Of course, elite conflict did not end with Deng’s consolidation of power. Differences over new decisions produce new conflicts, and problems of succession create personal opportunities. Within Deng’s camp, some have been more conservative ideologically and in economic policy, while others have been more daring. Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang are both considered among the more daring, while Chen Yun, the chairman of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, and Deng Liqun, director of the Propaganda Department, are considered more conservative. In 1984, Deng himself claimed to have withdrawn from active decision making, but these claims may be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the prestige of Hu and Zhao and to prevent any succession problems. Clearly, Chinese politics remains in the mid-1980s an inextricable mesh of positions, policies, and personalities. The evolution of institutions, the success or failure of policies, and the death of a personality such as Deng (witness the aftermaths of the deaths of Zhou and Mao) will upset any existing equilibrium. As with political contests anywhere, the results cannot be predicted confidently.

CHAPTER VII

The Governmental Process

The Chinese governmental process, through which authoritative decisions are translated into action, involves all the institutions discussed in earlier chapters. This chapter identifies several principles and problems that are prominent in the process without attempting to explore them in detail; it is more in the nature of an essay, trying to bring together themes and material that have, for the most part, been introduced earlier. We begin with an overview of the governmental process and then turn to salient aspects of decision making, administration, the enforcement and adjudication of rules, and external influences on the process.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Party leadership and mass line are the dominant principles of the Chinese governmental process. Although not inherently in conflict, they tend, in practice, to produce contradictory impulses that account for much of the complexity and instability of

Chinese politics. The struggle to maintain a working balance between them has been perhaps the most persistent problem of the post-1949 government.

*Party Leadership.* The principle of party leadership has a decisive impact on the organization and operation of formal government. It requires, above all, that authoritative leadership at the center be in the hands of the CCP. It thus ensures at least a minimal degree of ideological conformity and organizational continuity at the core of the political process. Elites may differ in their interpretation of the ideology, and the leading organization may undergo changes in composition and style, but there is no possibility, short of an overthrow of the system, that national elites will be chosen except through internal party processes or that any other political organization will capture control of the government. On the other hand, the party considers it part of its leadership mission to cooperate with nonparty forces and to absorb new personnel and policy directions, whether they be mass organizations, as in the Cultural Revolution, or intellectuals, as in the post-Mao period.

The CCP itself is a centralized organization whose internal processes are essentially closed to and largely concealed from outsiders. Ordinary citizens may influence initial decisions on recruitment into the organization but from that point on have no significant participatory roles in CCP decisions. Even during the Cultural Revolution, when activists outside the party challenged some of its policies, procedures, and personnel, it was the surviving organizational leadership that made final decisions on the reconstitution of its membership and structure. Important meetings of the organization are closed affairs, frequently unannounced and unreported, their publicized results limited to those that the leadership wishes to disclose. Provisions for internal party democracy may encourage open discussion at meetings and result in infrequent, formalized elections of hierarchies of committees, but lower levels of the organization have no real control over higher levels; it is higher-level committees and organs, culminating in the Politburo, that can prescribe and overrule the actions of lower committees. The party secretary and other members of his or her (usually his) leading group are by far the most powerful people at any level of the hierarchy, although formally they are subject to election and recall and to the will of the majority at committee meetings. Instances of the abuse of power by party officials are common in the Chinese media.

Although very concerned with preventing abuses of party power and facilitating modernization, the reforms of the 1980s have only slightly modified the role of the party. Like its predecessors, the 1982 party constitution reaffirms the political, ideological, and organizational leadership of the party. All CCP committees and branches are to play a leading role at their respective levels, a role that all nonparty organizations are to accept. In practice, the extent to which leadership constitutes direct control of governmental processes varies at different levels. At the center, the party elite monopolizes decision-making power and the controlling positions in state, party, and military bureaucracies that implement its decisions. At intermediate levels, the proportion of party members in leading positions is sufficient to ensure CCP dominance of governmental organs. At the basic level, party members may or may not constitute majorities on committees; their role becomes that of a "leading core," which must realize CCP policy through persuasive cooperation with nonparty cadres and committee members. Within the smallest primary units, the CCP may have little representation. The extent of party leadership has also varied significantly over time, being most complete during the Great Leap and weakest during 1966–1968, and it sometimes differs among comparable administrative units in different geographic areas.

Of course, party organs are not to dictate their orders to governmental and other organizations. To do so would be "commandism," a violation of the mass line. A major focus of party reform in the post-Mao period has been the restriction of inappropriate or arbitrary party control, especially at the basic level. The economic reforms of the 1980s will probably have the effect of weakening party control, because the responsibilities and discretion of rural households and enterprise management have been increased. The attempts to strengthen party discipline, most notably the reinstatement of the discipline inspection

commissions and the 1983–1986 party rectification, are aimed in part at reducing and punishing the arbitrary power of party cadres. On a broader level, the party and state constitutions of 1982 both proclaimed that the party is subject to the constitution and laws of the PRC. The constraint to act within the law is largely symbolic, given the interpenetration of party and state organs, however, it does indicate a promise of more regular and institutionally responsible party behavior.

These self-restrictions notwithstanding, the primary locus of decision making in the Chinese system is the CCP, which establishes policy on the basis of alternatives and demands made known to it. At higher levels, administrative acceptance of party decisions is virtually automatic due to overlapping roles. At lower levels, where CCP members may not dominate government organs numerically, the members’ role as a leadership core and the power of higher party-controlled bodies are normally sufficient to ensure compliance with CCP decisions. In general, then, the decision-making structure is a narrow one based on party committees acting in closed session. Although the amount of law-making activity has increased dramatically since 1978, the legislative process remains one of the circulation of drafts for comment among impacted organizations. The situation is well described in a Chinese legal manual: “The general method is that party organs produce legal drafts after investigation, research and the collection of experiences. After approval by the party center they are sent to legislative organs for discussion and revision, then they are either proclaimed publicly or simply implemented internally.” There is no media coverage as yet of contending proposals or of unofficial drafts, although Peng Zhen, the chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, suggested in 1984 that the media might report such things. Decisions tend to take the form of generalized statements on policy or doctrine, or emerge as administrative directives and regulations.

The CCP elite’s monopoly of central decision making does not translate into a comparable monopoly of policy implementation; that is, the Politburo’s power vis-à-vis the formulation of national goals and policies presents a misleading image of its control over the governmental structure. One reason for this is that the central government itself is a structure of considerable differentiation and complexity. Diverse interests are represented initially in Politburo decisions, through the involvement of provincial party secretaries, vice-premiers of the functional sectors of the State Council, and directors of CC departments. These are elites who themselves head major bureaucratic structures, replete with their own conflicts and interests and fully capable of defending their positions. Moreover, it is these units that develop the actual targets and directives that represent the central will. Feedback and bargaining are unavoidable features of the process, if not in the formal decision then at least in the drafting of implementational rules.

Once central decisions have been cast as central directives in a process already somewhat removed from the collective wisdom of the Politburo, the influence of decentralization and the mass line comes into play. Lower units may be permitted to draft their own rules or at least to interpret central directives flexibly with reference to their own circumstances, with much of the ultimate meaning of governmental outputs left to the actions of basic-level institutions. The actual capacity of central elites to control governmental performance was probably at its peak in the 1955–1958 period but declined thereafter.

**The Mass Line.** As noted at the outset of Chapter 6, Mao conceptualized the policy process as a dynamic pattern of reciprocating communication between leaders and followers. If we define the mass line in these general terms rather than in terms of the activities of mass organizations during the Cultural Revolution, the mass line has been a fundamental aspect of the party's political style since 1942. In Mao's formulation, it assigns the masses a continuous role in presenting their ideas to the party and in carrying out decisions rendered from above; the masses

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8Chen Xuan, ed., Gongmin jujia guanren (The citizen's legal advisor), Harbin: Heilongjiang Renmin chuban she, 1983, p. 66.
9People’s Daily, May 12, 1984, p. 5.
11On the way in which the central bureaucracy and its functional sectors may influence the policy process, see Barnes, Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power, pp. 6–7, 71–84, 131–92.
are to initiate as well as implement policy. Even in ideal form, the principle reserves for the party decision-making power and the right to distinguish between "correct" and "incorrect" ideas. Moreover, PRC institutions provide few opportunities, except within primary units, for direct popular influence on political decisions. But the mass line has a significant broadening effect on the postdecisitional process, which leaves room for considerable local initiative, relies on popular action in the implementation of policy, and provides opportunities for feedback on cadre performance and policy effectiveness.

The mass line's influence on the policy process is closely related to and reinforced by the CCP's willingness to decentralize management responsibilities in many areas. Decentralization, discussed in greater detail later, does not necessarily broaden the popular role in administration, nor is it always justified by the mass line concept. Nonetheless, when decentralization extends to primary units that are organized for member participation, encouraging them to embark on projects of their own and to assist in the operation of schools, health facilities, and other social services, it provides the institutional opportunity for practice of the mass line's basic tenet: the people must accept party policies as their own and demonstrate them in political action. There is, at least in Mao's view of decentralization, a direct link between the transference of responsibilities to the lowest feasible level and the mass line's emphasis on direct popular action rather than bureaucratic administration.

**The Mass Movement.** On many domestic problems, Chinese leaders have turned to the mass movement as a means of informing the population about policy objectives, of soliciting broad-based acceptance of the policy, and of mobilizing local units for action on central plans. As these movements have unfolded, the structures activated have moved in an ever-widening progression from party and state organs, through the communications media and experimental projects, and on into basic-level organizations, meetings, rallies, and discussion groups. There has been an intimate connection between the mass line and mass movements since their inception in the base areas, but the destructive effects of large-scale mobilization in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution have led to the rejection of disruptive

mass movements since 1979. Nevertheless, there are strong traces of the campaign-style approach in current Chinese politics. The law and order campaign of 1983, in which thousands of criminals were executed, some of them publicly, and the spiritual pollution campaign of 1983 are the two most obvious examples. The influence can also be seen in campaigns to study the constitution, to plant trees, to promote socialist ethics month, or to engage in any other activity that the leadership perceives as urgent. In contrast to Western governments, which tend to reach for the wallet when faced with urgent tasks, the Chinese will often reach for the megaphone.

One of the consequences of this frequent reliance on mass movements has been irregularity in the pace and results of policy implementation. Local areas have varied in the speed with which they have carried out their preliminary organizing and testing as well as their extension of the campaign on a general scale. Different models have sometimes appeared in the course of a campaign, producing discrepancies between the results of its earlier and later stages. A policy applied through a mass movement simply does not follow the precise timetable or lend itself to a detailed set of regulations of uniform applicability. National elites may set target dates for completion of campaign stages, but they cannot be sure that targets will be met; they may establish guidelines for expected results, but they cannot be sure that a process relying so heavily on local performance will produce uniform results. Under these circumstances, it becomes difficult to say precisely what a policy is, when it has gone into effect, and what its operative consequences are. These answers may be clear only when the campaign is over. One need only examine the general outlines of land reform, agricultural collectivization and communication, and the Cultural Revolution to recognize that the governmental process in China has a highly fluid and open-ended quality that is incompatible with a legalistic style of administration.

**Experimentalism in Decisions.** How can we reconcile the principle of party leadership with the flexibility that characterizes policy implementation? Part of the answer lies in a strong element of experimentalism in the Chinese elite's view of the policy process. Although the government issues some legalistic
rules, implying implementation at a certain point in time with procedures to enforce compliance, its decisions on many important issues have an experimental quality. They are cast in the form of general statements, indicating models to be followed or goals to be attained but not specifying exact procedures, forms, and relationships. The meaning of such a decision emerges only in practice as lower levels carry out their preliminary work and begin to develop concrete responses to the tasks demanded of them. In the midst of this process, higher levels will begin to review and investigate the early results. On the basis of these reports, central organs may accelerate or decelerate the process, publicize new models, or even issue new directives that alter the initial thrust of the policy. Party elites seem to regard the attendant shifts and variations as healthy or at least necessary for the development of viable policies. It is their way of practicing the mass line, of testing mass consciousness and local conditions, and of refining their views through practical experience.

The role of models in Chinese policy making cannot be over-estimated. They are the primary source of facts upon which policy is made and modified. If a village or enterprise is successful and innovative in a particular experiment, its case may be studied in great detail and reported to the highest leadership. Visits to the site may ensue, which, if publicized, already indicate a certain amount of approval of the model. The innovation may then be copied by other units, usually advanced units where conditions promise success. Finally, the innovator might be generally advertised as a model, thereby becoming the paradigm for an emulation campaign or at least an example of an approved policy alternative.

The factual basis of policy making by models tends to be exemplary rather than typical; instead of being based on what would probably succeed in the average unit, policy tends to be based on what has succeeded in the unusual unit. Once a unit becomes a model, there is considerable pressure to maintain and even exaggerate its accomplishments. The most famous model of the PRC was the Dazhai Brigade of Shanxi Province. A very poor brigade in a mountainous area, Dazhai had become fabulously successful through good leadership and collective effort. When Mao penned the words, “In agriculture study Dazhai,” it rose to dizzying heights of national emulation. The brigade chairman eventually became a member of the Politburo. But the fall of Dazhai was more rapid than its rise. First, articles appeared claiming that the spirit of Dazhai was worth emulating but not necessarily all the details of the model. Next, the brigade chairman fell from power and accusations appeared concerning mistreatment of Dazhai’s accomplishments. It is now claimed that the brigade is doing much better with different leadership and more individualistic policies.

Experimentalism in policy making does not necessarily weaken party leadership. It reduces the specificity and permanence of central decisions and increases the responsibilities of lower-level committees, but neither of these outcomes implies an abdication of the organization’s leading role. It raises the possibility of deviation from central wishes, but only in the Cultural Revolution—and then only with the Maoist’s initial blessing—did local actions take the form of outright defiance of CCP organizational authority. Probably the most important consequence of a reliance on mass movements and experimentalism is a tendency to blur the distinction between state and party organization. By attaching so much importance to the actions of lower levels, it leads the party to strengthen its leadership over local government. In its extreme form, as during the Great Leap, the phenomenon of party as government may mean the virtual displacement of state administration. Of course, such phenomena have led the post-Mao leadership to strong assertions of the autonomy of state organs, and occurrences of local party leaders riding roughshod over other organizations now provoke criticism. Nonetheless, the CCP retains overall leadership and with it the constant temptation to intervene in state administration.

A significant challenge to local party leadership in the 1980s is posed by the fact that the major campaigns are economic, and the active agents in these campaigns are households and enterprises. To a large extent, these are not mass campaigns that require party leadership, but dispersions of economic decision

making that require noninterference from the party. Such campaigns confuse even the exemplary role of the party member: should he or she continue to work selflessly for the common good or take the lead in pioneering new ways to personal profit? At this point the policies are too novel and the information too sketchy to predict the effect on local party leadership.

We turn now to a closer look at some of the problems suggested by these introductory comments. A section on decision making examines the central institutional framework, the role of Mao, and some enduring questions about the effectiveness of the process. Bureaucracy, political controls over it, and decentralization are discussed under the rubric of administration. The section on rule enforcement and adjudication deals with the formal legal system, coercion and voluntarism, and mechanisms of social control. A concluding section discusses briefly the importance of external influences on the governmental process.

DECISION MAKING

Institutional Considerations. Supreme decision-making power resides in the CCP Politburo and its Standing Committee. Politburo members are the core leadership of all major CCP meetings, and there is no regular mechanism by which other organs can overrule the Politburo's decisions. The decline of Politburo authority in the early part of the Cultural Revolution was made possible by a deep internal split within the body, not by an assertion of external control over it. Nonetheless, the Politburo does not monopolize decision making in the sense of excluding other elites and groupings from participation in the process. It is the authoritative locus of policy decisions; but if we look at decisions as inseparable from the policy-making process that accompanies them, then it is clear that the Politburo does not act alone. The history of the PRC indicates that top elites have regularly convened a great variety of larger and more representative meetings to assist in the formulation of national policies.  


The Central Committee, contrary to what one might expect, has not been a particularly important part of this expanded policy-making process. The CC was most active in 1956 to 1962 when it met in ten plenums; even so, these meetings were relatively brief and usually announced policies thrashed out in less formal gatherings preceding the plenums. The Eighth CC met only twice more after its Tenth Plenum of September 1962 before it was succeeded by the Ninth CC elected in 1969. The Ninth CC had only two plenums in its 1969 to 1973 span, the Tenth CC only three in its 1973 to 1977 tenure. The CC, then, has not been a regular instrument of policy making but rather a forum for ratifying and publicizing decisions reached elsewhere.

In contrast to the Central Committee, which has great formal authority but participates infrequently as a body in decision making, the Secretariat has been extremely influential in the 1980s. Formally, its duty is "to attend to the day-to-day work of the Central Committee under the direction of the Politburo and its Standing Committee," but, in fact, the advanced age of the top leadership and the strong ties of the Secretariat to Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang have given it a very powerful decision-shaping function. Its counterpart in the state apparatus is the Standing Committee of the State Council under Zhao Ziyang. The younger and more active membership of these two groups now constitutes the "first line" of central decision making, according to a 1984 interview with Zhao Ziyang.  

The substantive policy-making meetings have been diverse, ranging from slightly enlarged Politburo meetings; through middle-range gatherings of various party, state, PLA and provincial elites; and including some conferences of several thousand participants, with even low-level cadres in attendance. The most significant conferences have been those of Politburo members with selected leaders of various functional and geographic hierarchies. Before 1966, there were several variations on these conferences. One was the Central Work Conference, common in the 1960s, that convened around a hundred people representing the Politburo and its administrative departments, the State Council,

regional party organs, and the PLA. Another was the Supreme State Conference, a loose governmental advisory body authorized by the 1954 state constitution, that both Mao and Liu used in their capacity as chairman of the government. As party chairman, Mao also convened several meetings of provincial party secretaries or mixed groups of central and provincial party elites. The Cultural Revolution and its factionalized aftermath upset this pattern of informal but somewhat institutionalized working conferences. Of 298 identified meetings of central party and state organs held between 1949 and 1975, 271 occurred before August 1966, with the remaining 27 stretched out between August 1966 and January 1975.11 While some of the difference in frequency of identified meetings may be due to nonreporting in the 1966 to 1975 period, it seems fair to conclude that the latter period saw a decline in the Politburo's convocation of consultative conferences.

The secrecy referred to above is an important aspect of the policy-making process. Only about 10 percent of the 238 meetings in question—and only 1–2 percent if CC plenums and party congresses are excluded—were given substantial coverage in Chinese media when they occurred.12 In general, both the format and substance of key policy meetings remain closed to public view until well after the event, if indeed they are ever announced. Finally, we should note that the informal and even ad hoc convocation of diversified conferences for policy debate and formulation has mixed implications for decision-making effectiveness. It injects far more variety, deliberation, and political give-and-take into the process than the formal structure shows. Precisely because it is irregular and informal, however, it may still leave information gaps, be manipulated by elites who want to exclude other positions, or succumb to the paralyzing effects of factional struggle within the Politburo.13

The Role of Mao. Mao Zedong was the central figure in the policy-making process for most of PRC history. That fact alone justifies reflection on his influence, which has clearly posed continuing problems for his successors. Mao's roles between 1949 and 1966 were multiple, including initiating, deciding, and legitimating many of the most important policies adopted by the CCP. As initiator, he was the most vigorous and forceful advocate of new measures, presenting to his colleagues proposals that forced the decision-making process into action. His role as initiator included a willingness to promote his views before wider audiences—such as the provincial secretaries in the mid-1950s or the general public in the Cultural Revolution—thereby adding political pressure to the intrinsic force of his views. As decision maker, he was first among equals within the small group that bore ultimate responsibility for the direction of national affairs; more than any other individual, he was able to swing the judgment of his colleagues toward the decisions he favored. As legitimating, he served as a symbol of both elite and national unity, the figure whose support for a policy placed on it the stamp of authoritative approval.

Underlying these roles was a tremendous reservoir of personal ability, power, and prestige. Whatever his limitations, Mao displayed exceptional political capacities. His knowledge of personalities and issues, his self-confidence and determination, his persuasive abilities, and his sensitivity to both tactical and strategic maneuver made him a formidable politician. As party chairman, he occupied a position that gave him ample power to influence the procedural and institutional context of elite politics. His personal identification with the success of the revolution and the guidance of postrevolutionary consolidation made him virtually invulnerable to removal. His policies were criticized, resisted, or altered at times, but direct challenges to his leadership were doomed to failure. How far Peng Dehuai, Liu Shaoqi, and Lin Biao truly wanted to go or might have gone in their opposition to Mao may never be known. What is clear is that Mao's definition of the conflict as a choice between him and his antagonist always brought a reaffirmation of his leadership.

Although Mao had a great influence on the policy-making process, he never shaped it wholly to his wishes. His overall impact was a function of several variables, the most important of which seem to have been his own assertiveness, his relationship with his senior colleagues, the capacity of the party center to

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11Lieberthal, Research Guide.
12Ibid., p. 7.
13Ibid., pp. 10–15; and Lieberthal, Central Documents, pp. 79–82.
control the governmental structure, and the capacity of the system generally to realize centrally determined objectives.14 The first two are discussed more thoroughly below. The basic point is that Mao was erratic in exercising his leadership potential, owing to his changing perceptions of political priorities and, perhaps, to variations in his health and vigor, and that his authority among his senior colleagues was much more fluid than his relatively constant popular prestige would indicate. The latter points are also discussed in subsequent sections but require some comment here.

Perhaps the most fundamental restraint on Mao’s and other elites’ policy-making power has been the system’s finite resources and capacities. Vagaries of weather, harvest, and popular morale, and the necessity for making hard choices among competing claims on scarce resources, have intruded constantly on the formulation of national goals. At times, as during the Great Leap, elite decisions have seemingly defied these limitations, but the realities of system capabilities have always been close at hand, forcing compromise and modification on the predispositions of the leadership. Combined with China’s size and complexity, the scarcity of resources makes total central power a practical impossibility, although the Chinese media have sometimes conveyed the opposite impression.

When these variables are considered, the relativity and changeability of Mao’s influence over the process become clearer. Mao alluded to this frequently in reference to policies that he did or did not approve and to his general command of governmental operations. His most revealing comment was at a Central Work Conference in October 1956, when he stated that he had approved division of the leadership into a first echelon and a second echelon, with himself in the second echelon and hence removed from supervision of the daily work of the government.15 Mao identified the duration of the two echelons as seventeen years,

presumably from 1949 to the Eleventh Plenum of August 1966. The precision of this reference is questionable, since Mao’s second-echelon status was not rigorously observed throughout the 1949–1966 period; the years between 1959 and 1965 seem to mark his clearest performance of a second-line role. Nonetheless, the statement affirms Mao’s willingness to restrict the scope of his political involvement, a willingness based, he said, on a desire to cultivate other leaders and to avoid the Stalin pattern of rule.16

More concretely, Mao’s involvement in the 1949–1958 period was quite flexible. On the one hand, his political viability was relatively low. He was absent from some key conferences,17 let Liu and Deng take the lead at the Eighth National Congress of the CCP in 1956, and accepted the absence of reference to himself in the 1956 constitution. He was quite active, however, in the initiation and promotion of three crucial policies: accelerated collectivization in 1955; the hundred flowers episode of 1957; and the adoption of rectification, decentralization, and Great Leap policies in 1957–1958. In all three cases, Mao was able to secure favorable decisions and prompt governmental implementation. The mix of these variables permitted Mao to act with considerable freedom and effectiveness without assuming a dictatorial role.

However, as the Leap ran into difficulties, the mix shifted against Mao. In adopting decentralization and the Great Leap approach, the central leadership had stimulated local initiative and the mass movement but had also relinquished some of its control over governmental performance; its decisions became more controversial, less informed of local conditions, and more difficult to implement. Resource limitations, such as lowered output and popular morale, began to circumscribe the options

16Ibid., p. 276. In another reference, Mao also cited his health as a reason for the two iron ribs; ibid., p. 266.
17For example, Mao was absent from the Fourth Plenum of the Seventh CC in February 1954, which heard Politburo accusations against Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, and from a September 1957 conference that preceded and prepared for the Third Plenum of the Eighth CC; Chang, “Research Notes,” 185–86.
open to decision makers. Mao stepped down as chairman of the PRC, accepted some criticism of the Leap and his role in promoting it, but threatened to form a new revolutionary movement if his colleagues repudiated him. Subsequently, Mao's policymaking influence fell to its lowest ebb. Although his colleagues bolstered his public image with campaigns against the "rightists" of 1959 and in support of the wisdom of his "thought," their respect for his counsel seems to have declined. The veiled criticism of Mao that appeared in Peking publications in 1961–1962 was an accurate indication of his reduced prestige at the center. Refrenchment policies, oriented to restoration of governmental controls and accommodation of overstrained resources, left Mao little room for maneuver or initiative. When he began to assert his views again at the Tenth Plenum of September 1962, he found state and party bureaus much more resistant to compliance with his policies than in the 1950s.

Mao broke through in the Cultural Revolution, ending the two echelons and assuming undisputed leadership in central decision making. Once the Liu-Deng revisionists were purged, he seemed to hold more unqualified support from participants in the political process at all levels than ever before. Both the tone and substance of ensuing policy formulations reflected his ideas. But the political reality of China was one of chaos, and even Mao's unquestioned dominance did not translate easily into governmental action. Over four years passed (January 1967 to August 1971) before revolutionary committees and new provincial party committees were established. The formalities of the state structure remained unsettled, despite repeated allusions to a forthcoming National People's Congress and the adoption of a new draft state constitution at the Second Plenum in August–September 1970. Efforts to reopen schools and establish Maoist educational reforms began as early as 1967 but had little visible effect for several years thereafter. The contrast with the 1950s, when central decisions brought relatively prompt and thorough compliance throughout the country, was striking.

In any case, by the early 1970s Mao had entered the personal and political decline leading to his death. The "cult of Mao" receded as he moved into the background, leaving administrative leadership to Zhou Enlai and, as Zhou's health also failed, to the rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping. Deng's rapid rise in 1973–1975 was a prime indicator of Mao's declining capacity to control the process, as was his inability to resolve the debilitating factional conflict of this period. Yet his symbolic authority as legitimating hold firm, and his support was crucial for some of the key decisions of his last years, such as rapprochement with the United States and the second purge of Deng in 1976. The power of Mao's symbolic authority was evident after his death, as Hua and Deng used it to legitimize the four modernizations. It was also a source of conflict, however, since Hua used it to bolster his leadership, whereas Deng seemed intent on repudiating Mao's last decade—and necessarily reducing Mao's overall stature in the process—to serve Deng's personal and policy goals. It may be a long time before Chinese elites resolve the question of how to deal with Mao's substantive and symbolic legacy.

In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping is dealing with some of the same problems of personal leadership that beset Mao in his last decades. Deng would like to establish a smooth transition between his role and his handpicked successors, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. Therefore, he allows the Secretariat and the Standing Committee of the State Council to function as a first echelon of leadership, while he takes a more leisurely place on the second echelon. However, he cannot refrain from interfering in policy. The knowledge of his power and the strength of his convictions compels him to step in. But interference can lead to quite complex political situations. In the case of the 1988 campaign against spiritual pollution, Deng almost certainly was instrumental in approving the campaign, against the hesitations of Hu and Zhao; however, after its failure, he disclaimed any responsibility. It might seem that Deng was dumping the

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20For an excellent analysis of the campaign, see Stuart Schnier, "Economics in Command": Ideology and Policy Since the Third Plenum, 1978–84."
responsible for the failure on his subordinates, but, ironically, his disclaimer was instead a belated expression of support for their opposition. Even the most astute politicians find graceful retirement difficult, and there are few precedents within the Communist or Chinese imperial traditions.

The Legacy of Maoist Decision Making. The death of Mao Zedong and the overthrow of the Gang of Four end the era of leftist policy-making, but the post-Mao leadership had to tackle the problems and habits that those years had created. Three problems merit discussion: the role of ideology in policy, the "red-expert" dichotomy, and the institutional weakness of popular participation. It is unfair to consider those as problems created by Mao, in part, they are endemic to Communist regimes, and, in part, they are the collective responsibility of the party. Regardless of where the fault lies, however, these problems have set major reform tasks for the post-Mao regime that it is now in the process of fulfilling.

The problem of the role of ideological commitments has several aspects. The most obvious is expressed in the Maoist slogan that "Politics takes command." Every problem was scrutinized for ideological dimensions, and discussion of those dimensions often forced out more practical deliberation. Obsession with ideology did not preclude debate—ideology is rarely univocal—but it certainly skewed discussion toward questions of dogma. Perhaps a more serious hazard of the role of ideology was the political risks it created for cadres. Ideology tended to define policy debate as class conflict, so one side or the other was in danger of being labeled an enemy class, whereupon its supporters became targets for the harsh struggle reserved for antagonistic contradiction. Lastly, the ideological commitment to Mao's personal writings and directives restricted policy options in important areas. The overall effect of the role of ideology was to rigidify and restrict political discussion, while introducing great personal risk and instability for cadres.

In 1978, Deng scored a spectacular victory on the problem of ideological commitments, but the problem could not disappear easily. His campaign on the slogan that "practice is the only criterion for determining truth" solved, in principle, the dogmatic allegiance to Mao's policy preferences, and the decision of the Third Plenum to take economics as the chief problem turned attention toward practical dimensions of policy. "Hats" and "clubs" were condemned as weapons of the Gang. However, after assuming power in 1979, Deng has found it necessary to impose his own ideological commitments. This has included an emphasis on his own writings as a source for authoritative ideology. The hat and club problem has certainly been less serious in the 1980s than it was in the Maoist period, but it has not disappeared. The 1982 party constitution contains the ominous message that "class struggle will continue to exist within certain limits for a long time, and may even sharpen under certain conditions." The function of this statement is to justify antagonistic struggles against selected targets in the future. There have been important changes in the role and content of ideological orthodoxy; however, in some respects, the Maoist mold has yet to be broken.

The second question involves the role of expertise in decision making and leadership, a problem aptly summarized in the "red-expert" dichotomy. During the Maoist period, the call to be "both red and expert" expressed a suspicion of intellectuals and the monopolization of all decisions by party cadres, and it reinforced the precedence of ideological over practical criteria. In general, the CCP has denied that the expertise of intellectuals and technical specialists implied any claim to political authority. However, this approach has not precluded utilization of their services and advice. Most senior CCP decision makers have had ample access to staff experts, in addition to personal experience in one or more of the specialized administrative hierarchies.

On the other hand, those of the top elite have probably underestimated the intellectual resources available to them, mainly because the "red-expert" issue has been so vulnerable to extreme interpretation. In both the Great Leap and the period after the Cultural Revolution, hostility toward expertise discouraged some

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Footnotes:
2. See Luienthal, Central Documents, pp. 39-49, for description of the extensive compilation, including technical review, that goes into the drafting of central documents, and for case studies of the process.
ill-conceived policy experiments or caused a decline in the quality of specialized training. The devastation caused to the Chinese educational system, especially higher education, was described in Chapter 5.

This has been an area of great reform for the post-Mao regime. Deng announced at the First National Science Conference in 1978 that intellectuals were workers, thereby undercutting the class grounds for the suspicion of intellectuals. They have been recognized as a key force in modernization and have been treated accordingly. Funds have been poured into higher education and research, and academic control over educational institutions has been strengthened. The encouragement given to overseas study shows a confidence in intellectuals that is not often found in communist countries. Within the party, the recruitment of intellectuals has been stressed, and the curricula of party schools has been adjusted to include more science and management courses. Understandably, there has been considerable resistance and resentment of these changes among party members, and implementation has been gradual. The excesses of the campaign against spiritual pollution revealed a latent constituency for anti-intellectual (and possibly antiforeign) activities within the party that will not quickly dissipate.

Finally, the Maoist period left institutions of popular influence on government in a shambles, despite the large amount of mass participation in movements and in basic-level politics. The weakness of popular representation at higher levels and the absence of independent communications media led to an information gap, so that elites were poorly informed on how policies would be or have been received at the grass roots. This was and remains a real danger, since decision makers rely for their information largely on bureaucratic hierarchies, and what reaches the top is a very indirect and selective representation of the grass roots situation; as in all bureaucracies, tendencies to report data acceptable to superiors or data enhancing the position of the reporter are strong. There were spectacular misjudgments, for example, about the consequences of the Hundred Flowers experiment, the Leap, and the mobilization of the Red Guards. The basic problem of distorted popular feedback is due to structural problems inherent in Communist political systems, but it was exacerbated by the scale and novelty of Mao's policy interventions. The structure of

the Leninist state assumes that party leadership is correct and that there is no serious problem of information concerning popular interests. The effect of these assumptions can be seen in the weakness of the people's congress system, the control of the media, and the absence of any loyal opposition on major issues. To some extent, Chinese politics has compensated for these problems by various mass line techniques, including experimentalism. The post-Mao regime has improved the situation somewhat by strengthening the people's congress system and election mechanisms, allowing various voluntary associations, and encouraging diversity and expansion in the media. But the basic situation is still one where, as Deng Xiaoping himself complained, the fate of a policy may well depend on the preferences and attention span of a top leader.25

If we review the results of Chinese decision making over the first thirty-odd years of the PRC, the impressions are paradoxical. There were spectacular policy failures and yet cumulative successes that are no less impressive. There were requirements of ideological conformity and yet flexibility in policy implementation and modification. Technological feats such as the production of nuclear weapons have been accomplished, but intellectuals as a group have been politically and sometimes socially ostracized. The failures were no doubt induced in part by the inexperience of the leadership and the novelty of its goals; successes in some cases probably occurred despite the decisions made. The political reforms of Deng Xiaoping constitute an important structural reform of the Maoist legacy, probably the most important reforms in the history of the PRC. But Chinese decision making does not promise to change rapidly.

ADMINISTRATION

Bureaucracy. The Chinese political system entrusts the application of its rules to a variety of structures, including: state, party, and army bureaucracies and the communications systems that they control; the management organs of primary units; and a multitude of popular committees, organizations, and meetings that mobilize the population for direct action on governmental

25Deng as quoted in Peng Zhen's speech reported in People's Daily, May 12, 1984, p. 5.
programs. The national bureaucracies dominate the administrative process that brings central decisions to the local level. They are complex hierarchies, containing both territorial and functional divisions, but they share a common subordination to the authority of the central CCP leadership. They are staffed by full-time career cadres, appointed and assigned through internal processes. Their performance, too, is directed and supervised largely from within by party members in leading positions and by higher levels of their organizations. Since there is very little interorganizational mobility, state cadres tend to identify with their organizational location rather than with their profession. For example, someone doing economic work for the Ministry of Education would consider himself a ministry official specializing in economics rather than an economist working for the Ministry of Education. Institutionally speaking, state cadres have a high degree of autonomy from society, being organized as agents of central decision-making organs.

There are important qualifications in this picture, however, because the Chinese Communists have made serious efforts to restrain the exercise of bureaucratic power. Although they accept the necessity of centrally directed organizational hierarchies that will implement the CCP's monopoly of political power, they have tried to ensure bureaucracy's responsiveness to political controls and to keep its structure relatively simple and efficient. As a result, the history of bureaucracy in post-1949 China has been one of recurring tendencies to expand and institutionalize, matched by countervailing pressures to limit and modify its role.²⁵

Bureaucratic institutions were not prominent in the pre-1949 movement. Environmental factors inhibited the growth of large-scale territorial units or of functionally sophisticated governmental departments. The major exception to this rule came in Yanan in the early 1940s, when United Front policies, assumption of a more complete governmental role, and an influx of intellectuals encouraged bureaucratization. But the base area simply could not afford a large central organization, and the tendency was resisted by the rectification, "crack troops and simple administration," and "to-the-village" campaigns of 1942–1944.²⁶ After 1949, pressures for bureaucratization became much more formidable. The implementation of socialist reforms throughout the country not only required a governmental structure significantly larger and more complex than any the CCP had previously known, but it also encouraged co-optation of many cadres who had not experienced the socializing effects of the revolutionary movement. Despite sporadic campaigns against bureaucratism, the path was opened for a flow of more traditional bureaucratic influences into the new government. The initiation of the Soviet-style economic plan, with its centralization of power in the state ministries, brought the rapid growth of an administrative structure that was almost a direct antithesis of the CCP's earlier organizational model.

The mid-1950s probably marked the peak of bureaucratic power in post-1949 China, but the new structure was not yet highly institutionalized. It proved vulnerable to the growing reaction against it, which culminated in the Great Leap Forward. For a few years, an antibureaucratic tide was in ascendency, only to give way in the early 1960s to a reassertion of official authority and prerogatives. The governmental system of 1961–1965 was less centralized and, in terms of its actual control over society, probably less powerful than that of the mid-1950s. On the other hand, it was more institutionalized, and it seemed to be creating a new establishment that made routinized concessions to mass lines principles but was increasingly the preserve of bureaucratic interests and specialized skill groups. Its capacity to deflect and then resist the early thrusts of the Cultural Revolution was evidence of its strength and autonomy, even though it ultimately disintegrated under the Maoist attack.

Actually, the Cultural Revolution did not eliminate bureaucracy but rather replaced some bureaucratic sectors with others. The old state and party organs held on to their power until the winter of 1966–1967. It was only in the seizure of power stage that the country entered a period in which no bureaucratic apparatus seemed capable of providing effective government. Before long, however, the PLA began to fill this gap by taking over the basic administrative functions. The Maoists regarded

²⁵See Harding, Organizing China.

the PLA as a "revolutionary" organization, owing to Lin Biao's reforms of the early 1960s, and had encouraged it to expand its political role as early as 1963–1965. But even though the PLA entered the political arena under Maoist auspices, it was still a bureaucratic organization that displayed little enthusiasm for sharing its administrative duties with the radical mass organizations; the provincial revolutionary committees whose formation it supervised were dominated by military figures and included many former cadres. With the reconstruction of the CCP after 1969, military administration gradually began to give way to the reviving civilian bureaucracies, controlled by party cadres though with a facade of mass participation.

As noted repeatedly, the years between 1969 and 1976 brought intense struggle between administrative priorities oriented toward stabilization and economic development, and radical pressures for continuing revolutionization of the system. The post-1976 leadership resolved this debate with a forthright assertion of administrative prerogatives, stressing the need for central planning and controls, for technically competent management, and for regulations and labor discipline to ensure attainment of production targets. One lesson to be drawn from the Cultural Revolution experiment, therefore, is that bureaucratic administration is a given feature of Chinese politics, one that cannot be sacrificed even for goals that might have higher rhetorical priority. However, it is also important to recognize the Chinese efforts to curb "bureaucratism," if not bureaucracy, in an effort to control what are seen as the negative aspects of the institutions they cannot do without. These efforts have been most evident in two principles—politicization of bureaucracy and decentralization—which were advanced vigorously in the Maoist period and which, with important changes, continue to influence post-Mao administration.

**Politicization of Bureaucracy.** The Chinese Communists' attitude toward bureaucracy is two-sided. Some view bureaucracy in negative terms as a nonproductive superstructure that is divorced from the front line of political struggle; they seek to reduce the scope of bureaucracy and to transfer administrative powers to the lowest feasible level. Others accept some degree of bureaucratization as inevitable and potentially even positive in its provision of correct models and leadership; they focus on the politicization of bureaucracy to ensure its subordination to political leadership and its acceptance of a mass line style of behavior. To use Harry Harding's terminology, these viewpoints correspond to the radical and the rationalistic approaches to bureaucracy. In reality, few leaders and few policies were thoroughly radical or thoroughly rationalistic; these were polar positions between which normal Chinese politics oscillated. Because of its successful experience in the base areas, the top CCP leaders have tended to be hostile toward bureaucratic elitism and conservatism, appreciative of a strong relationship to the masses and of decentralized government, and searching in fairly innovative ways for administrative relationships that will promote the all-around development of Chinese society. No Chinese leadership has doubted that political control of the bureaucracy was necessary. The contentious issues have been the relationship of the party hierarchy to the administrative hierarchy and methods of the political control of cadres.

One of the crucial issues in the politicization of bureaucracy is the relationship between the CCP and the state structure. Party and state have never been separated sharply in terms of personnel, due to the high proportion of party members serving in state organs. The very first step in establishing CCP rule was the placement of its members in controlling positions in the government. Since the party had only one-third of the trained cadres it needed to fill state posts, a fair number of nonparty officials were retained in the early years, although their proportional representation fell steadily. By the late 1950s, party-member domination of state organs was complete. Nonetheless, the CCP insisted that the two hierarchies were functionally and organizationally distinct: the state was responsible for administration of policy, especially in the economic realm, whereas the party was...
responsible for political and ideological affairs. Initially at least, the CCP tried to observe the distinction, so that its organizational control did not necessarily follow the placement of party members in governmental positions.

From the early 1950s to the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese leadership addressed this problem in terms of a choice between "vertical rule" and "dual rule." Both types of rule assumed the existence of two parallel organizational hierarchies: the first, a bureaucratized network of branch agencies of the central ministries extending downward through subnational governments; the other, a less-bureaucratized hierarchy of party committees at each administrative level. Under vertical rule, which prevailed during the early part of the FFYP, the functional departments of local government were responsible to corresponding departments at higher levels leading up to the appropriate ministry in Peking. This system maximized central ministerial control over administration and encouraged the development of specialized bureaus at lower levels; however, it also inhibited coordination across departmental lines within governmental levels and made local departments resistant to supervision by local party committees. The alternative of dual rule, which was endorsed by the Eighth Party Congress of 1956, strengthened local control by making departments responsible to local committees as well as to their higher administrative counterparts.

Dual rule, which came into its own with the decentralization of 1957 and the ensuing Leap, greatly increased the involvement of party committees in state administration. Indeed, for a brief period in the late 1950s, the central ministries simply lost much of their former control over lower levels. Local decisions were made by party committees, which became the effective agencies of subnational government. The phenomenon of party as government threatened to obliterate the distinction between state and party. However, the state regained some of its authority in the reformation period, and an approximation of dual rule resumed. The adoption of dual rule was a decisive step in asserting the primacy of politics, through the medium of CCP committees throughout the bureaucracy. As Harding points out, "By the early 1960s the party had created a network of functional departments that paralleled the functional bureaus of the government and enabled the party to play an extensive role in policymaking at all levels of Chinese society." But success in politicizing bureaucracy had the unforeseen side effect of bureaucratizing politics. That is, as CCP organs intervened in the daily work of government departments, they began to absorb some of the interests and concerns of those departments. Nominally, the organizational and functional distinction between state and party remained; however, in practice, the two came closer together. The contrast between the antibureaucratic impulse of 1955–1958 and that of the Cultural Revolution is instructive. The former viewed the state as the prime base of bureaucratic evils and sought a solution through increased party penetration of administrative functions; the latter saw the CCP itself as a stronghold of bureaucratism and turned to nonparty elements for assistance in rectifying it.

Following the Cultural Revolution, the CCP experimented briefly with the principle of "unified leadership," combining administrative and political tasks in a single organ—the revolutionary committee—which relied on the leadership of party members within it. Ultimately, however, the organizational distinction between administrative and party organs returned, although the party's domination was even more marked than it had been earlier. Administrators were responsible for meeting goals set from above in the bureaucratic hierarchy, but they also operated under the close supervision of the party committee within their own level or unit. Given the concentration of power within the party, the party secretary was in an extremely powerful position. In effect, everyone working at his level was his subordinate. This situation created opportunities for the abuse of power that did not pass unnoticed and also weakened the administrative coordination of the state.

Since 1976, reforms affecting the role of the party in administration have been made in a number of directions. Attempts have been made to reduce the unnecessary and arbitrary interference of party cadres, to improve their technical and managerial competence, and to improve party discipline, all in the name of


strengthening party leadership. The formal authority structure of work units has been strengthened at the expense of their party structure. A system of dual rule still prevails, but the reorientation toward modernization has greatly strengthened the state-expert role.

The other major aspect of politicization of the bureaucracy has been the political orientation and control of the individual cadre. There can be little doubt that the message of “serve the people” has penetrated the Chinese bureaucracy, and yet there is probably no area of Chinese political life where the contradictions are stronger. On the one hand, cadres work in highly bureaucratized settings subject to complicated regulations and controls, have fixed pay scales and ranks that make them a privileged stratum, and hold considerable power over citizens with little access to the inner workings of the system. The tradition of bureaucratic rule and authoritarian social relationships still reinforces these features. On the other hand, there are the normative ideals and expectations of the regime concerning closeness to the masses. Exhortations to live up to the pre-1949 traditions of revolutionary populism are common, as are examples of exemplary behavior by officials. Mao’s conviction that the strength of a regime lies in its popular support has become an axiom of CCP ideology, and the citizenry is encouraged to develop high expectations about cadre responsiveness to mass needs and criticism. The tensions between the opportunities of authority and the norms of service are impossible to resolve, but one can contrast Mao’s and Deng’s methods of coping with the problem of bureaucratism.

Mao viewed bureaucratism as a problem of political style. The bureaucrat who sought his own comfort was out of touch with the masses and under the influence of bourgeois values. Typically, Maoist methods of correction were: requirements that cadres do a certain amount of productive labor; May Seventh cadre schools emphasizing labor and ideological study; criticism of cadres by the masses; and emphasis on political criteria for promotion. All of these methods attempted to sustain or recreate the base area experience of close mass-cadre relations, and they used episodic rather than constant measures to put personal pressure on the cadre to behave correctly.

By contrast, the approach characteristic of the post-Mao period views bureaucracy as an organizational defect. An organization that is not doing its job of service to the people, whose officials are allowed to be lazy and aloof, is a poorly designed and disciplined organization. Its problem is not too much capitalism but too much feudalism. With this idea of the problem, the solutions are the clear specification of organizational and individual responsibilities, efficient disciplinary procedures, proper training for officials, and intraorganizational democracy. These reforms do not attempt to recreate the base area experience in order to transform the outlook of the individual official. Instead, they attempt to structure the organization permanently in such a way that desirable, functional behavior is encouraged, and undesirable, dysfunctional behavior is discouraged. Institutionalization is used as a weapon against bureaucratism.

Decentralization. The relationship between national and subnational administrative units is one of the most complex problems of the Chinese political system. The system is highly centralized in its formal allocation of political authority. Central organs may assign certain functions and powers to lower levels but retain the authority to reclaim them or to intervene in their implementation; decentralization does not guarantee lower levels the right to exercise their powers permanently or autonomously. Yet decentralization is a principle of real operational importance that seems to be well established. Despite its theoretical subordination to the principle of centralism, it has gradually emerged since the late 1950s as one of the PRC’s primary administrative

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36 Barrett, Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power, passim.
37 The most typical period for Maoist administrative reforms was not the Cultural Revolution but the measures for administrative revitalization of 1967–1969. See Harding, Organizing China, pp. 267–95.
characteristics. Decentralization has been part of both the Maoist and post-Mao administrative programs, but for very different reasons.

The influences that have prompted decentralization are diverse. They include desires to restrict the power of central bureaucracy and thereby to give local units enough political space to develop their own internal resources. Underlying this view is the conviction that creation of a new political culture requires opportunities for local action that cannot be realized under a highly centralized system. More pragmatic considerations include efforts to rationalize the economic system by encouraging diversification and regional growth, cutting transport and distribution costs, and reducing the red tape and expense of a centralized planning apparatus. The size of the country and its uneven economic development provide powerful arguments for experimentation with decentralization. Decentralization may be, in part, a response to pressure from subnational elites or at least a product of bargaining between central and local authorities. As noted earlier, Mao mobilized provincial support for his advocacy of the Great Leap, and, in recent years, decentralization has drawn support from influence acquired by subnational governments during the Cultural Revolution. Questions of national security and defense also affect elite thinking on some aspects of decentralization, particularly economic diversification and the development of regional or local self-sufficiency.

Decentralization impulses have taken the form of bureaucratic simplification and administrative decentralization. The former is that recurring wish, found in most political systems, to reduce the size and complexity of governmental structure. Motivated by desires for economy and efficiency, and by an innate suspicion that bureaucracies are always overweight, advocates of bureaucratic simplification try to eliminate excess staff and departments. The CCP embarked on its first simplification campaign as early as 1941, in the context of its Yanan rectification movements. Attempts at a repeat performance began as early as 1956. By 1958, Mao had proposed a two-thirds cut in party and government organizations to correct "structural obesity." Although his

goal was unrealistic, a substantial reduction of administrative personnel and some simplification of lower-level administrative units took place over the next two years. However, the CCP's greatest assault on bureaucratic proliferation came with the Cultural Revolution. According to one report, forty ministries, eleven commissions, and twenty-one special agencies of the 1965 State Council had been reduced to seventeen ministries, three commissions, and fifteen special agencies in 1972. The Shanghai Municipal Statistical Bureau had a staff of 200 before the Cultural Revolution; it was abolished, and statistical work was carried on by four persons. The 1969 party constitution indicated that central CCP organization would be much less complicated than in the past. Model revolutionary committees were also noteworthy for their simplicity of administrative structure and staff. There can be little doubt that the governmental apparatus of 1972 was significantly smaller and less top-heavy than it had been in 1965. But bureaucratization then resumed, so that by the late 1970s the general size and complexity of administration was not greatly different from the pattern before the Cultural Revolution. Perhaps the most that can be said is that Chinese leaders are sensitive to the problem of bureaucratic proliferation and that they can be expected to mount recurring attacks on it. Administrative decentralization refers to a reordering of responsibilities within the government in which powers as well as personnel are shifted to lower levels. CCP historical experience was mainly with decentralized modes of government, a pattern continued in the 1949–1954 administrative system, which gave a major role to regional units. Rapid decentralization accompanied the FFYP; however, in late 1957, the CCP adopted a decentralization policy that remained in effect, albeit with many twists and turns, through the 1970s. The initial 1957 decisions shifted control over many industrial and commercial enterprises, as well as financial resources, from the central ministries to provincial authorities. This action, combined with dual rule, resulted in a marked increase in the powers of provincial party committees.


The following discussion draws on Schurmann, Ideology and Organization, pp. 175–78, 195–210.
Subsequently, a reverse process occurred in the countryside, as control over agriculture was pushed upward from the cooperatives to the rural communes. The Great Leap was marked, therefore, by a concentration of power in the middle (provincial and commune) levels at the expense of the center and basic production units.

A different pattern emerged as Leap policies yielded to retrenchment policies. Further decentralization occurred at lower levels as the communes were reduced in size and as rural production teams and individual enterprises acquired more autonomy. At higher levels, provincial dominance lessened with renewed emphasis on central planning and the reestablishment of regional party bureaus to oversee provincial activities. On the eve of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese administrative system was thus highly differentiated. The central ministries retained direct control over some enterprises—largely those of most importance for national defense and heavy industry—and responsibility for overall planning of the economy. Provincial and municipal authorities managed the bulk of nonagricultural economic activities, subject to coordination with central plans. However, basic-level units also operated a variety of small-scale enterprises, and agricultural management essentially was decentralized to production units within the communes. Throughout this system, individual production units had some leeway in managing their activities either through negotiation with higher planning authorities or through setting their own targets and distribution arrangements.62

The Cultural Revolution brought little formal change in this system, but the balance shifted toward decentralization. The weakening of CCP organization and the preoccupation with resolution of political disputes apparently gave units at all levels greater room for maneuver in performance of their routine activities. Second, decentralization took a broader political significance due to the expansion of mass participation in basic-level decisions; powers that initially devolved to local elites were partially shared with more representative bodies. Finally, the objectives of local development, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency received greater emphasis in the Cultural Revolution. Administrative units of all sizes were urged to be small but complete, that is, to be able to take care of all their own needs. All provinces were urged to become self-sufficient in grain, and all counties were urged to produce their own walking tractors (one small enough to be operated by a person on foot).

Administrative politics since 1976 have seen an alteration of centralizing and decentralizing tendencies. Many Chinese leaders assumed that modernization would be according to the Soviet model of a high rate of investment, economic decision making concentrated in the central ministries, and a number of expensive key projects directly controlled by the center. This would represent a return to the policies of the mid-1950s, a time of rapid economic growth for China. Other leaders were persuaded by the economists and theorists of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to embark on much more innovative and decentralized economic initiatives. Before he became premier, Zhao Ziyang had been very successful with such policies in Sichuan, and after he assumed national power, they became increasingly widespread. Among the most important post-Mao decentralizing policies are the household contracting and specialized household systems in rural areas; the expansion of enterprise control over personnel, investment, and production in urban areas; and the facilitation of direct contact with foreign capital, including special economic zones and grants of decision-making authority to various provinces and cities. These major policies have required, in turn, numerous other adjustments in economic policies and structures, including a greater priority for the production of consumer goods, restriction on party interference in enterprise management, development of economic law and courts, and so forth. Altogether, the devolution of economic power in the 1980s is so extensive that it is difficult to predict its political effects. In a fairly short time, the Chinese political economy has moved from leftist ideological experimentation to the most advanced experiments in market socialism in the Communist world.

It appears paradoxical that decentralization could be a policy of both the left and the right in China. The answer to the paradox is that Maoist decentralization is very different in motivation and policies from current efforts. Before discussing that

62 On pre-Cultural Revolution industrial organization and management, see Barry M. Richman, Industrial Society in Communist China (New York: Random House, 1969), esp. chaps. 8 and 9.
difference, it is important to recall some features of the general ecology of decentralization in China. First, some degree of decentralization is inevitable in China. The size of the population, the ruggedness of the territory, and the weakness of communications and central resources require that many decisions be made outside of Peking. Second, the political tradition of China is emphatically unitary, and this is reinforced by the ethnic homogeneity of the population as well as by the Leninist party-state. The ethnically based federalism and separatism of Yugoslavia are not problems in China, nor are minority questions as significant as they are in the Soviet Union. Third, decentralization is costly in terms of central information and control. To the extent that the hundreds of thousands of Chinese enterprises really make their own decisions, the state will be less knowledgeable about what is happening, less able to guide decisions, and less able to coordinate general development. These problems may be counterbalanced by an increase in productivity, but they remain problems. Attempts to improve information and control generate centralizing tendencies. Fourth, decentralization is attractive to the CCP because of its rural revolutionary experience. The CCP has always felt confident of its relationship to the peasants and of the potential of local initiative. This is in great contrast to the Soviet Union, where mutual mistrust between the peasantry and the urban Bolshevik leadership contributed to many tragic (and centralizing) policies. These four factors imply that any Chinese Communist regime would be decentralized to some degree, but probably not in a federal manner, and that the central leadership would be attracted to but at the same time inconvenienced by decentralization policies. There is much room for ideological and policy differences within this framework.

Self-sufficiency, egalitarianism, and communal mobilization were the key features of Maoist decentralization. The norm of self-sufficiency meant that each unit of society should try to take care of its own basic needs. For example, a village in Mongolia should try to raise enough grain to feed itself even if conditions were not favorable for grain growing, rather than exclusively raising sheep and then using the profits from sheep raising to buy grain. Egalitarianism encouraged decentralization by favoring the distribution of resources rather than their concentration. In health services, for instance, extensive and rather unregulated programs such as the barefoot doctors were preferred to the more centralized urban hospitals. Lastly, decentralization was intended to encourage initiative, but not individual initiative. Building socialism meant increasing collective activities and rewards and decreasing or eliminating private activities and rewards. The Great Leap Forward is a good example because, at the same time that central controls were relaxed, the key unit of rural organization was moved from the cooperative to the much larger commune. Moreover, decentralization relied on communal mobilization within a campaign cycle, implying a later consolidation phase with centralizing tendencies. Politically, Maoist decentralization encouraged an egalitarian, communal, and small-scale society, responding to and controlled by his own charismatic leadership. There are strong rural and traditional elements in this vision. It is a poor peasant's dream of middle-class peasant security and independence transposed into a socialist framework.

Decentralization under Zhao Ziyang emphasizes the opposite virtues of commodity production, maximum growth, and individualism. In the 1980s, villages and families are allowed to make their own production decisions based on profitability rather than self-sufficiency. Peasants are encouraged to engage in commodity production rather than producing for their own needs. Peasants are freer to produce what they want, but they are more dependent on markets and other producers. Maximum growth, rather than egalitarianism, is the criteria by which policy success is measured. Sometimes, this leads to concentration and centralization of resources in areas of maximum return, but this tendency is counterbalanced somewhat by the conviction that enterprise leadership and lower-level administration should have more decision making discretion. Moreover, maximum growth also means that innovators can justify their irregular behavior by favorable economic results. Although maximum growth has its own inherent flaws as a policy criterion, it is less constraining than egalitarianism. The emphasis on individual initiative and reward is one of the most amazing aspects of post-Mao policy. The principle behind it is that individual benefit is legitimate if society is benefitted as well. In rural areas, it has led to a decollectivization of resources and decision making. At this level, twenty-five years of Maoist collectivism has been reversed. Decollectivization is not presented as part of a campaign,
but as a long-term policy backed up by fifteen-year and twenty-year contracts. In general, what lies behind this approach to decentralization is a modern commitment to efficiency and rationalization, in which the front line of producers should have discretion with commensurate risks and rewards, backed up by stable and nonintrusive political-administrative coordination. The two approaches to decentralization presented here have been simplified and somewhat stereotyped for purposes of contrast, but it is important to note that the same general policy direction can have such different ideals and policy content.

**RULE ENFORCEMENT AND ADJUDICATION**

The Chinese attitude toward conflict, the role of law and the role of legitimate violence in society is quite different from that of developed Western countries, but increasing social complexity and the negative experience of the Cultural Revolution have led to reforms that emphasize "socialist legality," a concept very similar to legal reforms in European Communist countries and much closer to modern Western ideals than previous Chinese approaches. But the practice of conflict resolution does not change as rapidly as its theory, so the legal reality of the 1980s is a mixture of recent reforms with a system of social control that has evolved over thirty years of Communist rule.

**Social Control.** Despite the tension and outbreaks of violence that have accompanied political mobilizations, social life in the PRC has been relatively orderly. One reason for this is the lack of geographic mobility in Chinese society. Even in cities, people tend to live in the same place for decades, forming tight little neighborhoods in which strangers are noticed. Another reason is the government's success in reducing opportunities and temptations to violate its prescriptions. Chinese socialism, with its egalitarianism and austerity, is a factor here. Basic economic needs are met with few gross differentials in income and little conspicuous affluence. People know, in a general way, what others around them earn and the rationale behind income differentials. There are few opportunities to increase one's income except by publicly known changes in employment status. In other words, perceptions of economic inequity are low, and illegal income is difficult to conceal and dangerous to display.

Strict regulation of possession of firearms, rationing of scarce goods, controls on marketing activities, and close supervision of residence and travel present further obstacles to the commission of crimes and the evasion of authority. Moreover, the Chinese pattern of social organization leaves little space for individual privacy. Basic-level cadres and activists are close to the people and are able to engage in frequent face-to-face contact with the citizens whom they lead. Primary units are organized in small groups, each with an internal leadership structure that is necessarily familiar with individual activities and problems. The fact that many of these units are both work and residential groups adds to the fullness of knowledge that members have about each other. Group meetings and discussions provide a forum for direct solicitation and exchange of information about members' thoughts and behavior. Not are officials free from supervision by superiors, peers, and superiors, since the checks, reports, and discussion meetings required for cadres are more intense than those for ordinary citizens. Cadres are better able to manipulate the system to their advantage than are the masses, but the government makes serious efforts to counter the abuse of official position.

These conditions and controls cannot eliminate the possibility of deviant behavior. They are less effective in large cities than they are in towns and villages, and their effectiveness has varied with the intensity of changes demanded by the government, with economic conditions, and with the stability of political authority. For example, there was considerable noncompliance with the marriage law and collectivization directives. The economic crises of 1959–1961 led to hoarding, black marketeering, and a revival of official corruption. Crimes of violence increased during 1967–1968, although it was difficult to distinguish in

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those years between organized political violence and random criminal acts. Post-1976 criticism of the Gang's activities and influence involved many allegations about criminal behavior, profiteering, embezzlement, and so forth in 1974–1976. In 1978–1979, the press reported many current examples of crime and corruption to dramatize the need for stricter observance of the law. In 1983, it was felt that a major anticrime campaign was necessary. Despite these variations in degrees of compliance, however, the Chinese pattern of control and supervision has been relatively effective in limiting rule violations.

The preceding comments have referred to controls that seek to minimize the use of coercive measures by denying opportunities for offenses or by making their consequences risky or unrewarding. We should also note the more positive and voluntaristic aspects of social control at the basic level in the PRC. Two phenomena of particular importance are popular participation in rule enforcement and adjudication, and the effects of political socialization.

The popular role in rule enforcement and adjudication includes some participation in formal legal organs. The people's tribunals established early in PRC history the principle of mass participation in trials in both participant-observer and judicial roles. When state organs were formalized in 1954, a system of people's assessor's was provided to continue this practice. People's assessors are mass representatives who sit with judges and theoretically participate equally with them in the hearing and deciding of a case. Popular exposure to court proceedings contributes to a better understanding of the judicial system and possibly lessens traditional fears of litigation; it may also inject some popular notions of equity into court decisions. However, the modest role of the courts and their general subordination to police and party organs limit the significance of this kind of participation.

Much more important as a means of involving the population are the security and defense committees and mediation committees that are organized within basic-level units. The former were, before the Cultural Revolution, the lowest arm of the public security system, operating under close police supervision. Their primary responsibilities were to watch for and report on illegal or suspicious activities, and to maintain surveillance over the "five bad elements" and other offenders sentenced to supervised labor in their home locale. Following attacks on police and the public security system during the Cultural Revolution, security committees evolved more diverse organizational arrangements with broader and possibly more autonomous law enforcement functions within their units.

Mediation committees come close to representing the Chinese ideal of dispute resolution. As elected bodies, they add to the popular role in the local governmental process. As localized institutions composed of activists rather than full-time cadres, they are decentralized and nonbureaucratic in character. And in their mission of mediation, they display the Chinese preference for informal, persuasive, and voluntary modes of settlement over formal litigation and adjudication. Mediation is a preferred course of action for courts as well, with judges frequently advising disputants to work out settlements on their own or through intermediaries. Police, women's and labor organizations, cadres and activists, friends and relatives may also play mediating roles. But it is the mediation committees—which are charged with educating their fellow citizens about their social obligations and anticipating possible conflicts as well as mediating actual disputes—that perhaps symbolize best the ideal of a self-regulating society. Although security and mediation committees are largely the domain of activists in close touch with political superiors, they shift much responsibility for social control from the state apparatus to mass-based community organizations. In 1983, there were more than 927,000 mediation committees, with 5.5 million members. In the five years of 1979–1983 they settled 33


million disputes, approximately ten times the number of civil cases tried by China's basic-level people's courts.

Political socialization extends the development of voluntary social control to the entire population. As noted in Chapter 5, socialization in the PRC stresses the citizen's obligation to serve the community and creates multiple opportunities for the practice of this obligation in daily life. Participation in political study and discussion, in mass movements, in the management of primary unit affairs, in xiaofang and other forms of productive labor are all multifunctional activities. In them, the citizen gains a better understanding of the system's policies and norms and simultaneously takes part in their realization. Insistence on practice is of utmost importance, partly because it reinforces learning and individual commitment and partly because it creates a social milieu of collective effort toward attainment of community goals. Governmental pressures for compliance are intensified by the example of one's peers and by pressures for group conformity. Although the strength of these pressures has lessened since the end of the Cultural Revolution, they are still a major reality of Chinese life. There is nothing automatic about either group or individual acceptance of the system's prescriptions, but the CCP continues to push for the development of a social ethic in which compliance with the demands of the political community is recognized as a legitimate obligation of every citizen.

The Formal Legal System. It is important to note that there is very little involvement of the formal legal system in the pattern of social control described previously. Conflict and deviant behavior is not a private matter to be brought to court by the involved parties, but a public concern of families, neighbors, fellow workers, and superiors. What would certainly be viewed as meddling in a more individualistic society is seen as social duty. Most petty conflicts and transgressions are dealt with by basic-level social units rather than by the specialized legal system. The problems and offenses of party members are generally handled within the party. Victor Li aptly describes the Chinese system as "law without lawyers."\(^{48}\) The role of the formal legal system is more or less limited to special cases, irreconcilable conflicts, and transgressions requiring stiffer legal penalties.

The sharply limited social role of the PRC's formal legal system reflects its turbulent and tragic history. In the base areas and in rural areas after 1949, legal decisions were made by mass meetings or by local cadres. The lawyers and legal system that the PRC inherited were disdained for their bourgeois origins. By the mid-1950s, however, the regularity and control promised by an established legal system produced a short-lived spurt of legal institutionalization. Work began on law codes, and lawyers and judges were trained. It was thought that the period of irregular, spontaneous mass justice was over.\(^{49}\) However, the antireform campaign of 1957 quickly brought down the fledgling institutions. It was claimed that they showed insufficient class consciousness and restricted the enthusiasm of the masses. Lawyers who had defended criminals were criticized for unscrupulous behavior. A pattern evolved of unrestricted mass struggle against class enemies during campaigns and decisions by the political-legal secretary of the relevant party committee in other matters.\(^{50}\) The duties of the procuratorate were left to the security organs, a procedure that was formalized in the 1975 constitution.\(^{51}\) The legal system was inseparable from the political system, which in turn was identical with the party. Under these circumstances, judicial training and legal services were unnecessary.

The rehabilitation of the formal legal system began in 1978. Its destruction was blamed on Lin Biao and the Gang of Four (although in fact it had been ineffective since 1957), and its restoration was linked to the restoration of socialist democracy.\(^ {52}\) Law schools began to be rehabilitated, and working groups were

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\(^ {52}\) Chen Xuan, ed., *Gangmün jilu guandao*, p. 105.

formed by the party center to review and amend the draft legal codes that had been aborted in the 1950s. The Second Session of the Fifth National People’s Congress passed a battery of new organic laws and codes in July 1979, including China’s first official criminal code. The legal committees of the party and the people’s congress system continue to be very active, and many new laws have been promulgated, including a patent law designed with international advice. Judicial autonomy has been emphasized, and, since 1979, the power of judicial decision making has been taken from party political-legal secretaries and given back to the judges. The new importance assigned to law and the courts has put an unbearable strain on China’s meager and atrophied legal resources. In 1987, there were 2,500 full-time lawyers in China; in 1982, there were approximately the same number, or less than one two-hundredth of the number of lawyers in the United States.58

The recent reforms in the Chinese legal system are intended to eliminate the excesses of mass movements and to substitute the “rule of law” for the “rule of persons.” One legal manual describes the latter problem as follows:

The proletarian rule of law requires the creation of a comprehensive constitution and a comprehensive legal code so that in every area of work there will be laws to rely on and regulations to follow. It requires that all party organs and social organizations, all working officials and individual citizens act strictly according to the law. It requires that the law be concrete and stable, continuous and authoritative. No leader whatsoever should be able to change it arbitrarily.

The rule of persons is the opposite. Law is viewed as a restriction of one’s activities; if there are party directives there are no need for laws. Laws are viewed as mere reference guides for work; individual authority should be greater than law, the will of the leader should be higher than law. Business should be done according to persons rather than according to law, relying on words rather than on law. The “creative spirit of the masses” can be higher than law, and a mass movement could throw the laws to one side like waste paper. These theories, views and thoughts which opposed law and emphasized the rule of persons were once popular.


Currently, legal and theoretical circles have not yet come to a unified opinion on the question of the rule of law and the rule of persons.56

As the last line of this passage suggests, it is easier to introduce laws than it is to change behavior. Changing cadre behavior is one of the goals of the 1983–1986 party rectification campaign, and changing mass behavior is the goal of the 1985–1990 legal education campaign.

Recent legal reforms are not supposed to change the class base of the regime or the hegemony of the party; instead, they are intended to regularize the regime and prevent excesses. Therefore, authors emphasize and even overemphasize the difference between socialist legality and bourgeois legality. And indeed there are important differences between the two. The PRC has an explicit class base of the working class and its allies; these comprise the “people.” Although even class enemies are considered citizens and have the rights and duties of citizens, they will be treated as political enemies by the state. Although the current definition of the “people” is very broad—“all those classes strata and social groups who approve support and participate in construction of modernization”—it is flexible enough to be manipulated by officials. As far as the hegemony of the party is concerned, legal reform is not a challenge to party leadership, but it is a limitation of its direct ruling and administrative activities.56 It represents the self-restriction of the party to regulated behavior. However, the party can violate this self-restriction only with the loss of prestige and popular confidence.

Perhaps the current trend of legal reform is more challenging to the idea of the Leninist party-state than its proponents would care to admit. There is a latent tension between a strong, comprehensive legal system and the class basis of the state, because the former guarantees equal rights to all citizens and the latter presumes an internal war against enemies who are citizens. Some accommodation can be made—class-based legislation, for example—but the procedural principles are contradictory. This

56Chen Xuan. Gongmin falu guanx, p. 63.
56Bib., p. 3.
problem and the decline of exploiting classes led Khrushchev, in the early 1960s, to discard the notion of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and declare the Soviet Union a "state of the whole people." Another hidden problem is the relationship of current reforms to Western models. Quite obviously, a major reason for current legal reforms is the disastrous consequences brought on by the haughty disdain of legal institutions and procedures. Notions such as constitutionalism, judicial autonomy, and the rule of law should not be necessary according to Marxist-Leninist ideology, but they have proven necessary for China. Rather than question the ideology, however, most reformers pretend that what they are proposing has little to do with inferior, Western models. A more satisfying approach would be to view problems of the rule of law and of some aspects of constitutional structure (such as the basic criteria for effective elections) as problems faced by any large, modern country rather than as capitalist or socialist problems. If there were common problems of modernity, it might be expected that ideas for coping with them might be borrowed from different systems.57

Coercion and Voluntarism. Rule enforcement in the PRC emphasizes prevention of violations, through voluntary compliance or other deterrents, rather than legal processing and punishment of offenders. This has been described as an "internal" model of compliance because of its concern for ideological and moral rectitude, in contrast to the familiar, Western "external" model that identifies certain actions as crimes and then punishes violations.58 Even in the post-Mao period when the role of law has been emphasized, formal legal action has been mainly a last resort or a means of publicizing model cases for deterrent or educational purposes. Moreover, the penal system has a strong emphasis on the reeducation and rehabilitation of criminals. Jobs are found for released criminals with their old units or with new units, and the claimed level of recidivism is low. Control of deviance thus shifts away from formal legal institutions toward a great variety of other social institutions and pressures.59 The emphasis on voluntarism does not, however, apply to class enemies, nor does it obviate the need for coercive instruments, which are an important part of the legal system.

The PRG's coercive apparatus is extensive. It centers on the state public security system, which is tightly controlled by the CCP and is particularly influential within local governments.60 Public security organs are resourceful and powerful. They include administrative cadres, police, and secret police; they maintain extensive files based on both regular police reports and the numerous activities over which they have some supervisory powers (for example, rationing, census, travel, and the work of popular security and mediation committees); and they have de facto power to arrest, investigate, adjudicate, and sentence in many cases that never reach the courts or are subject to only nominal review and ratification by other arms of the legal structure. The police presence is not an oppressive one in terms of numbers or display of force and arms; however, it is backed by the militia and ultimately the PLA, which leaves little doubt about its capacity to employ force when it chooses to do so.

In cases of acute class struggle, the coercive apparatus has also included certain structures of a quasi-legal or extralegal nature, which have acted episodically but with telling effect. The most prominent of these were the "struggle" and "speak bitterness" meetings, people's tribunals, and mass trials of the reconstruction era, which meted out so-called revolutionary justice to landlords, counterrevolutionaries, and other enemies of the new regime. These instruments operated under varying degrees of governmental authority and supervision. For example, peasants' associations had legal authorization to redistribute land; the people's tribunals, to try counterrevolutionaries. All of the localized coercive measures of the early years had general party approval and leadership. At the same time, the party encouraged a degree of spontaneity and popular participation in their operations that

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57 An analysis of this sort is done by Xu Chongde in Wu Jialin, ed., ibid., pp. 401-04.
59 An excellent introduction is Victor H. Li, Law Without Lawyers.
blurred the lines of government control and made uniform standards and procedures impossible to maintain. The ad hoc measures of 1950–1952 have not been repeated on a comparable scale, but mass struggle meetings in campaigns have continued the policy of allowing extralegal institutions to bring real or threatened force to bear on political deviants. Red Guard activities, which had generalized support but not direct guidance from Maoist officials, included widespread acts of violence and property confiscation against suspected bourgeois or revisionist elements. During land reform, the objects of mass coercion were clearly identifiable as members of the former exploiting classes, and so there was a natural limit to the targets, if not the level, of violence. In the Cultural Revolution, however, the label of class enemy was much more arbitrary, and mass coercion intended by Mao degenerated into violent factional struggle. The chaos that ensued induced the post-Mao regime to abandon categorically the use of mass coercion.

The sanctions imposed by the rule enforcement apparatus itself can be divided into “administrative” sanctions, with “informal” and “formal” varieties, and “criminal” sanctions. * Informal” sanctions are those imposed by what we have called quasi-legal or extralegal structures. During the land reform in 1950–1952, they included severe penalties up to and including summary execution, but their normal range is varying degrees of criticism by local cadres and peers. The more moderate forms of criticism are constructive and nonthreatening, but the struggle meetings at the other end of the scale may include verbal abuse, physical intimidation, and physical attack. “Administrative” sanctions of a “formal” nature are those imposed by public security organs without recourse to court proceedings. They include warnings, modest fines, and brief detention; “supervised labor,” in which the offender remains in society but is subject to special supervision, indoctrination, and stigma; and “labor reeducation” or “rehabilitation,” in which the offender is sent to a labor camp for an indefinite period. “Criminal” sanctions are those imposed by the courts, including “labor reform” (sentence to labor for a fixed period, considered a more severe sentence than “labor reeducation”), imprisonment, and death. A unique example of the Chinese dedication to moral reform is the probated death sentence, which allows the condemned criminal two years in which to show internal transformation and then receive a life sentence. Several members of the Gang of Four, including Jiang Qing, Mao’s wife, received probated death sentences. However, especially during the 1988 anticrime campaign, the post-Mao regime has been very free with normal death sentences, and the number of those executed ranges well into the thousands.

The extent and effect of these coercive sanctions is difficult to gauge with precision (statistics are not available on such matters), but they have occurred on a scale sufficient to make a deep impression on the population. Those killed during land reform and suppression of counterrevolutionaries campaigns probably numbered in the millions, and virtually all Chinese are familiar with struggle meetings and the various kinds of labor reform that have been the most common sanctions since the reconstruction period. The threat and use of coercion must serve as a significant deterrent to resistance to or violation of state policies. It could not be otherwise for a regime that emerged from a bloody civil war, carried out a radical redistribution of wealth and status, sought to change many traditional social norms, and was to undergo serious internal upheaval in the postrevolutionary period. Opposition and noncompliance was inevitable, as was the impulse to attack it with force. That coercive sanctions were severe and arbitrary in the early years and have remained a ready response to serious deviations, particularly those of a political nature, is not surprising. It is disappointing, however, to see the post-Mao regime increase the severity of formal sanctions, while discontinuing the use of mass coercion. The Cultural Revolution proved that mass coercion was counterproductive for regime stability; it may well be true in a less dramatic fashion that sending large numbers of unemployed youths and dissidents to labor reeducation camps and executing thousands of persons

is detrimental to modernization or, at least, to a “high level of socialist spiritual civilization.”

Nonetheless, coercion is not the primary mechanism of social control in the PRC. There is no single mechanism that dominates the rule enforcement process, but there is a general approach that casts its influence over the entire process. Simply put, it is the view that citizens should be led to a voluntary acceptance of the system’s goals and norms, that they should enforce them through their own actions, and that deviations should be corrected through education rather than punishment. The ideal of voluntarism is not attained in practice, hence the need for the coercive apparatus. Still, the ideal is operative even within that apparatus. Trials seem to be valued more for their educational impact on the public than their punitive effect on the offender, and those on whom sanctions are imposed (whether “administratively” or “criminally”) are told that the objective is reeducation rather than punishment. Without denying the harsh realities of labor reform, which is a form of penal servitude, we should note that the regime does try to realize reform as well as labor in its administration of this sanction. Voluntarism manifests itself most concretely, however, in forms of social control that encourage citizens to avoid offenses in the first instance and to develop cooperative orientations toward compliance with governmental rules.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON THE PROCESS
One of the most striking changes brought about by the Chinese revolution is an altered relationship between state and society. The imperial political system, with its orientation toward maintenance of the status quo, accepted a certain isolation from society. It exchanged some of its capacity to mobilize the population in return for a high degree of autonomy from societal influences. The Communist system extends its influence and initiative to the mass level, magnifying greatly its capacity to mobilize social resources. In doing so, it opens the political process to diverse societal pressures and demands that intrude constantly on the calculations of political elites. The welfare and

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morale of the population, the structure and leadership qualities of primary social units, the willingness of the population to comply with national programs, the distribution of resources among different regions and population groups all constitute restraints as well as opportunities within the political process. In expanding the scope of governmental competence, the CCP also has expanded the range of societal influences that it must somehow accommodate. This point has, of course, been the subject of recurring analysis throughout our study.

A somewhat analogous change, which has not yet been discussed directly, has occurred in the system’s external relations. Although foreign policy and relations fall outside the scope of this volume, a few observations on the impact of the external environment are in order. We begin with a brief review of changes in China’s international role.

Changes in China’s International Role. The PRC’s early history was marked by a limited role in international affairs. The imperial political system—at least in Qing times—had been relatively aloof from the non-Asian world, preserving in its foreign relations a degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency that more than matched its internal autonomy. There was little tradition of active participation in a system of nation-states. Western and, later, Japanese imperialism shattered China’s isolationism, forcing late Qing and republican statesmen to enter into extensive contact and negotiation with representatives of foreign governments. China began to develop a foreign policy apparatus and to engage in a variety of international activities. However, the formalities of this shift were misleading, simply because China’s foreign policy focused largely on internal problems. China’s international role was that of a subject country whose demands on other countries dealt primarily with the power and privileges that those countries exercised within China. What its role might be after attainment of national independence and unification was an open question.

The CCP was in no position to reverse this role dramatically when it first came to power. Its own experience with other systems rested largely on its relationships with the Nationalists, Japanese, and Russians. Its immediate concerns were predominantly domestic, for obvious reasons, and it faced a Western
world already caught up in cold war hostility to Communism. The PRC's intervention in the Korean War sealed an American policy of containment and isolation, which, for two decades, placed American power behind efforts to restrict China's international role. For a few years after 1949, therefore, China's foreign contacts were mainly with other Communist systems.

In the mid-1950s, under the guidance of Zhou Enlai's "peaceful coexistence" policy, the PRC began to diversify its contacts with non-Communist countries, especially in Asia. Still, its foreign relations remained skewed toward the socialist bloc until the Sino-Soviet dispute initiated a fundamental shift, the evolution and consequences of which were to dominate PRC foreign policy (and to some extent domestic policy) throughout the 1960s and 1970s. China's adaptation to the schism was extraordinarily tortuous, but it can be divided into two general phases.

The first phase of the 1960s rested on strong opposition to both the United States and the USSR. In taking this stance, which placed it outside the two great global alliance systems, the PRC necessarily assumed a somewhat isolationist role. The Cultural Revolution reinforced this tendency by radical questioning of the foreign ministry—bringing the temporary recall of most PRC ambassadors at one point—and by creating a number of provocative incidents at home and abroad that strained bilateral relations with a number of countries. The effect was to exaggerate images of China as an outlaw country, intent on isolationist self-reliance. In fact, Mao's strategy was not isolationist at all, but rather a search for new allies to bolster China's exceedingly hazardous position as the world's only serious enemy of both nuclear superpowers.

The search began with an effort to win over the socialist bloc, an effort that split the bloc but failed to create significant support for China. Among Communist states, only Albania became a real ally, the others remained tied to the USSR or, as in the case of North Korea and North Vietnam, maintained a shifting middle ground between the two rivals. Many pro-Chinese splinter groups formed in left-wing parties not in power, but again the results were mixed and gave the Chinese little real leverage. The PRC could not compete successfully with the Soviet Union for leadership of the world Communist parties.

Increasingly, then, Chinese opposition to the superpowers turned to the larger Third World arena. Portraying itself as the champion of resistance to colonialism and neocolonialism, and particularly of Third World liberation movements, the PRC adopted a militant posture on global revolution and channeled limited political and military aid to selected liberation movements. The combination of aid and rhetorical support, plus China's credentials as a Third World country, gave this strategy some substance; however, as the 1960s wore on, Vietnam became its key testing ground. As that conflict escalated and then moved toward North Vietnamese victory, the Chinese realized that American imperialism was in decline and therefore a lesser threat than was the Soviet Union, whose border clashes with China in 1969 had raised the specter of a Sino-Soviet war, and that even in a country as close to China as Vietnam, the Russians could supply more material aid than could the PRC. The prospect of Soviet influence moving into Southeast Asia underscored China's fundamental military and economic weakness relative to the superpowers, a weakness that no amount of revolutionary rhetoric or Third World sympathy could counteract. In short, the strategy of the 1960s was an inadequate answer to the Soviet threat, and its anti-American rationale was dissipating as the United States absorbed its own bitter lessons from Vietnam and began to reconsider its long-standing containment policy.

With the 1970s, therefore, a new Chinese strategy took shape, one of building a global united front against Russian "social imperialism" with heavy reliance on cooperation with capitalist countries and a muting—although not an abandonment—of emphasis on world revolution. The crucial political event initiating the new phase was Sino-American rapprochement, signaled in July 1971 by Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Peking; followed by PRC admission to the United Nations later in the year, with tacit American support; and confirmed in February 1972 by Nixon's visit and the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué that opened the way for greatly improved relations between the two countries. Accompanying the breakthrough in United States-China relations was a sharp increase in diplomatic contacts with other countries, with the November 1972 normalization of Sino-Japanese relations perhaps the most significant develop-
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ment, and the beginnings of a marked expansion of foreign trade. Post-1976 policies accelerated China’s economic ties with capitalist countries and made more explicit the desire to rally Western Europe, Japan, and the United States in common opposition to the Soviet Union. While China’s relationship with these countries fell far short of a formal united front, resting largely on bilateral economic and cultural exchange, the Chinese openly advocated a strong anti-Soviet military posture for capitalist countries and were obviously deriving military benefits from their high-technology trade with them. Since 1979, China has continued to develop political and economic ties to the West, but the emphasis on a united front against the Soviet Union has diminished. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 continue to justify Chinese hostility toward the Soviet Union, although in 1979 the Chinese ceased calling the Soviets “revisionists” and seemed to be moving toward better relations until the invasion of Afghanistan. There were considerable increases in trade and diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1984. Possibly as a result of disenchchantment with the United States over the Taiwan Relations Act (1979) and the pro-Taiwan posture of the Reagan presidential campaign in 1980, the Chinese seem to be moving toward open but autonomous relations with both cold war camps—a development that has occurred alongside a continual expansion of contacts with the West.

This brief survey underscores two major changes in the PRC’s international role. The first has been in international alignments, with the PRC moving from reliance on the Sino-Soviet alliance in the 1950s (an alliance resting on mutual opposition to the United States as the primary enemy), to a united front strategy against the Soviet Union in the 1970s (involving close economic relations—and some shared military-security concerns—with Japan, Western Europe, and the United States), and finally to a more neutral position. In the middle of this great reversal was a period of militant self-reliance and championship of Third World liberation movements, which represented the Maoist response to China’s precarious position between the superpowers. Yet the 1960s appear in retrospect as a transitional period in which economic movement toward the capitalist world was already underway. Whereas China’s trade during the 1950s was mainly with Communist countries, especially the USSR, non-Communist countries moved into the lead as early as 1963 and increased their share steadily thereafter (see Appendix D). Japan became China’s leading trade partner in 1965 and has held that position ever since; in 1966 the PRC’s other leading partners, in order after Japan, were Hong Kong, the USSR, West Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and France. Although the most significant growth in trade began about 1972 (still well before Mao’s death), the shift toward trade with capitalist countries occurred much earlier. The direction of trade remains overwhelmingly Western-oriented in the post-Mao period, and, more importantly, the role of trade in China’s economic development has taken a qualitative leap.

The second change has been increasing involvement in the international system. The PRC was never truly isolated, securing diplomatic recognition from many European and Asian states—as well as all Communist states—soon after 1949. It maintained modest economic and cultural relations with a variety of countries around the world throughout its first two decades. Nonetheless, Chinese and American policies combined to limit the PRC’s international contacts. As late as July 1971, the PRC held diplomatic recognition from only 54 countries, compared to 68 for the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. Then the situation changed dramatically. By 1979, recognition had shifted to 118 for the PRC and 21 for the ROC; in 1984, the PRC had diplomatic relations with 129 countries. China’s foreign trade increased sharply from $6.3 billion (U.S. dollars) in 1972 to $44 billion in 1982 (see Appendix D). After its 1971 entrance to the United Nations, the PRC steadily expanded its participation in UN activities and other international meetings. Post-1976 policies led not only to accelerated growth of foreign trade, but also to increased tourism and cultural exchange, a Sino-Japanese peace treaty in 1978 that brought the two countries into a very close relationship, and extensive negotiations concerning capitalist investment in and loans to China. The diplomatic offensive of the 1970s culminated in normalization of diplomatic relations

between the United States and the PRC in January 1979. In turn, normalization has ushered in a new era of international openness that would have been unimaginable twenty or even ten years earlier.

National Security and Economic Development. These changing international roles reflect enduring problems of national security and economic development that have exerted a strong influence on domestic politics. Decades of foreign penetration and economic distress had given China's elite a sense of urgency about issues of security and development. This urgency intensified in the post-1949 international environment. Within its first year, the PRC became involved in the Korean War, which was fought close to its borders and threatened attacks on China itself. From then on, it faced an arc of American military power deployed around its eastern and southern perimeter and avowedly maintained to contain and isolate it; the threat of nuclear attack was explicit. The United States supported and defended the rival Nationalist government on Taiwan, which declared its intent to reconquer the mainland. While the PRC had little fear of the Nationalist government as such, its existence perpetuated the civil war and the possibility of military action that might attract American participation. In the 1960s, Vietnam raised the specter of another Korea-type confrontation with the United States, while the Sino-Soviet conflict created new military tension, again including nuclear threats, on the northern border. American pressure finally eased in the 1970s, but the Russians, with their pronounced military and technological superiority and their new influence in Southeast Asia, loomed as a closer and possibly less predictable adversary than the United States had been.

For much of PRC history, security concerns justified and reinforced the Maoist approach. They supported PLA political influence, the value of military virtues, and the idea of militia service for large portions of the population. They encouraged new applications of CCP historical experience with decentralized administration and dispersed production facilities. Especially during the Maoist period, when China confronted both superpowers, they buttressed the emphasis on self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Military encirclement, foreign intelligence activities, and the nearby presence of the ROC lent urgency to mobilization campaigns, intensified the secretive and coercive side of CCP rule, and heightened the tendency to view political opposition as "national betrayal" or "antagonistic contradiction." Perceptions of a hostile international environment helped to legitimize the ethic of austerity, sacrifice, and service for the national cause. In short, Maoism, as practiced in 1958-1976, had strong support from and roots in the "war preparedness" themes of those years.

China's international position also placed sharp limits on its foreign policy options, reserving major commitments for border issues that were, from a Chinese point of view, inseparably linked to domestic affairs and internal security. PRC military ventures since 1949 have included the conquest of Tibet in 1950; the Korean intervention; intermittent hostilities in the Taiwan Straits in the 1950s; brief border wars or skirmishes with India and the Soviet Union; military and construction aid to Vietnam throughout that long war, followed by a brief war on the Sino-Vietnamese border in 1979 and intermittent skirmishes; and the occupation of the Paracel—Xisha (Hsiash)—Islands in the South China Sea in 1974. Without accepting the Chinese version of these disputes, it is evident that the PRC has reserved its military risk taking for issues that involved what its leaders perceived to be Chinese territory and to which they had at least some historical claim or to efforts to keep hostile powers away from sensitive border areas.43

This is not to minimize the PRC's other international involvements, which have included military and economic aid to a number of Communist states and other Third World countries and, of course, a program of political support and some military aid to Third World liberation movements.44 These efforts have

43 For contrasting analyses of these events and the general context of China's foreign relations, see A. Doak Barnett, China and the Major Powers in East Asia (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1977); John Gilmore, China, 1922-1972 (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); and Harold C. Hinton, China's Turbulent Quest, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1972). The Chinese invasion of Vietnam in February 1979 may challenge this generalization, since the PRC defined its action, in part, as "punishment" for the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Nonetheless, some border territory was in dispute, and Peking's underlying concern was probably intensifying Soviet pressure on its southern flank through the medium of a Soviet-Vietnamese alliance.

been modest compared to those of the United States and the USSR, and have not taken a large share of Chinese resources; however, for a country with extraordinary economic needs of its own, they have represented a significant commitment. Yet they have been chosen with great care to minimize risks and maximize publicity, have ranked below frontier and territorial issues in priority, and have frequently involved more rhetoric than substance. The primary commitments of Chinese leaders, including Mao, have been to the security of the Chinese revolution rather than to world proletarian revolution, and many of their actions in alleged support of the latter have been designed to preserve the former. The PRC's dealings with countries such as Pakistan and Iran, its opposition to almost every pro-Soviet movement or government from 1960 to 1980, and its growing cooperation with capitalist countries all reflect the heavy influence of security considerations on the Chinese policy line.

The external environment has its greatest domestic impact on economic development policies and the competition for scarce resources. Although the Chinese military establishment has been relatively low-cost—due to its technological backwardness and its self-supporting or productive economic roles—it has still claimed 5-10 percent of the GNP. The development of nuclear capabilities, which the PRC undertook on its own after the rupture with the Soviet Union, has been a serious strain on national economic and technological resources. Yet direct military costs are only the most obvious indicator of international pressures on development priorities.

In 1949, the CCP faced a fundamental dilemma: long-term economic development, national security, and restoration of international power all required a program of rapid industrialization, but the base economy was too weak to generate easily the investment capital necessary for it. There were three possible responses to this dilemma. One was gradualism, to compromise on the goal of rapid development; historical, ideological, and security considerations opposed this option, which in fact has never had significant support in the PRC—fantasies about Mao's

"anti-modernism" notwithstanding. A second was full-scale Stalinism, a forced-march industrialization based on coercive extractions, especially from the rural sector; although Chinese development has had elements of this approach, the lower margin of surplus in China—as compared to postrevolutionary Russia—and the CCP's stronger commitment to popular livelihood made it unacceptable. The third was to seek foreign capital and technical assistance to get industrialization underway; this was the course chosen, with the USSR the only logical provider in the cold war era. From the outset, then, as seen in the FFYP, PRC development strategy reflected strong external influences. Generally, the plan worked to get industrialization started, although the PRC had to make major concessions to the Russians to obtain their aid. It also revealed the dangers of dependence on a single foreign power, especially one whose national interests increasingly diverged from those of China.

The Sino-Soviet conflict forced the Chinese to choose again, this time under even greater constraints since there were no realistic foreign sources of aid and since Mao had become highly suspicious of the Soviet model as a whole. The Maoist self-reliance extolled during 1958-1976 was an effort to continue rapid industrialization and simultaneously to strengthen the rural sector, in both production and provision of social services, by relying on fuller mobilization of domestic resources. It succeeded in maintaining strong industrial growth rates, in keeping agricultural growth abreast of population growth and in raising popular living standards. Yet it, too, had to adapt to international realities in two important respects. Self-reliance was qualified from the first by increasing trade with capitalist countries for grain and industrial equipment imports, which in turn required maintenance of export markets, especially those in Hong Kong, Singapore, and other areas of Southeast Asia. Foreign trade remained low as a percentage of GNP, but its substance was crucial to China's development, and it forced the PRC to moderate, or compromise, some of its professed principles in order to get what it needed from the global economy.


[For a cost-benefit analysis of Sino-Soviet economic relations in the 1950s, see Alexander Eckstein, Communist China's Economic Growth and Foreign Trade (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), esp. chaps. 5.]
The other and ultimately decisive liability of the Maoist approach was that it retarded technological development, preventing a breakthrough in agriculture and compromising long-term defense and security prospects. It is, of course, an open question as to whether this was really a consequence of Maoist development or of the factional difficulties that beset it. On this question, as on all issues discussed in this section, domestic politics interacted with external pressures in ways that obscure simple cause-and-effect relationships. What is clear is that some CCP elites realized that China was losing ground to the advanced countries—most importantly the Soviet Union—and that something like the four modernizations approach, with emphasis on science and technology, was essential if China were ever to secure its place as a major world power. Mao apparently shared some of these convictions, as seen in his doubts about Cultural Revolution extremism and his desire to improve relations with the United States and other capitalist countries, but he was too closely identified with the earlier pattern to permit its reversal.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a new era in Chinese international economic policy began in 1978. Policies have been abandoned or modified that hitherto had been considered basic to Chinese policy. In every respect, China is more open to Western contact, influence, and investment than at any previous time in PRC history. Moreover, every year since 1978 has seen the adoption of progressively more open policies. Foreign involvement in the economy has moved from the purchase of whole plants in the early 1970s to joint ventures (1978), special economic zones (1980), designated cities authorized to deal directly in international economic concerns (1988), selling bonds on the Tokyo bond market (1984), and the hiring of foreign management personnel by Chinese firms (1985). Credit financing and even international aid have been accepted as legitimate. There have been few hesitations in the onward march of liberalizing policies, and they have been facilitated by corresponding administrative and legal changes. Perhaps most importantly, a patent law, which protects transfers of technology, went into effect in April 1985. The full import of the new “open door” on the Chinese economy, politics, and society will be known only with time, but it certainly is a far-reaching initiative to which Deng, Hu, and Zhao have irrevocably committed themselves.

The changes in China’s international economic policy since the death of Mao have been so spectacular that it is worthwhile to reflect on its continuities with previous policies. First, it should be remembered that the diplomatic prerequisite of stable economic relations is political normalization. The process of normalization with the United States and its allies began under Mao in 1971; it was an option that was not really available to China in the 1950s and 1960s. Second, the 1980s are not the first time that China has adopted a path to modernization that depends on external inputs. Soviet advice and assistance played a major role in modernization in the 1950s, and later Chinese emphasis on self-sufficiency can be explained in part as an adjustment to the unavailability of such aid. Third, China will inevitably remain an internally oriented nation. Size of population, sufficiency of major resources, and a strongly Sino-centric culture dictate that domestic politics generally will have a greater reality and salience than foreign politics. The current “open door” is tied to a strong, popular leadership and to domestic policies that have been very successful, but observers of Chinese foreign policy would be well advised to keep in mind the domestic context of policy and policy makers.

CONCLUSION

The description of Chinese political processes in the last two chapters shows some of the strengths and weaknesses of the input/output model described at the beginning of Chapter 6. On the one hand, Chinese politics can be meaningfully analyzed in these terms. We have described activities and institutional arrangements approximating interest articulation and aggregation and also have described changes in Chinese policy that have affected the volume and content of political input. It is much easier to describe the output side of Chinese politics, although the role of the mass line and decentralization imply concrete limits on the ability of government simply to execute its will. On the other hand, the analytical distinction between input and output has cut across the major institutions and processes of Chinese politics. The principles of mass line and party leadership have featured prominently in both input and output functions, and the distinction has led to a rather artificial division between conflict within the CCP and its decision-making functions.
Even institutions that are essentially on the input side (e.g., mass organizations) have been found also to have output functions of policy propagandizing; and the quintessential output institution, the administration of law, contains important aspects of mass participation.

It should be recalled that input and output functions are not fully separate in Western politics. Bureaucracies often formulate policy, and legislators become involved in the executive process. However, the analytical distinction does correspond to a major institutional cleavage in parliamentary regimes between legislative and executive institutions or between policy-forming and policy-implementing processes. The division has its origins in the early Middle Ages and has been nearly universal in the West since the French Revolution. In China, for a variety of reasons, the institutional cleavage does not exist. There is no tradition of such a distinction in imperial China, and the distinction has been rejected in Marxist-Leninist theory ever since Marx praised the Paris Commune for uniting executive and legislative functions in 1871. It may well be argued that China is being analyzed and, to some extent, judged by alien criteria. To examine China from the perspective of parliamentary regimes necessarily produces some distortions.

It is therefore worthwhile to consider briefly the advantages and disadvantages of other, non-Western approaches to Chinese politics. Two such approaches are especially inviting: first, the PRCs as part of the tradition of Chinese government; and second, the PRC as a Marxist-Leninist regime.

The first approach would have the advantage of highlighting continuities in Chinese behavior and culture. The imperial aspects of the rule of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, the rather limited role of law and formal procedures, and the importance of personal access and connections have not been absent from our discussion, but they would be central to this alternative approach. Such an approach would probably be truer to the ambiance of Chinese politics at the personal level. However, the discontinuities of imperial and PRC politics are as important as their continuities, and these would tend to be slighted in an approach based on Chinese tradition. Behavior within the party may well have traditional overtones, but the party as an institu-

tion, the content of policy since 1949, and the strength and pervasiveness of politics are all radically new.

A second alternative approach would be to view the PRC from the perspective of comparative Communism. This approach has much to recommend it, primarily because the politics and government of the PRC have been explicitly modeled on the Soviet Union. For example, it would certainly be easier to understand the role of the people's congress system in terms of the system of soviets in the Soviet Union than in terms of legislatures in the West. The role of the party, the centralization of political and economic power, and the ideology of class struggle are perhaps best understood in their relationship to similar phenomena in other Communist countries. The problem with this approach is a subtle but very important one; namely, the actual role of Communist institutions and ideology in China has been determined by the experience of the Chinese themselves. Chinese politics appears more similar to Soviet politics than it actually is. This fact has contributed to consistent misinterpretations of Chinese politics by the Soviet Union, and vice versa. The success of Mao Zedong was an enigma to Stalin, and to some extent Sino-Soviet hostility has been based on misunderstandings concealed or exacerbated by a common ideological heritage.

A particularly interesting question from the comparative Communist perspective would be the orthodoxy of current reforms. The somewhat naive claim that China is giving up on Communism and turning toward capitalism can be clarified by observing that, in some respects, China is simply catching up with European Communist reforms of the 1960s. In other respects, however, China has jumped to the lead in the reform of Communist political economies and presents a considerable ideological challenge to the others. This challenge consists not of the abandonment of party hegemony and public ownership of the means of production, but of demonstrating the flexibility possible within a Communist system. In this respect, China should be a
lesson to both Eastern and Western observers, who are both overly burdened with the Stalinist stereotype.

The point of the preceding discussion has been to clarify for the reader the limits of our analysis by reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches. The advantage of the Western approach is that it is more familiar to most readers and that it highlights those aspects of Chinese politics that are shared by other modern governments, regardless of political system. This may be an especially advantageous approach for the appreciation of post-Mao reforms because of the boldness of the regime in pursuing modernization.

CHAPTER VIII

From Maoism to Modernization: Socialism With Chinese Characteristics

The death of Mao Zedong was a turning point in Chinese politics, marking the end of the revolutionary era and initiating a transition to a new modernization model. By the end of 1984, that new model was in place as the guiding spirit of Deng Xiaoping’s reforms. “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” remained an elusive phrase that often came across as defensive insistence that China had not abandoned socialism, yet it also suggested a growing confidence that the PRC had carved out a different developmental path that deserved a different label.

The particulars of the modernization model and the process by which it evolved have been discussed in detail. In concluding, we will raise some larger questions that surround the passing of China’s revolutionary era. One set of questions deals with the fate of the Maoist model. Has it been decisively rejected in favor of a different model? What continuities or precedents link the two models and periods? And is the Maoist model still of any interest, or can it be discarded as an outdated set of policies or principles? A second set of questions concerns assessment of China’s revolutionary era. If it is really over, can we now tally its successes and failures, or produce a balance sheet of its accomplishments? Finally, what issues are emerging in the 1980s that