when the Soviet Union started to decline”, and “the key to understanding the historical lessons of the Soviet downfall” (Chen, 1997: 12).⁵ Chen’s remark is not altogether correct. In reality, Chinese research of Brezhnev and his administration had flourished in the 1990s.

Throughout the 1980s, many Chinese Soviet-watchers did not have positive views on Brezhnev, because his conservative thinking was running afoul of China’s reform and open door policies. Some articles examined the bureaucracy and life-long tenure cadre system under Brezhnev, and remarked that the Soviet ruling machine had become more ossified and less efficient since the 1970s (Dong, 1982: 42; Chen, 1985: 54; Chen, 1986: 23-24). Others concentrated on the analysis of Brezhnev’s concept of “developed socialism”. They compared the living standards between the USSR and the West, and concluded that the Soviet Union was by no means a developed country with an advanced economy and material abundance. The articles criticized the notion of “developed socialism” as a utopian belief and a political calculation to keep the Soviet Union as the leader in the communist camp (Wu, 1983: 48-50; Wang, 1986: 95-96; Liu, 1986: 44). However, the social and economic stagnation under Brezhnev had not fallen within the purview of analysis until the 1990s.

In 1992, Deng Xiaoping embarked upon a trip to China’s southern provinces, where he repeatedly urged the need for learning from capitalism and rekindling China’s all-round economic development – particularly after the setback of Tiananmen, in which the Party conservative force attempted to attack and quash Deng’s policies taken after 1978. Deng stressed that it was “the achievements of the reform and the open policy” that had helped China to weather the Tiananmen crisis. He argued that the PRC should “make socialism develop in a healthier direction”, in order to overcome the panic caused by the worldwide defeat of socialism. He especially emphasized that he could not tolerate “slow growth” and “stagnation”. He pointed out that “it is necessary to fundamentally change the economic structure”, and “to establish a vigorous socialist economic structure that will promote their development” (Deng, 1995f: 358). Deng seemed to fully understand that, after having squandered what legitimacy communism had in the brutality of 1989 and the Soviet demise, the only resource of the CCP regime was economic performance, which meant putting more food in the shops and improving the living standard of the Chinese people.

Moreover, another important purpose of Deng's 1992 southern tour was to win the factional warfare and succeed in having his reform strategy prevail after the Tiananmen backlash. The fact that his trip at first received no official media coverage and the *People's Daily* did not publish anything about it until one month later was a testament to the strength of CCP leftist opposition. In his talk, Deng asserted that the reason for the failure of European socialism had little to do with democracy, and more to do with the lack of security and prosperity. During the trip, Deng attempted to make moves against the Party conservatives, saying those insufficiently enthusiastic for reform should go (Deng, 1995f: 363).

In response to Deng's messages, on 4th June 1992, three years after the Tiananmen Incident, the *People's Daily* published an article saying that China should "give up the highly centralized socialist economic system borrowed from other countries before", and "overcome the problem of the leftist thinking" (*People's Daily*, 1992: 2).⁶ On the same day in 1993, another article in the *People's Daily* indicated that "leftism is the biggest enemy of socialism" (*People's Daily*, 1993: 2).⁷ In scholarly writings, Wu Xingtang (吴兴唐), vice-president of the Chinese Association of International Communist Movement Studies, praised Deng's speech in early 1992 as "the guiding principle for studies in international relations and the communist movement". Wu sneered at the leftist thinking, which put blame on "the excessiveness of reforms and insufficient class struggle" as the main factors for causing the Soviet demise. He concluded that the real intention of leftism was for "obstructing Deng's reformist line" (Wu, 1992: 3-4).⁸ Gao Fang (高放), a professor of international relations at Renmin University and an expert in the history of world communism, in another article also strongly attacked the leftist tendencies. The author attributed the failure of Soviet socialism to economic, not political, factors. He said that "leftism was the true gravedigger of the USSR, while rightism was only putting a nail in its final coffin" (Gao, 1992: 10).⁹

In and after 1992, many pieces of academic work seemed to lavish attention on the Soviet Union under Brezhnev (E, 1992: 27-33; Liu, 1992: 8-12; Huang, 1993: 39-46; Chen, 1993: 53-57; Ma, 1995: 59-63). Unlike the 1980s writings presented above, which focused on the aspects of ideology and political administration under Brezhnev, in the 1990s Chinese scholars were targeting his obsession with the status quo and ignorance of true reality, which made the Soviet economy lag behind the West more and more. The commentaries meshed with Deng's emphasis on economic growth and anti-leftism after the Soviet demise. As IREECAS scholar E Huancheng (鄂焕成) wrote, "Comrade Deng Xiaoping once remarked that the priorities of development are scientific technologies and the productive forces, and such remark inspires us to seek the true reason of Brezhnev's failure."¹⁰ The author

concluded that the Soviet problems had surfaced under Stalin and escalated in Brezhnev's time, which he termed as "the long medieval ossified rule".¹¹ He said that the Brezhnev administration had rendered subsequent reforms launched by Gorbachev insufficient to rescue the Soviet system (E, 1992: 31).

Another IREECAS scholar, Liu Guanghui (刘光慧), described the USSR after the 1970s as "a pool of lifeless and stagnant water". He found that the biggest reason for Brezhnev's unwillingness to take up reforms was his predecessor Khrushchev's rashness in improvising the reform programs that had contributed to the chaotic economic situation – thus causing the CPSU to become tired of such adventure and to itch for stability. He concluded that the lesson from Brezhnev was that socialism should "persist with reforms forever" (Liu, 1992: 10-11).¹² After criticizing the Brezhnev administration for being "conservative and rigid",¹³ Huang Zongliang (黄宗良), vice-director of the Russian Studies Institute at Beijing University, concluded that a socialist country should always find a balance between reform and stability. While a stable environment could ensure the success of reform, nonetheless reform should always be prioritized in order to maintain stability and prosperity (Huang, 1993: 44-45).

In the late 1990s, IREECAS senior researcher Xu Kui (徐葵) retraced Brezhnev's early life and trajectory to power, and studied his personal attributes and characters, such as "mediocrity, lack of innovation, being pleasure-seeking and vainglorious". He argued that these explained why the Soviet Union since the 1970s had been fraught with personality cults, incorrigible bureaucracy, and economic deterioration. He commented that the era of Brezhnev was "the turning point when the Soviet Union went from prosperity to decline" (Xu, 1998: 27).¹⁴ In late 1998, Chen Zhihua (in his new book funded and published by CASS) re-examined Brezhnev and his time. At the beginning of the book, Chen wrote that his analysis was in accordance with the motif of Deng's speech in 1992, which was the theoretical framework of the project (Chen, 1998: 1). The author said that the rule of Brezhnev was not only the dividing line for the USSR's turn from strength to weakness, but also "the bane of the final demise in 1991". In his view, "Studying Brezhnev's period is a must in finding out reasons for the downfall" (Chen, 1998: 4-5).¹⁵ He finally contended that the crumbling of the USSR was not historically inevitable. The state under Brezhnev was ripe for reforms, but he slept through it, as it were. Brezhnev might have helped the Soviet Union survive, but he had missed the chance to transform the sorrow into strength in the 1970s (Chen, 1998: 24).

As noted in the Introduction, a number of secondary sources written by Western scholars pointed out that Chinese Soviet-watchers after 1991 almost unanimously blamed Gorbachev and his reform programs as the major factors in capsizing the Soviet Union (Rozman, 2010: 464; Marsh, 2005:

111; Shambaugh, 2008: 48, 56, 81; Wilson, 2007: 272). David Shambaugh even suggested that this so-called “blame game” persisted throughout 1990s Chinese writings (Shambaugh, 2008: 48). Those works have obviously overlooked the revival of research on Brezhnev in Chinese writings since 1992. Unlike the 1980s’ sporadic inquiries on Brezhnev presented above, the 1990s writings were more divergent in views and had a focus, pertaining to the state agenda set by Deng Xiaoping during his southern tour in 1992.

First, the renewed discussion on Brezhnev was a product of a more open political milieu resulting from Deng’s 1992 landmark speech. Accordingly, Chinese intellectual debates became, to a limited degree, more lively and animated than the dreary period after 1989. In the wake of Deng’s southern tour, the spirit of “seeking truth from facts” was re-emphasized to give a new impulse to the study of socialism (Deng, 1995f: 369-370). Although the general political climate in China was still uncertain, this modest progress had made it possible for scholars to discover more objectively the problems of the USSR, and to diversify the roots of the collapse. It provided encouragement to reinterpret and challenge the prevalent one-sidedly views that were mainly concerned with the cause of Gorbachev.

Second, unlike the post-Tiananmen official and academic analysis, which argued that the peaceful evolution engineered by the West had played a prominent role in jolting Eastern Europe and the USSR, the debate on Brezhnev and the moribund economy under his administration marked the termination of the peaceful evolution thesis, which seemed to be an exaggerated accusation that the Soviet collapse was simply a victim of Western subversion.¹⁶ The doctrine of peaceful evolution was more a propaganda trick than a genuine academic argument. The Party hard-liners had used the threat of peaceful evolution as the justification to shut down reforms.¹⁷ The first PRC leader Mao Zedong once said that “the fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal” (Mao, 1965a: 313). Some Chinese Soviet-watchers also remarked that putting blame for the Soviet downfall on external factors such as the peaceful evolution was either “superficial” (E, 1992: 8) or “one-sided and noxious” (Chen, 1993: 53).

Seen from his 1992 speech transcript during the southern tour, Deng believed that the chief cause of turmoil in socialism was not the imperialist peaceful evolution. The problem lay with the internal factors, such as poverty and the under-developed economies in many socialist countries. In his view, the only way for China to survive after the Soviet dissolution was to continue the open door policy and reform the past economy characterized by centralized control and enforced egalitarianism. He argued that abandoning the path of reform set in 1978 would only lead the country to the sort of catastrophe befalling the USSR (Deng, 1995f: 370). In Deng’s mind, to admit that the socialist system itself has fundamental flaws was more important than

to blame foreign machinations. Instead of giving the excuse of the so-called peaceful evolution and ignoring true problems, China after 1991 should face up squarely to reality and meet the challenges ahead.

As Joseph Fewsmith demonstrated, firstly, after the Tiananmen Incident and the Soviet demise, Deng needed to rely on economic development to convince those who no longer believed in socialism, and to restore the Party legitimacy through its ability to “deliver the goods” (Fewsmith, 2001: 70). Moreover, following the ouster of Zhao Ziyang, the former CCP Secretary General who was in sympathy with the 1989 Tiananmen protest, the conservative faction was clearly directed at Zhao’s former patron Deng Xiaoping and attempted to undercut his reform policy, which was being criticized for neglecting politics and ideology and concentrating merely on economic development. Deng would interpret the conservative manoeuvre as an effort to challenge his position in China and have the country revert to the old days of Mao. To strike back, Deng must ensure the reform process would become “a national rallying cry” and survive his own death (Fewsmith, 2001: 71). Since 1992 some scholars also concluded that, if the impact of Gorbachev’s *glasnost* (openness) and the peaceful evolution were rational explanations for the collapse, then it was because the inherent weakness of the Soviet socialist system that had made it become unable to resist the restoration of capitalism and democratization (Chen, 1993: 56; Lu, 1997: 14). By dispelling the assertion of peaceful evolution, Deng won the power battle over his Party rivals, ensuring a state-wide consensus to embrace his strategy of faster growth, enhanced economic reform, and greater interaction with the outside world. Similarly, the research on Brezhnev in the 1990s also signalled the return of a down-to-earth and critical approach in studying the Soviet demise, and the repudiation of seemingly non-scholarly and irrelevant official rhetoric.

Last, as we have seen, there was a distinct change in Chinese writings in the 1990s, from attacking Gorbachev’s liberalization to condemning Brezhnev’s conservatism. After that, Gorbachev became the lesser of two evils and was rarely seen as the cardinal source of the downfall.¹⁹ In and after 1992, when China had come out of the shadow of Tiananmen and the Soviet demise, and was at the height of campaigning for anti-leftism, the practice of criticizing Brezhnev’s orthodoxy instead of attacking Gorbachev’s liberalization was instrumental in encouraging more innovation to keep the socialist regime vital. The discussion of Brezhnev played a role in affirming and promoting China’s market-oriented path, thereby revivifying the pace of reform that had slowed in the wake of the 1989 repression. Chinese writings intended to take advantage of the study of Brezhnev to give credit to the ethos of Deng’s 1992 speech, and to enlist support for his future vision for China in the post-communist world.

There is one more illustrating example demonstrating that Chinese scholars had taken advantage of the use of Brezhnev, in order to give the Chinese regime the extra push that was needed for the acceleration of reforms in the 1990s. In 1996, CASS funded and published a book “*Yuzongshuji tanxin*” (与总书记谈心 Chatting with the Secretary General).²⁰ The book is a collective project written and edited by a group of CASS scholars, which consists of more than 20 academics from different institutes at CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 2-3). The book title is quite misleading. In reality, it is not a record of face-to-face interview with then Party Secretary General Jiang Zemin; instead, Jiang appears as the *dramatis personae*, which the authors use as a form of communication to channel their views on the future development of China.

The book starts with the full text of Jiang Zemin’s 1995 speech “*Zhengque chuli shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe zhongde ruogan zhongda guanxi*” (正确处理社会主义现代化建设中的若干重大关系 To Correctly Handle Certain Important Relations in Building Socialist Modernization).²¹ The content of the speech is in fact no different from Deng’s 1992 southern tour talk, both of them espousing the goals of technological innovation, acceleration of economic modernization, and further opening to the outside world (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 1-17).²² The authors commented that China at the time was at a crossroads and its reforms were facing a bottleneck, in which economic disparity and corruption were rampant across the country. As a result, many people doubted if the market economy was still compatible with socialism, and whether the third generation of the CCP leadership led by Jiang was able to maintain the economic growth and Party dictatorship in the post-Deng era (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 3-4).

The solution given by the authors was “reforms, reforms, and reforms”, since this was the only way and “China has no choice” (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 12).²³ To elaborate the point, the authors presented the example of the Soviet Union under Brezhnev in the following section entitled “*Lishi jiaoxun: cengjing youguo yige bolierinieftu*” (历史教训：曾经有过一个勃列日涅夫 A Historical Lesson: Once Upon a Time There Was the Person of Brezhnev) (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 16).²⁴ According to the section, there were three critical moments in Soviet history. After the first wave of Khrushchev’s incomplete reforms, his successor Brezhnev balked at “the knot and complexity of the social and economic structural problems”.²⁵ He, therefore, chose to eschew reforms. He wanted to preserve the status quo and was reluctant to move forward. When the last wave of reforms came in the 1980s, the last Soviet leader Gorbachev had to employ “the radical method of liberalization” to reshuffle the moribund system. Unfortunately, such measures brought “the counter-effect of instability and

the ultimate collapse” (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 17-18).²⁶ The authors warned:

Absolute stability does not exist. The lesson of Brezhnev was that not to push reforms, not to persist in reforms, not to carry reforms through to the end means only that the Party, state, and socialism will not be able to have genuine security, and that the final result will be a thorough instability (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 19).²⁷

Unlike what Jeanne Wilson remarks that the book was to “commend Jiang’s vision of reform based on a 1995 speech” (Wilson, 2007: 275), upon a closer reading, the tone of the authors appears to be more like an admonition. They argued that the reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping should not be stalled or slowed down once Deng retired, otherwise China might face the fate of the USSR ahead. China specialist Willy Wo-Lap Lam reveals that in the late 1990s, Chinese intellectuals increasingly felt unsatisfied about the dearth of initiative and the roll-back of reform, and “there were signs that the more liberal among Jiang’s advisors were urging the president to take bolder steps in reform” (Lam, 1999: 83). According to the book authors, unlike other Chinese scholars, who tended to “wait and annotate” the speeches of the leaders in their research, this time these CASS academics would like to “use a new way of thinking to tackle leaders’ theories” in this project. As such, in this book they decided to “invite Secretary General Jiang Zemin and the third generation leadership for heart-to-heart talks,” and “contribute our limited knowledge to finding solutions to China’s present problems” (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 8-10).²⁸

Indeed, unlike the previous Chinese writings presented in this research, the book reflected a change – namely, that these Chinese scholars were attempting to take the lead rather than follow the tide in drawing the lessons of Soviet socialism and its implications on China’s future to influence the government.²⁹ Their eagerness for making the Party leadership hear their voice demonstrated the anxiety of those scholars. They seemed to worry that post-Deng China would become the USSR under Brezhnev, which was content with the status quo and losing momentum for bolder reforms in the face of economic uncertainty. It might eventually result in the equivalence of the Soviet failure in China. They argued that the third generation of Party leadership should not just accommodate Deng’s legacy to move on, as “a politician with broader vision and greater historical sense will choose the deepening of reforms” (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 16-17).³⁰

Moreover, the discussion in the book was not only about examining the negative lessons of the Soviet demise, but also about presenting an important message for China’s future direction in moving towards the path of state-led capitalism. The authors argued that amid the economic difficulties at

the time, China might confront two possibilities: going back to orthodox socialism (symbolized by Brezhnev's rule) or slipping into wholesale capitalism (represented by the Gorbachev administration), and that either way, China would probably end up getting nowhere (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 144-147). Instead, they recommended a third option, in which China should practise *laissez-faire* economy under a strong state control. They advised that China should not go too far in economic privatization and liberalization, drawing on the negative example of the USSR under Gorbachev.³¹ They argued that maintaining public ownership was still the key to the future success of reforms (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 147-154). Their advocacy of a state-led capitalism as the future direction of the Chinese party-state, in which the state is the principle actor in directing the market and economy, was not only a lesson drawn from the pre-1991 Soviet Union.³² It also resonated with the thesis of the Chinese new-left movement, which became an intellectual trend from the 1990s onwards. The themes of the new-left are common to this approach: reassertion and expansion of the role of the state, appeal for the self-renewal of the Party authority, the need for strong governmental intervention in a market economy, and a scepticism, if not outright hostility to, China's integration into the Western political system.³³

4. Re-assessment of Stalin

Apart from Brezhnev, another Soviet leader had become the subject of avid study in 1990s China. Joseph Stalin has long been a controversial figure in China. After the founding of the PRC, Mao Zedong glorified the Soviet Union led by Stalin, saying that it had guided China in the struggle for national liberation, and regarded the USSR as leader of all the oppressed countries in the world (Mao, 1965b: 62-63). In fact, Stalin personally disliked Mao and always gravely misunderstood the situation of Chinese socialist revolution. For example, according to Beijing University professor Niu Jun, Stalin had belittled CCP military strength and repeatedly requested that the CCP make a compromise with the Guomindang (Republican Party) led by Chiang Kai-shek during the Chinese Civil War period (1946-1949), which deeply irritated Mao (Niu, 1998: 62). Mao also profoundly sensed the distrust of the Soviet leader, and was not able to challenge Moscow's authority in the socialist camp until Stalin's death in 1953.³⁴ Although having harboured grievances against Stalin, Mao still refrained from criticizing him in the wake of the new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev mounting an attack on his predecessor at the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956. This was because he understood that consigning Stalin to purgatory was detrimental to the unity of the socialist world as well as his rule in China. Mao remarked, "It is the opinion of the Central

Committee that Stalin's mistakes amounted to only 30 per cent of the whole and his achievements to 70 per cent, and that all things considered Stalin was nonetheless a great Marxist" (Mao, 1965c: 304).

After the passing of Mao, against the trends of cleansing the remnants of the Gang of Four and opposing leftism symbolized by the Maoist legacy, Chinese Party organs in the early 1980s started to mount their criticisms on Stalin and his policies. In 1981, an article in *People's Daily* remarked that Stalin's cult of personality was oppositional to Marxism-Leninism, and equated the cult with the kind of fanaticism occurring during the Cultural Revolution (Ma, 1981: 3). A half year later, a commentator in *Beijing Review* contrasted Stalin's "grievous deviations" with Lenin's "tremendous contributions". He wrote that Stalin had violated "the principle of collective leadership and the system of democratic centralism", and practiced "great-nation chauvinism and again interfered in the internal affairs of certain countries" (Yin, 1982: 19). It should be noted that in the early 1980s, several articles appraising Stalin published in various Chinese academic journals not only criticized Stalin for creating an ossified political and economic system, but also showed contempt for Stalin's inappropriate moral conducts; these included being conceited and arrogant, as well as having a propensity for the use of violence (Zhou, 1980: 43-44; He, 1984: 5-9; Bi, 1985: 64-71). Zhou Biwen (周必文), a researcher at the Central Party School, stated that "it is time for China to stop treating Stalin as God" (Zhou, 1980: 44).³⁵

After the second half of the 1980s, the image of Stalin in the minds of Chinese scholars was gradually transformed from deity to human, and eventually from human to a devil-like villain. Many academic articles in the late 1980s began to attack almost every aspect of Stalin: from his attempt to seize the Chinese territory through the post-war Yalta Agreement (Hu, 1987: 3-4), a disastrous agricultural policy (Xu, 1988: 8-11), a rigid political system (Wang, 1989: 4-6), failed economic planning (Wang, 1987: 11-15), and his problematic writing on Philosophy (Jin, 1989: 43-46). Wu Wenjun (武文军), president of the Lanzhou Academy of Social Sciences, in his 1989 article even undertook research on Stalin's childhood, which is rare in Chinese writings. The author revealed the tense family relations in which Stalin had grown up, and explained his later cruelty by the abusive treatment he endured as a child (Wu, 1984: 113-115). Most importantly, while Chinese scholars in the early 1980s were bold to remark that Stalinism was the distortion of Leninism, in the late 1980s some writings were not shy to point out that Stalinism was equal to feudalism and a legacy from Tsars, which had nothing to do with what they saw as true socialism at all (Su, 1986: 12-13; Wang, 1988: 11-15; Li, 1999: 15-18).

These intensified criticisms of Stalin in the late 1980s were mainly owing to the following three factors. First, as IREECAS scholar He Li (何

力) revealed, while having many problems, the Soviet model established by Stalin was nonetheless accepted by Chinese academic circle in the early 1980s as the universal yardstick of socialism. At the time, Chinese scholars still recognized that the Soviet model was synonymous with Stalinism, but the model needed a fundamental fine-tuning to adjust to the modern society (He, 1984: 9). However, after the late 1980s, China started to deepen its economic reform and launched a war on the Soviet model that had harmed China in the past. As Deng Xiaoping announced in 1988:

Frankly, when we were copying the Soviet model of socialism we ran into many difficulties. We discovered that long ago, but we were never able to solve the problem. Now we are solving it; what we want to build is a socialism suited to conditions in China (Deng, 1995e: 256).

Second, Moscow's re-assessment of Stalin under Gorbachev held great appeal for Chinese scholars. It coincided with the relaxed political climate since the mid-1980s generated by the liberal-minded CCP leaders Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, and more importantly, the popularity of Gorbachev's *glasnost* in China.³⁶ Some scholars were truly impressed by Gorbachev's determination to face the past and demanded that China learn from him (An, 1987: 5-6; Wu, 1988: 134-136). CASS President Hu Sheng (胡绳) remarked in 1988 that China in the past had never engaged in genuine research of Stalin, therefore "we do not have good ideas on many questions". Right now, "when the Soviet Communist Party decided to reverse the verdicts on many previous unjustly charged cases under the impact of *glasnost*", he urged Chinese scholars to "follow suit and conduct research into such issue" (Hu, 1988: 6-7).³⁷

Last, although China had embraced reform and open door policies after Mao's death, the relaxation was more about economic liberalization than political democratization, and Chinese people were not allowed to criticize Stalin's counterpart in China – Mao Zedong. Chinese studies of Stalin still operated in the shadow of the many remaining statues to Mao. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping said that China "will not do to Chairman Mao what Khrushchev did to Stalin" (Deng, 1995a: 344). But things changed in the late 1980s when, motivated by Gorbachev's challenge to the orthodox hagiography of Stalin, the Chinese started to question Mao's own brutality – though this was by no means a large scale open attack. In 1989, Shantou University history professor Zheng Shaoxin (郑绍钦), who had studied at the University of Leningrad in the late 1950s, wrote that the cult of personality created by Mao "had wreaked havoc in China and exacted an enormous human toll on Chinese people. The depredations were many times than those in the 1930s USSR" (Zheng, 1989: 6).³⁸

Two weeks prior to Gorbachev's state visit to China and one month ahead of the Tiananmen Incident, *Beijing Review* conducted an interview for several IREECAS scholars. All of them blasted Stalin and expressed aversion to his monocracy, when the Chinese authorities had not officially reappraised the former Soviet leader. It is noteworthy that one of the scholars Wu Renzhang (吴仁彰), an expert on the Soviet economy, said in an interview that he recommended that Stalin's portrait be removed from Tiananmen Square, because "his status is different from that of Marx, Engels, and Lenin", and "is not on the same level as the other three are" (*Beijing Review*, 1989: 7-8).

Since 1976 China has consistently superimposed Mao Zedong's profile next to those of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin in official discourse, in the form of oft-reproduced group portraits – the so-called *Maen liesimao* (马恩列斯毛 Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao), for demonstrating their equality in ideological terms and significance, whitewashing Mao's past misdeeds, and legitimizing the post-Mao Chinese communist regime. Both Mao and Stalin were officially canonized as the successors of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, as the best disciples of the dead communist sages. Both of them were depicted as incarnations of Marxist-Leninist wisdom and omniscience. However, as evident from Wu's words, the Soviet-watcher omitted Mao's name in this context and it was certainly at variance with the regime's ideological discourse. He obviously hinted that both Stalin and Mao were the same, but that their conducts were not in tune with the norm of true communism created by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Both of their standings were not in the same league as those of the other three. Moreover, we should remember that it was Mao who had vigorously opposed Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech and praised Stalin's legacy. The 1980s negative Chinese assessment of Stalin ironically demonstrated Chinese scholars' unstated admission of Mao's mistaken judgment about Khrushchev in the 1950s, which led directly to the later Sino-Soviet schism and a series of disastrous Maoist policies that had left a deep scar on China.

In the wake of the Tiananmen Incident and particularly after March 1990, when Gorbachev ordered to abolish the CPSU power monopoly, criticisms of Stalin in Chinese writings became silent. After Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in early 1992, China began to reflect on its past inefficient socialist economic system, for the take-off of a new wave of reforms after the backlash of Tiananmen. In late 1992, the new CCP Secretary General Jiang Zemin delivered an opening speech at the 14th CCP Congress. He remarked:

This new revolution is not going to change the nature of our socialist system; instead, it is a self-improvement and a further development of socialism. However, it is also not a simple repair to our economic structure, but a fundamental reform of it. The past economic system was born under the special historical circumstances, and it had once played a key role in

our socialist construction. However, as time goes on, the system becomes increasingly unfit for the requirement of modernization (Jiang, 2006a: 212).³⁹

Jiang's words revealed that after Tiananmen and the perdition of European communism, China had no intention to change its political system to adjust to the post-communist world. However, the CCP was eager to tackle its economic institution in order to make the regime more viable after the worldwide crisis of socialism.

Encouraged by the official announcements, Li Zongyu (李宗禹), a researcher in the Institute of Studies of the International Communist Movement at the CCP Central Bureau for the Compilation and Translation, reactivated the attacks on Stalin in late 1992. In his article published in *Dangdai shijieyu shehui zhuyi* (当代世界与社会主义 Contemporary World and Socialism), the author made the point that all problems of the former Soviet Union had originated from the Stalinist model after Lenin. He contended that such a model had overly excluded the capitalist elements and obstructed the productive forces and economic development, when Soviet socialism was still in its infancy – thus contributing to the subsequent dissolution of the state. In his opinion, both Deng's theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics and the goal of the 14th Congress in establishing a socialist market economy, were “a breakaway from Stalin's formulaic understanding of Marxism and the highly centralized plan economic system founded by Stalin, respectively” (Li, 1992: 23).⁴⁰

In his book published by CASS in 1994, the well-known Soviet historian and independent scholar Shen Zhihua (沈志华), by quoting the classics of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, pointed out that socialist agriculture needs to be privatized and complemented by capitalist management methods, thereby criticizing Stalin's notion that only collectivization was socialist in nature and the state was the owner of the land (Shen, 1994: 21). Throughout the book, Shen stated unequivocally that building socialism needs to be guided by the line of state capitalism. He argued strongly that Stalin had overturned Lenin's liberal approach to Soviet agriculture initiated during the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1922-1928) period. Such a move paved the path to not only the subsequent disastrous rural famine in the 1930s, but also the final collapse of Soviet economic and political system in 1991 (Shen, 1994).

Afterwards, throughout the 1990s, numerous articles appeared in various academic journals and studied the Stalinist model for helpful lessons in building socialism in China. Most of them resembled the tone of Li Zongyu's article; they were criticizing Stalinism as a distortion of Leninism and socialism, the origin of leftism in the international communist movement, and a fundamental cause of the Soviet demise (Zhao, 1993: 3-9; Yu, 1994: 64-69; Zheng, 1995: 7-12; Zuo, 1996: 57-63). In the late 1990s, several

articles generated new arguments and went further to attack the Stalinist model. Unlike some erstwhile Chinese writings, which justified that the Stalinist economic institution was absolutely essential during the period of war, but not necessary in the time of peace (Wang, 1989: 58; Kong, 1990: 29-34; Zhang, 1990: 188), Wu Kequan (武克全), a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, dismissed the historical inevitability of the Stalinist model and concluded that such a highly militarized but inefficient system was by no means a measure of building socialism under any circumstances (Wu, 1998: 13-17).

Both Wen Yi (闻一) (a researcher in the Institute of World History at CASS) and Li Zongyu challenged China's long-time assumption that industrialization is equal to modernization. They argued that the Soviet economy under Stalin was actually not modernization but a strange form of industrialization, which was extremely wasteful and at the expense of people's livelihoods. In their opinion, the Soviet Union was a paradox of industrial plenty in the midst of consumer poverty. They criticized that China since Mao had followed such a wrong path in constructing socialism, and made it clear that the USSR had never realized modernization up to the day of its demise (Wen, 1999: 49-52; Li, 1999: 118-119).

Unlike Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin at the 20th CPSU Congress, which detailed and gave examples of how Stalin engaged in physically torturing his enemies, most of the time, Chinese scholars in both decades did not delve into Stalin's crimes against humanity. This was because such an action would open the door to denouncing his Chinese analogue of Mao, which was a forbidden zone in China at all times. On the other hand, both Khrushchev and Chinese scholars criticized Stalin as a person, and some flaws of his policies; however, they only made efforts to condemn the man but not the system, and did not display an undercurrent of heterodox thought. They rarely touched the fundamentality of the institution established by Stalin, and were concerned about not socialism itself but its problems.⁴¹ While the 1980s Chinese writings manifested their distaste for the tyranny of Stalin and the problems of the Stalinist political system up to a point, the 1990s articles mainly focused on the imperfection of Stalin's economic apparatus. In a nutshell, Chinese scholars were more direct and bolder in criticizing some negative elements of Stalinism prior to Tiananmen, although this was by no means an attempt to question the dynamic of socialism that had produced such a leader.

The post-1991 Chinese re-evaluation and criticisms of Stalin should be analysed in a broad spectrum after Deng's southern tour in 1992. In a book on Stalin's political life published in 1997, the authors Jiang Changbin (姜长斌)⁴² and Zuo Fengrong (左凤荣)⁴³ wrote in the Epilogue (*Jieshuyu* 结束语) that the project was inspired by Deng's 1992 talk. It was Deng's remarks on the

nature of socialism and the Soviet model that had made the authors “become enlightened”. They decided to use Deng’s theory as the “guiding principle” in conducting research into Stalin (Jiang and Zuo, 1997: 623).⁴⁴ According to them, the Soviet model, which had consigned the country to the ash heap of history, was, in fact, the Stalinist model – and this model should hold the responsibility for the downfall. They contrasted the lethargic and inflexible Stalinist model with the pragmatic Deng model, which focused on combining Marxism with China’s peculiar conditions (Jiang and Zuo, 1997: 624-625).

Many Chinese writings after Deng’s southern tour also pointed out that the rightist tendencies practised by Gorbachev in the late 1980s were, in fact, an outcome of Stalin’s leftism. Gorbachev’s restoration of capitalism was a bounce-back to the long history of stagnation and self-seclusion caused by Stalin. At the time, the last Soviet leader had no choice but applied extreme methods to save the falling USSR (Wang, 1993: 38; Ma, 1998: 29; Lu and Jiang, 1999: 142-143). Such a conclusion accorded with the ancient Chinese proverb *Wuji bifan* (物极必反), which means when things are forced to become worse they begin to go to another extreme for retaliation. While some 1980s Chinese writings targeting Stalin might in fact be indirectly blaming Mao’s political repression in China (Zheng, 1989: 6; *Beijing Review*, 1989: 7-8), the 1990s criticisms on the ossification of the Soviet model created by Stalin could also be considered as a foil to attack Mao’s past leftist economic (not political) policy. This policy was similar to that of Stalin, as both leaders favoured heavy industrialization and exploitative economy as their repertoires.⁴⁵

Post-1991 Chinese Soviet research put the Stalinist economic model and the discredited leftism in 1990s China on an equal footing. By arguing that Stalinism was the root of the Soviet demise and retracing its damage on China under Mao, scholars justified Deng’s 1992 statement that leftism has done more harm than good to China, and like rightism, it could also destroy socialism (Deng, 1995f: 363). Therefore, they used their writings to defend China’s post-Tiananmen policy of accelerating economic reform and open door policy, and to assist the CCP reformers’ efforts to thwart the comeback of the leftist offensive.

5. Conclusion

The revival of research on Brezhnev and the re-assessment of Stalin’s model in 1990s Chinese Soviet research are two sides of the same coin. They are the two components of the principle that argues the decline of Soviet socialism had originated from Stalin and had been exacerbated by Brezhnev’s stagnation. The final demise of the country was due to the post-Lenin leaderships’ deviation from Lenin’s principle of building socialism.

Chinese Soviet-watchers tended to highlight the intrinsic relations between the two leaders. While Xu Kui defined the Brezhnev administration as “Neo-Stalinism” (Xu, 1998: 33),⁴⁶ Gao Fang described that the USSR under Stalin was already “a patient with early symptoms of cancer”, and Brezhnev later aggravated the situation that led the country into “the terminal stage of cancer”.⁴⁷ As a result, when Gorbachev came to power, the Soviet Union had no hope of recovery at all and it became a totally spent force (Gao, 1998: 79).

Both research trends not only served to checkmate the resurgent leftist thinking after Tiananmen, but their rationales could also be explained in the following ways. First, the research outcomes justified Deng’s consistent understanding that the problem was not socialism but the outdated Soviet model (Deng, 1995c: 143; 1995d: 180). The underlying concept of Chinese writings is that there was nothing wrong with socialism itself and the problems lay with the people who operated the system. The Soviet leaders achieved the opposite of what they intended. They had involuntarily destroyed this good system.

Second, after the demise of the USSR, Deng re-emphasized during his southern tour that China is still in the primary stage of socialism and it should make use of any means necessary to build socialism. Therefore, he announced “the more elements of capitalism will be introduced and the more capitalism will expand in China” (Deng, 1995f: 361). The writings of Chinese Soviet-watchers were also pertinent to Deng’s call. Through analysis of the rules of Brezhnev and Stalin, a common judgment appeared that argued that self-complacency, sheer immobilism, and rigid economic planning are fatal to socialism. By observing the lessons of Moscow, China should not be constrained by the orthodox mode of development. It should be more open to innovative experiments. It should learn something new from a market economy and replace the problematic Soviet model – developing the so-called “Chinese-style socialism” underscored by Deng (Deng, 1995f: 360).⁴⁸

Third, according to James Etheridge, before 1989, the Chinese leadership attempted to push the price reform, in order to accelerate the process of dismantling the plan economy and establish the market mechanism. Unfortunately, the experiment failed and resulted in skyrocketing inflation, rampant corruption, and an extraordinary sense of uncertainty concerning what the reforms would lead to, which created widespread frustration and fear among the people. Moreover, the economic crisis led to a deep division within the Party leadership. The reform-minded leaders led by Zhao Ziyang were facing fierce challenges from the Party old guards, who believed that the price reform had damaged the CCP’s control of China’s political power and undermined the legitimacy of the Party. These setbacks resulting from the price reform brought all the accumulated societal problems to the surface and piled up the people’s resentments. Most seriously, it greatly increased

the faith crisis among everyday Chinese by directing it towards the CCP's qualification and capacity to rule the country. After witnessing the rapid rise of pro-democracy tides in Eastern Europe and Gorbachev's promotion of *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, many Chinese, particularly intellectuals and university students, became increasingly convinced that it was time to shift the emphasis of China's reform project to the political sphere, exploring the prospect of transforming the party-state structure and creating new political institutions with checks and balances. They believed that doing so could ensure the better management of the state economy and a cheerful prospect of Chinese people's livelihood.⁴⁹

In sum, the economic situation in the late 1980s was also a factor in touching off the Tiananmen crisis. As such, by holding out the negative example of the Soviet economies under Stalin and Brezhnev and using the discussion to their advantage, Chinese scholars created a rallying point for urging and supporting the CCP's post-Tiananmen efforts, in order to normalize the distressed economy and revive its reform process in the shortest possible time. As we have seen in their discussion above, it was not just an economic issue for the Chinese leadership, but it was also a major political issue concerning the legitimacy of the Party – especially given its unwillingness to implement political reform and its decision to brutally crack down on the pro-democratic Tiananmen demonstrations. Thus, the CCP would desperately seek to regain its weakened legitimacy in China by fixing the past economic disorder and catalysing a new round of economic take-offs, after the wholesale collapse of world communism.

Fourth, the 3-year period between the Tiananmen Incident and the disintegration of the Soviet Union was an earth-shaking period that nearly convulsed the CCP regime. The Chinese reformist leadership led by Deng Xiaoping understood very well that only by successfully carrying out the reforms would the Chinese communist state be able to regain the legitimacy that it had lost. They were eager to explore a new way of dispelling tough resistance by the hardliners and make a breakthrough. They needed to regenerate the Party that was still in a coma after experiencing a heavy blow by the Tiananmen crisis and the ensuing collapse of communism in Europe.

As seen in this article, it is apparent that Chinese Soviet-watchers were trying to use the re-assessments of Brezhnev and Stalin to create new momentum. They intended for this momentum to revive China's reform and open door policies, and to further the cause of socialist modernization that had been championed since 1978. The discussion of the two Soviet leaders was a means to rally support for the forces of pro-reform. Afterwards, China was bolder in embracing economic liberalization while still refusing to transform its quasi-Leninist political system. Especially after Deng's southern tour in 1992, the CCP formally adopted the concept of "socialist market economy"

(Deng, 1995f: 361). China then registered unprecedented economic growth and experienced profound social transformation throughout the rest of the 1990s, a phenomenon that continued in the 21st century. As Chen Jian comments, “The Tiananmen tragedy remains a knot that must be untied and a barrier that must be removed in China’s continuous advance towards modernity” (Chen, 2009: 126). The use of Brezhnev and Stalin after Tiananmen was seen to be the best way for China to untie the “knot” and remove the “barrier”.

Last, in the 1980s many Chinese Soviet-watchers had thought highly of Gorbachev’s inspiration in undertaking political reform for facilitating economic modernization. However, in the 1990s most of them dismissed such an idea as one of Gorbachev’s weaknesses and a precipitating cause of the Soviet breakup (Li, 2016). The changing tone of Chinese writings tied in with the shake-up of the CCP in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident, when Deng made a comeback and reasserted his supreme position in China. While both Zhao Ziyang and Gorbachev championed the notion that economic reform is a product of political restructuring, Deng consistently remained wary of such a concept and emphasized political stability but not political pluralism. He found it good enough to have economic prosperity under the one-party rule, and felt there was little need to tackle the communist institution (Deng, 1995b: 129-130). This was particularly evident after Tiananmen, when the CCP became simply a delivery vehicle for material progress or a self-preservation machine, claiming the modern mandate of heaven with no greater purpose than to hold on to power.

While stressing reform and open door directions, Deng in his 1992 talk did not forget to defend “the dictatorship of the proletariat” and “the Four Cardinal Principles” (Deng, 1995f: 367). Chinese examination of Brezhnev and Stalin after 1990 was a response to the return of such Deng’s orthodox line, which focused on the sheer survival of the communist regime by economic means. It also disregarded any political demands, while making it clear that the policy of prioritizing political liberalization did not comport with socialism, and was not a future direction of the PRC in the post-communist world. In the 1990s, Chinese Soviet-watchers concentrated on the economic aspects of Brezhnev and Stalin while ignoring their political policies, and such a tendency was in tune with Deng’s 1992 guidelines. That the research focused on economic problems suggested that scholars seemed to have believed that the breaking apart of the Soviet Union was mainly due to economic illness but not the deficiency of political institutions. Having observed the economic troubles in the times of Stalin and Brezhnev, the writings appear to suggest that state legitimacy comes from economic results and consumer satisfaction, and socialism would be going down the wrong road if it could not deliver economic benefits to the people. The findings gave credibility to Deng’s faith that only a strong one-party rule could

ensure the effective implementation of rapid economic development. They justified the post-1991 China's state agenda of taking precedence in economic modernization while downplaying the importance of political restructuring. Their conclusions conveyed a message that it is economic affluence, not political reform, that matters the most for the survival of Chinese socialism after the fall of the USSR.

To conclude, the 1990s Chinese debates about Brezhnev and Stalin revolved around the backgrounds of the aftermath of Tiananmen and the collapse of world communism. The discussion confirmed that Deng Xiaoping's 1992 agendas involved renouncing the past Soviet model of economic development, opposing leftism, and saving Chinese socialism by speeding up the pace of reform and open door policy.

While ostensibly examining policies of the two Soviet leaders, in reality, Chinese Soviet-watchers were making pointed references to Chinese reality against the Soviet precedent. They not only learned the negative experience of the Soviet past, but also attempted to sum up lessons for China's future direction and the prospect of its communist regime. By depicting Brezhnev's stagnation and Stalin's rigid centralization as the primary causes of the collapse, their writings suggested that state legitimacy comes more from economic results and consumer satisfaction than democratic politics, and socialism would not be attractive to the people if it could not deliver economic benefits to them. As can be seen from the re-assessments of Brezhnev and Stalin in the 1990s, the major conclusion of Chinese Soviet-watchers also reiterated a thesis. Namely, the survival of Chinese socialism lies on good economic performance and political stability, but not dynamic transformation of the communist ruling institutions.

In the final words, in the eyes of post-1991 Chinese Soviet-watchers the example of the Soviet Union was not only a past lesson that should be learned from and a grave mistake that should be avoided, as claimed by most of the previous scholarship. As we have seen in the Introduction, since the 1989 Tiananmen incident and the 1991 Soviet collapse, the discussions of Gorbachev's political reform and Lenin's foreign agendas (as explored by my previous two articles) and the revival of research on Brezhnev and Stalin in the 1990s (as examined by this article) all demonstrate that Chinese Soviet-watchers viewed the former Soviet Union as both a warning from the past, as well as an image of a possible Chinese state in the future. After the collapse, Chinese Soviet-watchers argued that continued reform was the best way to revamp socialism. In their understanding, only a strong, stable, open, and wealthy state could ensure the survival of the socialist system in the long term. By examining the Soviet past, Chinese Soviet-watchers not only demonstrated concern for the survival of the CCP regime, but also attempted to envision the future direction and position of China in the post-communist world.

After the Soviet demise in 1991, Chinese Soviet-watchers switched to studying negative lessons of the collapse (such as the rigid economic policies of Brezhnev and Stalin presented in this research), with the aim of preserving Chinese communist rule, maintaining social stability, and seeking China's future position in the post-communist world. Seen from this article (and my previous two articles), the post-1991 Chinese research on the Soviet Union, therefore, could be considered as more of a rationalization of Chinese scholars' opinions about the legitimacy of Chinese socialism, China's domestic politics, and state agendas, than an academic attempt to reconstruct and discover the Soviet past. Scholars demonstrated the purported causal relations between the Soviet past and the political views they upheld for China's future. They mainly used their interpretation of the events in the USSR to speak for the political agendas that were believed to represent the correct directions of Chinese socialism and modernization, and to justify ongoing reform programs. Thus the post-1991 Chinese Soviet research served to render Party policies and principles understandable and plausible.

Seen from the article, Chinese Soviet research has thus failed to reveal much of the Soviet reality, but instead has resonated with Party ideologies and served to legitimate the political claims of those in power in China. The goal of the Soviet-watchers has been to address state policies and satisfy the ever-changing needs of contending political forces in China – rather than to seek accurate knowledge of the Soviet Union. They used their construction of analytical narratives and interpretations of the events in the USSR to justify PRC state policies, alter people's perceptions on socialism after 1991, and rationalize the communist one-party dictatorship in China.

The post-1991 Chinese Soviet research became a malleable tool that could be reinvented to serve different political purposes regardless of academic authenticity. By doing so, Chinese Soviet-watchers sought to make Chinese-style socialism meaningful and valued. Writings on the Soviet Union have largely reflected China's prevailing political climate as well as the current strategy of reform and open door policy. Although changes in the Soviet Union and in Sino-Soviet (and later Sino-Russian) relations have mattered, China's domestic concerns have been primary. We can say that Soviet research in China is an epiphenomenon of PRC politics.

When the former Soviet Union had turned into a relic of the past, the defunct country became less and less a subject of serious academic study in China, but remained a symbol for Chinese Soviet-watchers: reminding the domestic audience of the significance of deepening economic reform and open door policies as the key to keeping socialism vital, while upholding the fundamental importance of one-party dictatorship. For Chinese Soviet-watchers, this was the first and foremost lesson drawn from the failed experiments of the USSR, as presented in this study.

Notes

- * Jie Li completed his PhD in History at the University of Edinburgh in 2017. While his primary interest is modern and contemporary Chinese history, Jie Li's research covers many fields, which include China's international relations since 1949, the histories of the former Soviet Union and communism, and the Cold War. His recent publications are: *Gorbachev's Glasnost and the Debate on Chinese Socialism among Chinese Sovietologists, 1985-1999* (Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies December 2016), *Lenin in the Early 1980s China* (Newcastle University Postgraduate Forum E-Journal 2016), *Xinjiang's Islamic Resurgence: A View from 1990s Chinese Sovietology* (Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies 2016), *The Use of Lenin in Chinese Sovietology in the 1990s* (Routledge India forthcoming in 2018). In addition, he has published a number of commentaries on contemporary Chinese affairs as well as book reviews on a variety of historical scholarship. Some of these works appeared in the *Twenty-first Century Bimonthly* administered by the Institute of Chinese Studies at Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is teaching Chinese language and culture in Hong Kong. He can be contacted at <jielican2009@hotmail.com>.
1. The term "blame game" is coined by Shambaugh, see Shambaugh, 2008: 48.
 2. For a list of the 1980s PRC journals on the Soviet Union, see Rozman, 1985: 440-441.
 3. Similarly, Robert Desjardins in his book on post-war French Sovietology also includes not only the scholarship of French Soviet specialists but also the writings of French historians, economists and political scientists, whose works are orientated only incidentally towards the USSR. See Desjardins, 1988: 10.
 4. For a list of PRC institutes that have facilities for research of the Soviet Union, see Rozman, 1985: 444-445.
 5. The quotations are translated by the author.
 6. The quotations are translated by the author.
 7. The quotations are translated by the author.
 8. The quotations are translated by the author.
 9. The quotations are translated by the author.
 10. The quotations are translated by the author.
 11. The quotations are translated by the author.
 12. The quotations are translated by the author.
 13. The quotations are translated by the author.
 14. The quotations are translated by the author.
 15. The quotations are translated by the author.
 16. Shambaugh also has a survey on the pre-1992 Chinese short-lived thesis of peaceful evolution, see Shambaugh, 2008: 55.
 17. Deng once indicated that the Soviet collapse could not be attributed to the peaceful evolution statement. He said, "Some theoreticians and politicians have used this thesis in an attempt to jettison the economic reform policy. Their thinking is not safeguarding but negating socialism." (Quotations are translated by the author) See Zong, 2007: 42.

18. The quotations are translated by the author.
19. On the evolving perceptions of Chinese scholars on Gorbachev from the 1980s to 1990s, see Li, 2016: 35-65.
20. The title is translated by the author.
21. The title is translated by the author.
22. On Jiang Zemin's original speech, see Jiang, 2006b: 460-475.
23. The quotations are translated by the author.
24. The title is translated by the author.
25. The quotations are translated by the author.
26. The quotations are translated by the author.
27. The quotations are translated by the author.
28. The quotations are translated by the author.
29. In the postscript, the authors revealed that there was a possibility they might present the research outcomes of the book in the form of a report to the CCP, for providing reference for future policy-making. See Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1996: 289.
30. The quotations are translated by the author.
31. Guan Guihai once revealed, that many 1990s Chinese Soviet-watchers had argued that one of the main causes of the fall of the USSR was the rush introduction of private ownership under Gorbachev. See Guan, 2010: 512.
32. On the rise of the thesis of China's state-led capitalism after the Tiananmen Incident and the fall of world communism, see Naughton 2011: 154-178.
33. On the rise and discourse of Chinese new-leftism, see Dongen, 2009.
34. For Sino-Soviet relations under Mao, see Luthi, 2008.
35. The quotations are translated by the author.
36. In his article, Su Shaozhi (苏绍智), director of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism at CASS, compared Zhao Ziyang's endeavours to redress the wrongdoings of the Cultural Revolution with Gorbachev's efforts to sweep away the 1930s negative residue. See Su, 1988: 207.
37. The quotations are translated by the author.
38. The quotations are translated by the author.
39. The quotations are translated by the author.
40. The quotations are translated by the author.
41. On the 1956 secret speech in criticizing Stalin, see Khrushchev, 1963: 204-265.
42. Jiang Changbin was a professor of international politics at the Central Party School.
43. Zuo Fengrong was a PhD candidate in international politics at the Central Party School under Jiang Changbin's supervision.
44. The quotations are translated by the author.
45. On the comparison between Mao and Stalin in administering their own economies in China and the Soviet Union, respectively, see Li, 2006.
46. The quotations are translated by the author.
47. The quotations are translated by the author.
48. Zheng Yifan (郑异凡) (a researcher at the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau) once remarked that "the achievement of China's economic reform since

1978 is the best testimony to the incorrectness of Stalin's notion of 'socialism in one country'." (Translated by the author) See Zheng, 1995: 11.

49. For details, see Etheridge, 1990.

References

Primary Sources

- An, Suhua 安素华 (1987), "'Gongkaixing' yuanzeyu sidalin wenti" ("公开性"原则与斯大林问题) [The Principle of "Glasnost" and the Question of Stalin], *Dangdai shijieyu shehui zhuyi* (当代世界与社会主义) [Contemporary World and Socialism], Vol. 6, pp. 3-6.
- Beijing Review* (1989, May 15-21), "Stalin's image fades in China", pp. 7-8.
- Bi, Ke 毕克 (1985), "Luetan sidalin shiqide sulian tizhi" (略谈斯大林时期的苏联体制) [On the Soviet Institutions under Stalin], *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* (社会主义研究) [Socialism Studies], Vol. 1, pp. 64-71.
- Chen, Lianbi 陈联璧 (1985), "Bolieriniefu shiqi yilaide sulian minzhu wenti" (勃列日涅夫时期以来的苏联民主问题) [The Questions on Soviet Democracy since Brezhnev], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 3, pp. 51-58.
- Chen, Lianbi 陈联璧 (1986), "Bolieriniefu shiqide ganbu zhidu" (勃列日涅夫时期的干部制度) [The Cadre System under Brezhnev], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 1, pp. 18-25.
- Chen, Lin 陈林 (1993), "Sudong yanbian yuanyin zhi bianxi" (苏东演变原因之辨析) [Analysis of the Reasons for the Changes in the Soviet Union and East Europe], *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* (社会主义研究) [Socialism Studies], Vol. 3, pp. 53-57.
- Chen, Zhihua 陈之骅 (1997), "Dangqian sulianshi yanjiu zhongde jige fangfalun wenti" (当前苏联史研究中的几个方法论问题) [Several Methodological Questions on Present Research of Soviet History], *Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiu* (俄罗斯东欧中亚研究) [Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies], Vol. 4, pp. 10-13.
- Chen, Zhihua 陈之骅 (1998), *Bolieriniefu shiqide sulian* (勃列日涅夫时期的苏联) [The Soviet Union under Brezhnev], Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe [China Social Sciences Press].
- Deng, Xiaoping (1995a), "Answers to the Italian Journalist Oriana Fallaci, August 21 and 23, 1980", in The Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed. and trans.), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 2, pp. 342-349.
- Deng, Xiaoping (1995b), "Bourgeois Liberalization Means Taking the Capitalist Road, May and June 1985", in The Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed. and trans.), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 3, pp. 129-130.
- Deng, Xiaoping (1995c), "Reform is the Only Way for China to Develop Its Productive Forces, August 28, 1985", in The Bureau for the Compilation and

- Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed. and trans.), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 3, pp. 140-143.
- Deng, Xiaoping (1995d), "On Reform of the Political Structure, September-November 1986", in The Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed. and trans.), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 3, pp. 178-181.
- Deng, Xiaoping (1995e), "We Must Emancipate Our Minds and Think Independently, May 18, 1988", in The Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed. and trans.), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 3, pp. 255-256.
- Deng, Xiaoping (1995f), "Excerpts from Talks Given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai, January 18-February 21, 1992", in The Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ed. and trans.), *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 3, pp. 358-370.
- Dong, Xiaoyang 董晓阳 (1982), "Sulian zhengfu jigoude gaige" (苏联政府机构的改革) [Reform of the Soviet Government], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 4, pp. 41-45.
- E, Huancheng 鄂焕成 (1992), "Sulian dongou jubian yuanyinde duibi fenxi" (苏联东欧剧变原因的对比分析) [Comparative Analysis of the Reasons for the Radical Changes in the Soviet Union and East Europe], *Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti* (当代世界社会主义问题) [Problems of Contemporary World Socialism], Vol. 1, pp. 27-33.
- Gao, Fang 高放 (1992), "Sulian dongou jubian de genben yuanyin hezai?" (苏联东欧剧变的根本原因何在?) [What Were the Reasons of the Soviet and East European Turbulence?], *Dangdai shijieyu shehui zhuyi* (当代世界与社会主义) [Contemporary World and Socialism], Vol. 3, pp. 9-10.
- Gao, Fang 高放 (1998), "Sulian jubian hongguan yanjiu lungang" (苏联剧变宏观研究论纲) [The Macro Framework of Research of the Soviet Turbulence], in Gong Dafei 宫达非 (ed.), *Sulian jubian yanjiu xintan* (苏联剧变新探) [New Inquiries on the Soviet Turbulence], Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe [World Affairs Press], pp. 68-89.
- He, Li 何力 (1984), "Sidalin shiqi sulian zhengzhi jingji tizhi" (斯大林时期苏联政治经济体制) [Soviet Political and Economic Systems under Stalin], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 6, pp. 5-9.
- Hu, Sheng 胡绳 (1988), "Shehui kexue mianlinde xingshihe renwu" (社会科学面临的形势和任务) [The Situation and Tasks Facing the Social Sciences], *Zhongguo shehui kexue* (中国社会科学) [Social Sciences in China], Vol. 4, pp. 3-14.
- Hu, Zhiying 胡之滢 (1987), "Duiyu zhanhou sulian dui dongya zhanluede lishi fenxi" (对于战后苏联对东亚战略的历史分析) [Analysis of Post-War Soviet Strategy towards East Asia], *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (国际政治研究) [The Journal of International Studies], Vol. 1, pp. 1-11.

- Huang, Zongliang 黄宗良 (1993), "Jianlun sulian jubiande yuanyinhe jiaoxun zhongde liuda guanxi" (简论苏联剧变的原因和教训中的六大关系) [On the Six Major Relationships and the Causes and Lessons of the Sudden Collapse of the Soviet Union], *Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiu* (俄罗斯东欧中亚研究) [Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies], Vol. 1, pp. 39-46.
- Jiang, Changbin 姜长斌 and Zuo, Fengrong 左凤荣 (1997), *Sidalin zhengzhi pingzhuàn* (斯大林政治评传) [The Political Biography of Stalin], Beijing: Zhonggong dangxiao chubanshe [Central Party School Publishing House].
- Jiang, Zemin 江泽民 (2006a), "Jiekuai gaige kaifanghe xiandaihua jianshe bufa, duqyou zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi shiyede gengda shengli" (加快改革开放和现代化建设步伐, 夺取有中国特色社会主义事业的更大胜利) [To Accelerate the Pace of Reform, Open Door, and Modernization, and Achieve a Bigger Victory in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics], in Jiang Zemin 江泽民, *Jiangzemin wenxuan* 江泽民文选 [Selected Works of Jiang Zemin], Beijing: Remin chubanshe [People's Publishing House], Vol. 1, pp. 210-254.
- Jiang, Zemin 江泽民 (2006b), "Zhengque chuli shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe zhongde ruogan zhongda guanxi" (正确处理社会主义现代化建设中的若干重大关系) [To Correctly Handle the Certain Important Relations in Building Socialist Modernization], in Jiang Zemin 江泽民, *Jiangzemin wenxuan* 江泽民文选 [Selected Works of Jiang Zemin], Beijing: Remin chubanshe [People's Publishing House], Vol. 1, pp. 460-475.
- Jin, Hui 金挥 (1989), "Jianghuade moshi" (僵化的模式) [A Rigid Model], *Shijie lishi* (世界历史) [World History], Vol. 4, pp. 43-46.
- Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeyeovich (1963), "De-Stalinization", in Thomas Whitney (ed. and trans.), *Khrushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949-1961*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 204-265.
- Kong, Lingdong 孔令栋 (1990), "Duisulian moshide yixie renshi" (对苏联模式的一些认识) [Some Thoughts on the Soviet Model], *Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti* (当代世界社会主义问题) [Problems of Contemporary World Socialism], Vol. 3, pp. 29-33.
- Li, Zongyu 李宗禹 (1992), "Yanjiuhe qingli guoji gongyun shishang 'zuo'de lilun guandiande ruili wuqi" (研究和清理国际共运史上“左”的理论观点的锐利武器) [A Sharp Weapon in Clearing the "Leftist" Theories in the International Communist Movement], *Dangdai shijieyue shehui zhuyi* (当代世界与社会主义) [Contemporary World and Socialism], Vol. 4, pp. 22-27.
- Li, Zongyu 李宗禹 (1999), *Sidalin moshi yanjiu* (斯大林模式研究) [Study of the Stalinist Model], Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe [Central Compilation and Translation Press].
- Liu, Guanghui 刘光慧 (1992), "Bolieriniefu zhizheng niandai shuping" (勃列日涅夫执政年代述评) [On the Brezhnev Administration], *Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiu* (俄罗斯东欧中亚研究) [Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies], Vol. 4, pp. 8-12.
- Liu, Yiwen 刘艺文 (1986), "Sugong guanyu fada shehui zhuyide tifa" (苏共关于发达社会主义的提法) [The CPSU Slogan of Developed Socialism], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 3, pp. 38-44.

- Lu, Nanquan 陆南泉 (1997), "Sulian jubian yuanyin yanjiuzhi jinzhan qingkuang" (苏联剧变原因研究之进展情况) [Further Research of the Reasons of the Soviet Disintegration], *Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiu* (俄罗斯东欧中亚研究) [Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies], Vol. 3, pp. 11-16.
- Lu, Nanquan 陆南泉 and Jiang, Changbin 姜长斌 (1999), *Sulian jubian shencengci yuanyin yanjiu* (苏联剧变深层次原因研究) [Research on the Causes of the Soviet Turbulence], Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe [China Social Sciences Press].
- Ma, Longshan 马龙闪 (1998), "Congsidalin daogeebaqiaofu" (从斯大货到戈尔巴乔夫) [From Stalin to Gorbachev], *Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiu* (俄罗斯东欧中亚研究) [Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies], Vol. 2, pp. 28-36.
- Ma, Wen 马文 (1981, August 14), "Yaorenzhen dujue geren chongbai" (要认真杜绝个人崇拜) [We Shall Seriously Eliminate the Personality Cult], *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报) [*People's Daily*], p. 3.
- Ma, Zhenggang 马郑刚 (1995), "Shehui zhuyi guojia zhongde quanli fubai xianxiang tanyuan" (社会主义国家中的权力腐败现象探源) [Origin of Bureaucratic Corruption in the Socialist Countries], *Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti* (当代世界社会主义问题) [Problems of Contemporary World Socialism], Vol. 2, pp. 59-63.
- Mao, Tse-tung 毛泽东 (1965a), "On Contradiction", in Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 1, pp. 311-350.
- Mao, Tse-tung 毛泽东 (1965b), "Great Victories in Three Mass Movements", in Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 5, pp. 59-63.
- Mao, Tse-tung 毛泽东 (1965c), "On the Ten Major Relationships", in Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, Vol. 5, pp. 284-307.
- Renmin Ribao* (人民日报) [*People's Daily*] (1992, June 4), "Lunjiefang sixiang" (论解放思想) [On the Liberation of Thoughts], p. 2.
- Renmin Ribao* (人民日报) [*People's Daily*] (1993, June 4), "Lunshehui zhuyide fazhan jieduan" (论社会主义的发展阶段) [On the Development Stages of Socialism], p. 2.
- Shen, Zhihua 沈志华 (1994), *Xinjingji zhengceyu sulian nongye shehuihua daolu* (新经济政策与苏联农业社会化道路) [New Economic Policy and Agricultural Socialization in the USSR], Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe [China Social Sciences Press].
- Su, Shaozhi 苏绍智 (1986), "Zhengzhi tizhi gaige chuyi" (政治体制改革刍议) [On Political Reform], *Dushu* (读书) [Reading], Vol. 9, pp. 12-13.
- Su, Shaozhi 苏绍智 (1988), "Lun 'xinliweitan'" (论“新利维坦”) [On "New Leviathan"], *Dushu* (读书) [Reading], Vol. 5, pp. 205-207.
- Wang, Jianhong 王坚红 (1989), "Guanyu sidalin wenti" (关于斯大林问题) [On the Questions of Stalin], *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* (社会主义研究) [Socialism Studies], Vol. 3, pp. 57-58.
- Wang, Jianyu 王建宇 (1993), "Congsulian shehui zhuyi xinshuaide jingyan jiaoxunzhong kanyou zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi lilun" (从苏联社会主义兴衰的经验教训看中国特色的社会主义理论) [Viewing the Theory of Socialism

- with Chinese Characteristics through the Lessons of the Rise and Fall of Soviet Socialism], *Jinri qiansulian dongou* (今日前苏联东欧) [The Present Days of the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 4, pp. 36-40.
- Wang, Qi 王器 (1986), "Sulian lingdaoren guanyu sulian shehui fazhan jieduan tifa de bianqian" (苏联领导人关于苏联社会发展阶段提法的变迁) [The Evolution of Soviet Leaders' Definitions of Soviet Socialist Development Stages], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 1, pp. 94-97.
- Wang, Yizhou 王逸舟 (1989), "Shehui zhuyi lilun yanjiu" (社会主义理论研究) [Research on Socialist Theories], *Tianjin shehui kexue* (天津社会科学) [Social Sciences in Tianjin], Vol. 2, pp. 3-8.
- Wang, Zhengquan 王正泉 (1988), "Sidalin shiqi dangnei geren chongbaide xingchenghe fazhan" (斯大林时期党内个人崇拜的形成和发展) [The Formation and Development of Intra-Party Personality Cult under Stalin], *Guoji guancha* (国际观察) [International Review], Vol. 2, pp. 11-15.
- Wang, Zhuo 王琢 (1987), "Lunshehui zhuyi zhidude youyuxing wenti" (论社会主义制度的优越性问题) [Questions on the Advantages of Socialism], *Xueshu yanjiu* (学术研究) [Academic Research], Vol. 6, pp. 11-17.
- Wen, Yi 闻一 (1999), "Sulian youguo xiandaihuama?" (苏联有过现代化吗?) [Had the USSR Ever Achieved Modernization?], *Shehui kexue luntan* (社会科学论坛) [Tribune of Social Sciences], Vol. 5, pp. 48-52.
- Wu, Jing 吴敬 (1988), "Cong sulian chongping lishi kanshixue zaigaige shiqide shehui gongneng" (从苏联重评历史看史学在改革时期的社会功能) [On the Social Function of Historiography in the Reform Era: The Soviet Re-assessment of Historical Events], *Shijie lishi* (世界历史) [World History], Vol. 5, pp. 133-136.
- Wu, Kequan 武克全 (1998), "Shehui zhuyiyu sidalin moshi" (社会主义与斯大林模式) [Socialism and the Stalinist Model], *Fudan xuebao* (复旦学报) [Fudan Journal], Vol. 2, pp. 13-20.
- Wu, Renzhang 吴仁彰 (1983), "Guanyu suliande fada shehui zhuyi lilun" (关于苏联的发达社会主义理论) [On the Soviet Theory of Developed Socialism], *Sulian dongou wenti* (苏联东欧问题) [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], Vol. 2, pp. 44-50.
- Wu, Wenjun 武文军 (1984), "Sidalinyu jiaotiao zhuyi" (斯大林与教条主义) [Stalin and Dogmatism], *Makesi zhuyi yanjiu* (马克思主义研究) [Studies on Marxism], Vol. 6, pp. 97-115.
- Wu, Xingtang 吴兴唐 (1992), "Yanjiu guoji gongyunde zhinan" (研究国际共运的指南) [The Guiding Principle for Studying the International Communist Movement], *Dangdai shijieyu shehui zhuyi* (当代世界与社会主义) [Contemporary World and Socialism], Vol. 3, pp. 3-4.
- Xu, Kui 徐葵 (1998), "Bolieriniefu niandai: sulian zouxiang shuaiwangde guanjianxing zhuanzhe shiqi" (勃列日涅夫年代: 苏联走向衰亡的关键性转折时期) [The Era of Brezhnev: A Major Turning Point of the Soviet Union], *Eluosi dongou zhongya yanjiu* (俄罗斯东欧中亚研究) [Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies], Vol. 1, pp. 27-41.
- Xu, Tianxin 徐天新 (1988), "Dunongmin wentide cuowu renshi" (对农民问题的错误认识) [The Erroneous Understanding on Peasant Questions], *Shijie lishi* (世界历史) [World History], Vol. 4, pp. 8-11.

- Yin, Chengshan (1982, January 25), "The 'Relationship between Leaders and the Party'", *Beijing Review*, p. 19.
- Yu, Hanxi 余汉熙 (1994), "Zongjie sullivan yanbianhe jieti jiaoxunde jidian sikao" (总结苏联演变和解体教训的几点思考) [Several Thoughts on the Evolution of the USSR and the Lessons of the Collapse], *Eluosi yanjiu* (俄罗斯研究) [Russian Studies], Vol. 4, pp. 64-69.
- Zhang, Xiaoxiao 张晓校 (1990), "Shijie xiandai shi yanjiu" (世界现代史研究) [Current Research on Modern World History], *Lishi yanjiu* (历史研究) [Historical Research], Vol. 6, pp. 186-189.
- Zhao, Mingyi 赵明义 (1993), "Dangdai shehui zhuyide zhongda keti" (当代社会主义的重大课题) [The Big Issues of Contemporary Socialism], *Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti* (当代世界社会主义问题) [Problems of Contemporary World Socialism], Vol. 3, pp. 1-9.
- Zheng, Shaoqin 郑绍钦 (1989), "'Mimi baogao' deneirong yushiji yiyi" ("秘密报告"的内容与实际意义) [Content and Significance of the "Secret Speech"], *Shijie lishi* (世界历史) [World History], Vol. 1, pp. 2-6.
- Zheng, Yifan 郑异凡 (1995), "Yiguo jiancheng shehui zhuyi lilun xinpings" (一国建成社会主义理论新评) [A New Comment on the Theory of Socialism in One Country], *Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi* (当代世界与社会主义) [Contemporary World and Socialism], Vol. 1, pp. 7-12.
- Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan 中国社会科学院 [Chinese Academy of Social Sciences] (ed.) (1996), *Yuzongshuji tanxin* (与总书记谈心) [Chatting with the Secretary General], Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe [Social Sciences Academic Press].
- Zhou, Biwen 周必文 (1980), "Shilun sidalin" (试论斯大林) [On Stalin], *Shehui kexue zhanxian* (社会科学战线) [Social Sciences Front], Vol. 2, pp. 42-44.
- Zong, Fengming 宗凤鸣 (2007), *Zhaoziyang ruanjin zhongde tanhua* (赵紫阳软禁中的谈话) [Zhao Ziyang: Captive Conversations], Hong Kong: Open Books.
- Zuo, Fengrong 左凤荣 (1996), "Yeping sidalin 'yiguo jiancheng shehui zhuyi' lilun" (也评斯大林"一国建成社会主义"理论) [On Stalin's Theory of "Socialism in One Country"], *Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti* (当代世界社会主义问题) [Problems of Contemporary World Socialism], Vol. 2, pp. 57-63.

Secondary Sources

- Chen, Jian (2009), "Tiananmen and the Fall of the Berlin Wall: China's Path towards 1989 and Beyond", in Jeffrey Engel (ed.), *The Fall of the Berlin Wall: The Revolutionary Legacy of 1989*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 96-131.
- Desjardins, Robert (1988), *The Soviet Union Through French Eyes, 1945-1985*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Dongen, Els Van (2009), *"Goodbye Radicalism!": Conceptions of Conservatism among Chinese Intellectuals during the Early 1990s*, Leiden: Wohrmann Print Service.
- Etheridge, James (1990), *China's Unfinished Revolution: Problems and Prospects since Mao*, San Francisco, Calif.: China Books & Periodicals.
- Fewsmith, Joseph (2001), *Elite Politics in Contemporary China*, London: M.E. Sharpe.

- Guan, Guihai (2010), "The Influence of the Collapse of the Soviet Union on China's Political Choices", in Thomas Bernstein and Hua-yu Li (eds), *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 505-516.
- Lam, Willy Wo-Lap (1999), *The Era of Jiang Zemin*, Singapore: Simon & Schuster (Asia) Pte Ltd.
- Li, Hua-Yu (2006), *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China, 1948-1953*, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Li, Jie (2016), "Gorbachev's Glasnost and the Debate on Chinese Socialism among Chinese Soviet-watchers, 1985-1999", *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December), pp. 35-65.
- Li, Jie (forthcoming in 2018), "The Use of Lenin in Chinese Sovietology in the 1990s", in Geeta Kochhar (ed.), *Modern China: Society, Culture, Language and Literature*, Routledge India.
- Luthi, Lorenz (2008), *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Marsh, Christopher (2005), *Unparalleled Reforms: China's Rise, Russia's Fall, and the Interdependence of Transition*, Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Naughton, Barry (2011), "The Impact of the Tiananmen Crisis on China's Economic Transition", in Jean-Philippe Béja (ed.), *The Impact of China's 1989 Tiananmen Massacre*, New York: Routledge, pp. 154-178.
- Niu, Jun (1998), "The Origins of the Sino-Soviet Alliance", in Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 47-89.
- Rozman, Gilbert (1985), "China's Soviet Watchers in the 1980s: A New Era in Scholarship", *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (July), pp. 435-474.
- Rozman, Gilbert (2010), "China's Concurrent Debate about the Gorbachev Era", in Thomas Bernstein and Hua-yu Li (eds), *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 449-476.
- Shambaugh, David (2008), *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Wilson, Jeanne (2007), "The Impact of the Demise of State Socialism on China", in David Lane (ed.), *The Transformation of State Socialism: System Change, Capitalism or Something Else?*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 269-285.
- Xenakis, Christopher (2002), *What Happened to the Soviet Union?: How and Why American Soviet-watchers were Caught by Surprise*, London: Praeger.

