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Modernizing Chinese Informal Politics*

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In the study of modern Chinese politics, the informal dimension has always played an unusually vital part.[1] This is due in part to the unsettled nature of the Chinese political scene throughout the twentieth century, making it difficult for any political arrangement to become securely institutionalized. It is also due in part to the traditional aversion to law and a cultural preference for more moralistic and personalized authority relations. And finally, it is due in part to the revolutionary ethos that formerly prevailed in China, according to which any commitment to the *status quo* was apt to be considered "reactionary". Though not typically part of an explicit analytical framework, the informal dimension was tacitly taken into account in biographical analyses of prominent leaders and in the attempt by analysts to explain shifting leadership coalitions and cleavages. Informal politics *per se* did not, however, become the basis of social science theory on China until the 1970s—specifically, with the publication of a pioneering article by Andrew Nathan and an influential rebuttal by Tang Tsou.[2]

While their contributions have taken us a long way toward a consensually acceptable analytical framework, there are many contradictions in the canonical

1 A relatively comprehensive bibliography of writings on Chinese informal politics may be found in Lucian Pye, *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1981), pp. 267–76.

2 Andrew Nathan, "A Factionalism Model for CCP Politics", *The China Quarterly*, No. 53 (1973), pp. 33–66; Tang Tsou, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Informal Groups in CCP Politics", *The China Quarterly*, No. 65 (1976), pp. 98–114; "Andrew Nathan Replies", *The China Quarterly*, No. 65, pp. 114–17.

theoretical literature that need to be reconciled, and many once secure empirical findings that will require updating to take political changes into account. The present analysis contains three parts: it begins with a review of previous efforts to condeptualize the underpinnings of Chinese politics, introduces a schema that attempts conceptual synthesis, and concludes with an application of that schema to the informal politics of the reform era.

Notions of Informal Politics

The central variable in Andrew Nathan's model is the faction, which he uses to explain patterns of conflict and coalition among the elite leadership in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). His analysis is informed by Franz Schurmann's distinction between elite "opinion groups" and "factions". The "opinion groups" are coalitions that contain their disagreements within a demarcated decision-making arena (without mobilizing outside constituencies) and resolve their differences through reasoned "discussion" (*taolun*), whereafter they promptly disband, whereas a "faction" conspires for power over a longer time span and may endeavour to mobilize outside organizational forces to overthrow the consensus.[3] Focusing on this distinction, Nathan launches a wide-ranging tour through the comparative social science literature in search of a universally valid model of factional behaviour. He then applies this construct to China—and finds that it fits. Recent CCP elite political history is then reconstrued in the light of the model.

Nathan defines a faction as a vertically organized patron-client network linked by personal face-to-face "connections" (*guanxi*). It is external to but dependent upon the formal structure along which it extends, like a "trellis" (in Nathan's now-famous metaphor). Altogether a faction has no fewer than fifteen "structural characteristics": including a "code of civility" governing normal intra-elite relations (as factions discover that they can never really eliminate one another they learn mutual toleration), an overarching ideological consensus that subsumes hair-splitting wrangles over policy or "line" differences, and so forth. Nathan deems the Cultural Revolution to have been an exception to this conceptualization. The Cultural Revolution's wholesale purges represented Mao's determination to overcome and destroy the hated factional system as Nathan describes it. This attempt, however, ultimately failed, according to Nathan, permitting Chinese elite politics to revert to the factional *status quo ante*.

Tang Tsou first subjects Nathan's model to a thorough critique and then erects his rival conceptualization upon its debris. Tsou begins by substituting "informal group" for "faction". The main reason given is that the former term is more inclusive, with a tradition of social science scholarship behind it. Moreover, the term "informal groups" eschews any pejorative taint (which in the case of "factionalism" is even more pronounced in the Chinese terms *paibie, paixing*).

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[3]   See Franz Schurmann, *Organization and Ideology in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 54–7, 196 ff.

The new term has the added advantage of highlighting the relationship between formal and informal organization, avoiding cultural exceptionalism and facilitating cross-fertilization with the rich post-Weberian literature on informal organizations. Agreeing with Nathan's "trellis" analogy, Tsou emphasizes that a formal structure is assumed to be the "precondition rather than the product" for the development of informal groups—the informal grows from the formal. But although his conceptualization makes it possible for him to differentiate among types of informal groups, in his empirical discussions Tsou tends to use "faction" and "informal group" interchangeably.

Tsou makes three important criticisms of Nathan. First, whereas Nathan argues for "rampant" factionalism (namely, factions operating independently of formal structures), Tsou argues that structures place various constraints upon factions. For example, factions share the ideology of the "host" organization, including many of its goals, norms and interests (not to mention personnel). If the formal organization is the trellis, informal organizations normally follow the trellis. There may of course be more than one informal group within a given formal organization. Though the factions within an organization may differ stridently, their differences are couched in the same (or only minutely differentiated) language.

Second, in contrast to Nathan's assumption of an overarching ideological consensus, Tsou contends that ideology is up for grabs, with the victor claiming a monopoly on legitimacy and roundly denouncing the loser in both ideological and moral terms. (This claim stands in some tension to the first point, which assumes that all factions accept the legitimacy of the host organization.)

Third, and most fundamentally, Tsou denies the hypothesized "live-and-let-live", "no win" pattern of factional contests. Factional fights typically end in a clear-cut victory of one faction over the other, whereupon the former seizes control of the formal organization, breaks the decision-making logjam and rams its own policy preferences through. Without altogether denying the existence of a "code of civility" that governs intra-elite relationships during certain periods, Tsou reconstrues its meaning: this is not a "live-and-let-live" compromise that stems from the fact that no faction is able to defeat its rivals; it is merely the somewhat more tolerant form of domination exercised by a now confident victor over subordinates who in any case are most likely clients in the same informal network. To be sure, Tsou concedes that a "balance-of-power" type of arrangement obtained when the leadership split into first and second "fronts" in the early 1960s, but he tacitly dismisses this as a tactical truce pending later opportunities to renew the struggle and finally prevail decisively.

In addition to the points addressed by Tsou, Nathan's seminal construct raises a number of other important unresolved issues for further empirical investigation. First, are factions always vertically organized on a patron-client basis? This does seem to have been true in the case of the initial targets of the Cultural Revolution—Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, Lu Dingyi and Yang Shangkun (who, whatever their previous connections, seem to have colluded to restrain public criticism of their colleague Wu Han)—or of the Gang of Four, in which Jiang Qing was the patron to Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang

Hongwen by dint of seniority as well as her own empowering "apron-string relationship" (*chundai guanxi*) with Mao,[4] or in the case of Hua Guofeng's "small gang of four" (always written in strict hierarchical order: Wang Dongxing, Ji Dengkui, Wu De, and Chen Xilian). But vertical linkages are less clear-cut in the cases of the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi coalition in the early 1950s, the Liu Shaoqi-Deng Xiaoping alliance up through the early 1960s,[5] or the factional collaboration (in fact, conspiracy) between Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying that led to the sudden arrest of the Gang of Four in September 1976.[6]

Second, Nathan's fifteen characteristics are too numerous to serve as a practical checklist. In an attempt to define the essence of factionalism these would have to be carefully winnowed and reduced to a few critical points. As is, some of the characteristics are not specific to factionalism but were normative features of CCP intra-elite relations in general (such as the "climate of civility").

Third, the point that factions are based on "connections" (*guanxi*) generated through face-to-face interaction is a valid and percipient insight that may go far to explain both the persistent elitist bias in PRC politics and the key role of convening meetings to mobilize support and flush out opposition. Yet two factors qualify this point. Albeit perhaps primarily based upon face-to-face contacts, connections are to some extent fungible: a factional contact may be transferred to a third party. Thus entire factional networks may be transmitted intact from one patron to another. The remnants of Liu Shaoqi's political base seem to have shifted allegiance successively to Zhou Enlai and to Chen Yun and Deng Xiaoping during the 1970s, just as Hu Yaobang's faction migrated first to Zhao Ziyang upon Hu's demotion in early 1987, and then to Zhu Rongji after Zhao's fall at Tiananmen. The other factor is that despite the *guanxi*-limited, elitist bias of Chinese politics there have been occasions when elite factions have been augmented by mass constituencies, and it is impossible to account for such coordination based purely on face-to-face contacts. Face-to-face contacts

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[4]   During their active careers, the Gang of Four were listed in the hierarchical order of their formal positions: Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan. When legal proceedings were initiated against them in 1980, they were listed in the order of their informal power bases: Jiang, Zhang, Yao and Wang.

[5]   The Liu-Deng alliance, based upon a compatible ideological outlook and work style rather than any anti-Maoist conspiracy, was reinforced by such acts as Liu's suggestion that Deng be appointed Secretary-General when Mao complained of an excessive workload in December 1953, and Deng's nomination of Liu as Chief-of-State in 1959. See Frederick Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), p. 26 ff.; Hei Yannan, *Shi nian dongluan* [Ten Years of Chaos] (Hong Kong: Xingzhen, 1988), p. 50.

[6]   On the Hua-Deng-Ye connection, see Lin Qingshan, *Fengyun shi nian yu Deng Xiaoping* [A Decade of Turmoil and Deng Xiaoping] (Beijing: Liberation Army Daily Press, 1989), p. 440.

between, say, central and local leaders may still play a certain role in coordinating large-group movements, as when Zhou Enlai and members of the Cultural Revolution Small Group (*wenhua geming xiaozu*) toured the countryside and met with Red Guard faction leaders during 1967–68, or when Mao went on tour in the summer of 1971 seeking support for his move against Lin Biao, or when Deng Xiaoping convened intensive meetings with PLA leaders in May 1989 preparatory to the mobilization of troops for the crackdown at Tiananmen. In other cases the link may be initiated from below, as when Democracy Wall activists mobilized in support of Deng Xiaoping in the autumn of 1978, or when democracy protesters in the spring of 1989 gravitated to support Zhao Ziyang after Hu Yaobang's death—in both cases without evident coordination from above. In any case factional theory will need to be supplemented by a principal-agent model (including political-economic variables and leadership acknowledgement of public opinion) to account for such coordinated large-scale movements, even when the latter seem to mimic factionalism on a larger scale.[7]

Lucian Pye's contribution in the early 1980s to the analysis of factionalism (he reverts to Nathan's original term) also merits our attention. Rejecting the premise that factions are defined by "primordial" ties such as shared generation, class or geographical origins, Pye likewise discards relations "achieved" in previous bonding experiences, such as old school ties, organizational associations, or even ideological affinity, pointing out exceptions to each presumptive link.[8] Factionalism, he argues, constitutes a central, even modal, pattern of Chinese political behaviour that is deeply rooted in cultural and psychological security drives. The faction-centred reality of Chinese politics is obscured by a "veil of consensus", which stems from an equally powerful cultural imperative that identifies political authority with unchallenged moral and doctrinal correctness. China's political culture is averse to conflict, and norms of consensus predominate, but meanwhile the search for personal security generates a ceaseless counter-mobilization of informal loyalty networks. It is the intimate and indissoluble linkage between these contradictory imperatives that is the key to the political process; the failure of Western analysts to grasp this, Pye suggests, is what accounts for the alternating adoption and rejection of conflict and consensus models of Chinese leadership politics. Because factions are power-maximizing entities constrained only by the moral imperative to affirm a nominal leadership solidarity, factional struggle does not serve as a vehicle for rational policy debate, organizational interest articulation, or aggregation of political demands and support. China emerges as a "bureaucratic polity" without "bureaucratic politics", a system in which policy conflict is perpetual, but policy issues become essentially symbolic of unstated personal rivalries. The Alice in Wonderland quality of

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[7]   D. Roderick Kiewiet and Matthew D. McCubbin, *The Logic of Delegation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Ch. 1.

[8]   Pye, *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics,* pp. 7, 77–126.

Chinese politics is typified for Pye in the 1970s paradoxes of a technology-intensive air force exalting "men over machines", and an industrially advanced Shanghai lobbying on behalf of China's rural poor. Such symbolic transpositions suppress policy debate and obscure accountability on behalf of a purely nominal consensus.[9]

Whereas Pye deftly illustrates the paradoxical or illogical relationships between formal and informal power in Chinese politics, these contradictions also provide useful starting points for the positive analysis he tends to neglect. There are several distinctions implicit in Pye's critique which might fruitfully be sifted out and linked to specific hypotheses. To wit:

(a) Some informal ties are relatively self-sufficient—that is, they can stand on their own in an institutional vacuum. Examples include the Cultural Revolution coalitions between radical Red Guard faction leaders and the Cultural Revolution Small Group, or between moderate faction leaders and the Central work teams and later regional PLA commanders. The hunger strike grouping that wrested leadership of the Tiananmen protests in early May 1989 seems to have been autonomous of any central leadership. Such factions may be expected to function independently of the formal structure, as demonstrated by the tenacious power of Deng Xiaoping and certain other leaders after they were divested of formal power bases in 1976–77.

(b) Informal ties as the independent variable, with formal organization as the dependent variable: for instance, the gerontocratic networks that led to the formation of the Central Advisory Committee and the Central Disciplinary Inspection Commission, and that led to the reconstitution of the Party Politburo in 1982–86. In such cases the formal structure can be artificially (but only temporarily) inflated by the appointment of a powerful leadership personality, such as Liu Shaoqi's appointment as chief of state in 1959, or Peng Zhen's appointment as chair of the National People's Congress Standing Committee in 1982.

(c) Formal organization as the independent variable, with informal ties as the dependent variable: for example, clientage or the aggregation of informal power on the basis of the personal use (or abuse) of the perquisites of office, as in the studies of rural and urban patronage networks in Jean Oi's and Andrew Walder's studies, respectively.[10]

The central focus of Frederick Teiwes's magisterial historical analyses has not been factions or informal groups *per se* but the normative framework or "rules of the game" he perceives to be regulating the process of intra-elite conflict and

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[9]   Ibid., passim.

[10]   See Jean Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: The Political Economy of Village Government* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), Chs 7 and 9; and Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), Chs 4 and 5.

"rectification".[11] This normative framework, permitting open discussion and vigorous debate of conflicting proposals before a decision is made, followed by maintenance of iron discipline during its subsequent implementation, was allegedly introduced during the Rectification Campaign in the 1940s to replace the "ruthless struggles and merciless blows" type of rectification associated with the Returned Students' leadership, and lasted (with momentary lapses, such as the Gao-Rao purge) from the late 1940s through the mid-1950s.[12] "Mistaken" viewpoints were tolerated and even allowed to persist so long as organizational discipline was maintained—that is, no conspiratorial activity and no mobilization of outside organizational resources. So long as conflict was conducted according to the norms, elite solidarity behind a decisive and apparently monolithic leadership could be maintained while permitting a full airing of views. Teiwes credited this new pattern of rectification primarily to Mao Zedong, with whose rise to power it coincided, at the same time blaming Mao for its lapse at the Lushan plenum in 1959 and, more explosively, during the Cultural Revolution. Whereas in his earlier studies Teiwes attributed considerable independent efficacy to the "rules of the game", his more recent work has tended to subordinate this code to the historical prestige attained by the players by dint of their achievements in the revolutionary period. Status considerations, according to this perspective, tend to eclipse policy orientation or a bureaucratic base as a source of power, becoming more significant than formal "rules of the game" in sustaining a climate of civility.

It goes without saying that any attempt to review and assess these varied formulations is still tentative. Nathan's model was clearly seminal and remains a primary reference point, though it operates with a set of definitions that perversely preclude its application to the very period to which it might have been considered most relevant (the Cultural Revolution). Tsou's central criticism of Nathan, that his "code of civility" is based on an intra-factional balance of power that is empirically exceptional, and that a hierarchical intra-elite relationship is more typical than pluralistic power balancing, seems to be largely correct. This is

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[11] See Teiwes's *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950–1965* (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1979), and *Politics at Mao's Court*; also see Teiwes and Warren Sun (eds), *The Politics of Agricultural Cooperativization in China: Mao, Deng Zihui, and the "High Tide" of 1955* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

[12] This generalization is qualified in Teiwes' *Politics at Mao's Court*, which finds that the confrontation with Gao Gang-Rao Shushi took place in a considerably more rough-and-tumble fashion than previously assumed. Based on new documentary evidence plus interviews with Chinese scholars and bureaucrats, Teiwes finds that "Such phenomena as attacks by proxy, vague and politically loaded accusations, exaggerating past 'errors' without regard for historical circumstances, and collecting material on political enemies, which would become such a feature of the Cultural Revolution, were already present in the Gao-Rao affair" (p. 151).

borne out in Teiwes's more recent research, which likens high-level politics during the early Maoist period to "court politics": that is,

> a process dominated by an unchallenged Chairman surrounded by other leaders attempting to divine his often obscure intentions, adjusting their preferences to his desires and trying to exploit his ambiguities to advance their bureaucratic and political interests, and squabbling among themselves when Mao's actions exacerbated old tensions or created new ones among them.[13]

Yet does this necessarily imply that intra-elite conflict inevitably culminates in a showdown resulting in the clear-cut victory of one group and its establishment in a position of hegemony, in a "game to win all"? Such a generalization, it seems to me, requires two qualifications.

First, there do seem to be periods, sometimes fairly extended, when a certain level of elite pluralism or balance-of-power politics does obtain. One of these was the post-Leap recovery period preceding the Cultural Revolution, and a second includes the first several years of the post-Mao period, during which Deng was obliged to share power with a series of strong rivals, including Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, Li Xiannian, Bo Yibo, Peng Zhen and Chen Yun. Even after Deng consolidated his supremacy at the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in late 1978, his relationship to Chen Yun was less than authoritative. Collective leadership is after all a norm among the Party elite, as Teiwes has emphasized, and the exercise of domineering leadership is frequently derogated as a "personality cult", "hegemonism", and so on. (Mao himself, upset by Deng Xiaoping's failure to consult, once stormed: "What emperor decided this?"). This norm is strongly sanctioned in the canonical literature and is accorded lip service in the public rituals of leadership politics. To assume that norms are always adhered to would be naive, but norms are an important component of organizational culture. One may of course dismiss periods of apparent calm and balance as concealing periods of frenzied subterranean factional maneuver that anticipate later opportunities for renewed struggle, but how can we justify privileging the latter with a higher level of "reality" than the former? If periods of compromise are preparatory to renewed conflict, are not bouts of struggle also followed by efforts to establish periods of stability and balance? Clearly, both phases are part of the Chinese political reality.

Second, even in those cases in which factional struggle culminates in the victory of one faction and the destruction of its rival, this is typically followed by the recurrence (often quite promptly) of a new factional balance in which new actors step into the position of the eliminated faction, leading not to hierarchical consolidation but to a new rivalry. One is tempted to infer that opposition is a "functional requisite" of the system. Thus no sooner was the alleged Liu-Deng "bourgeois reactionary line" destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, than first

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[13]   Personal communication from Teiwes.

Zhou Enlai and then a renascent Deng Xiaoping re-emerged to assume ideological and organizational leadership of a moderate "line" that many of the leading radicals deemed analogous to the earlier alleged Liu-Deng line.[14] Nor has the purge of Zhao Ziyang at the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Party Congress in June 1989 resulted in the destruction of his line, which seems to have survived with the help of Li Ruihuan, Zhu Rongji and Tian Jiyun. Deng Xiaoping himself, frustrated by the consolidation of resistance to further economic reform, found it useful to resuscitate this group in the spring of 1992, after having brought it to the brink of ruin. So if Nathan is wrong to assume that a factional balance of power is a normal state of affairs, it would also be a mistake to assume that just because one faction decisively destroys a rival faction, this will result in an enduring leadership consensus. We may perhaps make the weaker inference that a destructive factional outbreak is likely to be followed by a period of what one might call "contained factionalism".

Lucian Pye has made an important contribution in pointing to the psychological insecurity at the root of factional affiliation and maneuver, and to the environmental conditions tending to exacerbate or alleviate that insecurity. But to conclude by dismissing all objective bases for such affiliations is, I think, going too far. Just because no one node (such as generation, territory or old school tie) can function as an invariably reliable indicator of factional linkage does not mean that all of them may be dispensed with. These may function as interchangeable options, at least one being necessary but not sufficient, with the specific selection likely to be based upon situational factors and mutual needs.

Toward a Conceptual Synthesis

Any new conceptualization should avoid the two opposing problems—excessive modesty and overweening ambition—that have plagued earlier definitional efforts. In the case of the former, we are given a purely negative definition of the central term, defining informal politics not in terms of what it is but in terms of what it is not: formal politics. Clearly, it is important to note the interdependency between formal and informal politics, but informal politics should not be derogated to the status of a residual variable, dependent upon the definition of its positive counterpart. The opposite problem is the tendency to strive for prematurely

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[14]   This telescopes events slightly: in 1969–71, Zhou aligned with Lin Biao to shut out the radicals, thus earning Jiang Qing's ire and precipitating the purge of Chen Boda in 1970 and Lin Biao in 1971. Chen Boda and Lin Biao could not, however, be considered functional replacements of Liu and Deng because their policy preferences were diametrically opposite to Liu and Deng. The elimination of the military radicals, however, allowed Zhou Enlai to consolidate his position on the right, and he proceeded to revive economic policies previously associated with Liu and Deng. This in turn brought him into confrontation with the radicals, in a factional power balance redolent of the 1966–69 "line struggle".

ambitious conceptualizations—to aim at a model of factionalism that is valid throughout the Third World, for example, or applicable to organizations throughout the Chinese cultural oecumene—and then to interpolate from these general models to the political situation within the Chinese Party Politburo during the last two or four decades. This sort of abstract model-building is tempting, in view of the paucity of hard empirical evidence about the inner workings of the Politburo and other powerful leadership organs. Yet a definition that is valid for a universal or even comparatively broad range of factional behaviour cannot be expected to capture the *differentia specifica* of the Party leadership. A more prudent strategy, it seems to me, would be to set a middle-range boundary for inquiry—say, the arena enclosing the 20 to 35 top members of the Party and governmental elite—and then see to what extent the theories and explanations derived from this limited sample can be more broadly generalized. With limited time and resources, this is a good place to start even if our findings turn out not to be easily generalizable, given the pivotal role assigned to the "Centre" in Chinese politics and the tendency of subordinate political institutions to emulate this "model".

The central term in our conceptualization of informal politics is relationships. As Liang Shuming noted long ago, Chinese culture is neither individualistic (*geren benwei*, or individually based) nor group-oriented (*shehui benwei*), but rather relationship-based (*guanxi benwei*).[15] Ambrose King has postulated that in contradistinction to Japanese relationships, which are based on fixed frames or *ba* (the family, workplace or village) that set a clear unit boundary and give a common identity to a set of individuals, Chinese relationships are formed on the basis of attributes (such as kinship, classmate, school ties) that are infinitely extendable.[16] Attributes provide a pluralistic basis for identification depending on the specific attribute shared; thus the more attributes one has, the more relationships one is able to establish.[17] While it is certainly true that Chinese attributes sometimes articulate into vast networks, some Chinese attributes are also defined by fixed frames, such as those within the same family, parochial village, or "basic work unit" (*jiben danwei*). Perhaps Chinese political culture includes both types of connections.

Analytically we may usefully distinguish between two types of relationships: those in which the relationship with the other is valued as an end in itself, to use the Kantian language, and those in which the other is merely a means to other ends. We may term the former "value-rational" relationships and the latter

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[15]   Liang Shuming, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi* [An Outline of Chinese Culture] (Hong Kong: Jizheng Tushu Gongsi, 1974), p. 94.

[16]   Cf. Chie Nakane's brilliant *Japanese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

[17]   Ambrose Yeo-chi King, "*Kuan-hsi* and Network Building: A Sociological Interpretation", *Daedelus*, Vol. 120, No. 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 63–85.

"purpose-rational" relationships.[18] Both may be useful in high-level elite politics, but they have different uses. A purpose-rational relationship is typically formed with colleagues, subordinates and superiors with whom one has routine work-related or functional contacts. These relationships may be mobilized in support of career objectives so long as they are in the collective interests of the organization of which all are a part. We may refer to this ensemble of occupational relationships as one's formal base. By mobilizing one's formal base one is able to exert official power, which Chinese refer to as *quanli*. Some high-level leaders seem to have relied exclusively on official power, either out of principle, as seems to have been the case for Liu Shaoqi or Deng Xiaoping,[19] or because they lacked sufficient opportunities to build a mobilizable informal base, as seems to have been true in the cases of Hua Guofeng or Zhao Ziyang.

Yet there are two important limitations to what one can do with official power. First, in most cases it is a relatively simple matter to be divested of one's formal base: a job rotation or demotion and it is gone. Chinese cadres have not, historically, had "tenure" or legally stipulated terms of office, and their positions hence have been far more tenuous from a strictly formal perspective than those of a civil servant in the West (either elective or appointed). Thus, when Hu Yaobang failed to crack down energetically enough on young protesters in December 1986, he was promptly relieved of his position as General Secretary. Although he remained a full Politburo member, he was in effect in internal exile, for without a hierarchical organization beneath him that he could convene at meetings and thus mobilize in support of his interests, his ability to exert official power was sharply curtailed. When the official responsible for one's official demotion is also one's informal patron (as in the Deng-Hu and Deng-Zhao clashes, though not in the Mao-Deng or Hua-Deng confrontations), dismissal is normally a career-ending event. Kang Sheng is an interesting variant: in the course of over-zealously "rectifying" suspected ideological deviants during the Rectification Campaign of the early 1940s in his capacity as head of the six-man campaign committee, Kang became so unpopular within the Party that after Liberation he was divested of control of the security apparatus and (like his contemporary, Beria) rendered politically impotent. Relegated to the governorship of Shandong province, Kang

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[18]   Though I have obviously borrowed these terms from Max Weber, Weber employed them differently, using value-rationality or *Wertrationalitaet* to refer to actions oriented to ultimate ends, and purpose-rationality or *Zweckrationalitaet* to refer to actions oriented to more immediate payoffs. In adapting this terminology to refer to *"relationships"*, we shall see that it has a quite different connotation.

[19]   Liu did nothing to protect Peng Zhen when the latter came under fire during the Cultural Revolution, for example, and Deng did little on the same occasion to support Wu Han, his bridge partner, or Li Jingchuan. Nor is there much evidence that the informal groups below the Party centre rallied to the support of their putative patrons—they were too busy defending themselves. Although Deng rehabilitated Liu posthumously, he did not support his own presumptive clients and designated heirs, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang.

took "sick leave" throughout the early 1950s. He continued to lose power at the 8th Party Congress in 1956, falling to a mere candidate membership within the Politburo. Yet though he may have lost Mao's favour he retained an alternative "connection" to the Chairman through Mao's wife Jiang Qing. He used this conduit to regain favour at "court" when the Mao-Liu rift began to emerge in the early 1960s, by involving himself in the Sino-Soviet dispute and by editing, with Chen Boda, the "little red book" of Mao quotations. By dint of such services he succeeded in being named again to various *ad hoc* committees, including the Cultural Revolution Small Group, culminating in his comeback as *de facto* secret police chief during the Cultural Revolution. Kang's experience conforms to the pattern that a formal position is normally a prerequisite to informal influence. There are, however, important exceptions to this generalization, which will merit consideration later when the issue of the relationship between formal and informal politics is more closely examined.

The second limitation is that one cannot rely on one's formal base to defend one's personal career interests, insofar as these are detachable from the interests of the host organization. For example, if I were to come under attack for some serious ideological transgression not based on my performance in office but characterizing my entire career, it would not be in the interests of my professional associates to jeopardize their careers and the interests of our organization to come to my defense, for to do so would be to risk becoming implicated in my crime. Under such circumstances the prudent course for my professional associates would be to repudiate and ostracize me—especially in view of the presumption that an authoritative accusation is tantamount to conviction. If my career is jeopardized by an assault on my character, I have but two recourses: allay the accuser's attacks through a persuasive self-criticism (by definition well-nigh impossible in the case of an "antagonistic contradiction") or mobilize my personal base to resist.

Thus most members of the Party elite find it useful to cultivate value-rational as well as purpose-rational relationships, which typically have more long-term utility and can be mobilized if their life-chances or career is at stake. Such relationships comprise an informal "political base" (*zhengzhi jichu*), on the basis of which one can exercise informal power, or *shili*. A political base may be measured in terms of its depth and breadth: a "broad" base consists of a network of cronies located throughout the Party, military, diplomatic, and governmental apparatus, whereas a "deep" base consists of supporters going all the way back to the early generations of revolutionary leadership, hence having high seniority and elevated positions. Whereas some formidable politicians such as Zhou Enlai or Ye Jianying have had political bases both broad and deep, others have had bases that were deep but narrow (for example, Chen Boda), or broad but shallow (Hu Yaobang, for instance)—which has tended to limit their options. Since the passing of the Yanan generation in the 1990s, no Chinese political actor had a comparable broad and deep base.

How is an informal base assembled? It is put together through the incremental accretion of "connections". People have a large but finite number of potential affinities, including kinship, common geographic origin, former classmates,

teachers or students, or common former Field Army affiliation—at least one of which is usually requisite to form a "connection" (*guanxi*). A cadre assigned to a new task or post will, as a matter of course, immediately canvass the area for politically opportune objective affinities as a priority, not just passively wait for them to emerge. An objective basis for an affinity does not necessarily create one, however, as demonstrated for example by Mao's wholesale purge of fellow Hunanese of his generation during the Cultural Revolution, or Chen Yun's loathing for Kang Sheng, whom he knew all too well: it is no more than a starting point. An informal base must be "cultivated", which involves investing gifts, time, and personal attention to the relationship. An initial bonding episode is also useful, such as the bond formed among certain "White" area cadres when Liu Shaoqi authorized confessions to spring them from KMT prisons, or the bond formed between fellow Shandong natives Kang Sheng and Jiang Qing when he vouched for her admission to the Party and her marriage to Mao (not to mention Kang Sheng's rumoured romantic relationship with the ambitious young woman in Shandong much earlier).[20]

If such bonding involves an experience common to a whole group of cadres, we might refer to this as categorical recruitment, an occasion that may later be publicly commemorated once the recruits become politically established. Thus 9 December is typically used to celebrate the so-called White area clique that emerged to lead the urban anti-Japanese student movement, just as 1 August, originally an occasion for celebrations among Nanchang Uprising alumni (and the cadres who helped organize it), became the anniversary of the founding of the PLA. But connections may also be recruited on an individual basis, as when Mao recruited Chen Boda at Yanan in the early 1940s or Hua Guofeng in Hunan in the mid-1950s. And of course it is quite possible to have connections with patrons who later have a falling out, thrusting a client into a cruel dilemma (as Chen Boda was forced to choose in late 1965 between Liu Shaoqi, his first patron, and Mao Zedong, his later but more powerful one).[21]

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[20]   There is "plausible" but by no means conclusive evidence that Jiang Qing became Kang Sheng's lover when her mother was employed in the Zhang household in Shandong. See John Byron and Robert Pack, *The Claws of the Dragon: Kang Sheng* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), pp. 18, 48–9; Ross Terrill, *The White-Boned Demon: A Biography of Madame Mao Zedong* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), pp. 18, 136. Despite the lack of any confirming evidence, the fact that such rumours are so widely credited by Chinese sources (for instance, Terrill cites Hu Yaobang on the "depravity" of the liaison) is in itself significant.

[21]   When Liu was in charge of the Northern Bureau during the anti-Japanese war period, he recruited Peng Zhen as director of the organization department and Chen Boda as director of the propaganda department, thus giving Chen his first important post since joining the Party. Chen's subsequent collaboration with Liu included helping to edit several of his manuscripts for publication. Chen became Mao's "pen" at Yanan, allegedly saving his life during a Nationalist air raid at Fuping in 1948, and much later compiled (with Kang

Cadres with an informal base may resort to this resource in the case of a serious threat to their careers, an "antagonistic contradiction" that would normally lead to purge or permanent sidelining. An informal base might be mobilized in the most extreme case via clandestine meetings or informant networks, as in the cases of Chen Duxiu's "Leninist Left-wing Opposition", Zhang Guotao's alleged organization of a rival Central Committee, Peng Dehuai's "Military Recreation Club" that Mao claimed conspired in Peng's critique of the Leap prior to the Lushan plenum, Zhang Chunqiao's "244 Secret Service Group", whose purpose was ironically to frame other leading cadres on charges of belonging to secret conspiracies, or Lin Biao's son Liguo setting up an alleged "Joint Fleet Command" to plot a coup d'état.[22] But because factional conspiracies are *ipso facto* illegitimate, more subtle tactics are often used, such as Aesopian public signals (as in the commissioning of rival writing groups to reconstrue Chinese history, a device used by both moderates and radicals in the mid-1970s)[23] or even a passive manifestation of support by withholding public criticism of the target (for instance, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian et al. conspicuously failed to join in criticizing Deng Xiaoping in 1976). This last tactic was employed with increasing frequency and boldness during such mobilizational efforts as the Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign of 1983–84 or the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization campaigns of 1987 and 1989-90. These campaigns illustrated the waning capability of the Party to induce positive expressions of compliance. Because informal bases are not mobilized for the sake of routine bureaucratic policy-making but rather for reasons of personal power, the bases normally have no specific policy relevance—though given the assumption that politics is a moral crusade, the factional gist of a dispute may be disguised by ideological rhetoric alleging earth-shaking policy relevance. (Thus Deng Xiaoping, when asked in the 1980s about specific cases in the history of CCP "line struggles", dismissed the importance of diverging policy "lines".)[24]

Sheng) the "little red book" for publication. Chen was alerted to his dilemma in 1966 while editing the draft of the May 16 Circular (*Wuyiliu tongzhi*) in Hangzhou. When Chen and Kang Sheng found that Mao had added the phrase "Khrushchev-like persons sleeping beside us", Chen asked Jiang Qing for guidance. Jiang rolled her eyes and said, "You really don't know who China's Khrushchev is? You helped him edit and publish his *How to Be a Good Communist . . .* You should be cautious". See Ye Yonglie, *Chen Boda* (Hong Kong: Wenhua Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1990), pp. 103–4, 157–9, 234–78.

[22] This was a twenty-member network based at 244 Yongfu Road in Shanghai during the 1970s, which allegedly succeeded in destroying more than a thousand of Zhang's enemies. As cited in John Wilson Lewis, "Political Networks and Policy Implementation in China", unpublished paper (Stanford University, 1983), pp. 43–4.

[23] Cf. Lowell Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 197–205.

[24] "The struggle against Comrade Peng Dehuai cannot be viewed as a struggle between two lines. Nor can the struggle against Comrade Liu Shaoqi", he chided the authors of the 1981 Resolution on Party History. While absolving Chen Duxiu, Qu Qiubai, Li Lisan and others

The relationship between formal and informal politics is fluid and ambiguous—informal groups are often absorbed into formal structures, and formal structures in turn operate with a great deal of informality[25]—but the distinction remains relevant in at least three respects. First, the distinction appears in the recruitment and utilization of "base" members. There are two ideal types of base members: those who entail relatively pure cases of informal "connections", and those who have their own formal credentials (*zige*). An example of purely informal connections lies in the growing incidence of relatives in elite politics (for instance, Jiang Qing, Liu Shaoqi's wife Wang Guangmei, and the children of Lin Biao, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun). Still more "informal" would be Mao's extracurricular romantic attachments[26] (or Jiang Qing's, for that matter).[27] But personal secretaries may be included in this relatively pure form of informal recruitment as well (for example, Chen Boda and Hu Qiaomu had been Mao's secretaries; Deng Liqun was Liu Shaoqi's secretary; Zhang Chunqiao was Ke

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of conspiracy, he did accuse Lin Biao, Gao Gang, Jiang Qing et al. of conspiracy—yet not of championing a divergent "line". As an example: "But so far as Gao Gang's real line is concerned, actually, I can't see that he had one, so it's hard to say whether we should call it a struggle between two lines". Deng Xiaoping, "Adhere to the Party Line and Improve Methods of Work" (29 February 1980), in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp. 278–9.

[25] Due to the members' long-term association with one another, their relative lack of lateral contact with members of parallel organizations, the comprehensive regulation of participants' roles, and a perceived sense of common threat from the "outgroup", informal bonds often develop among members of the same formal unit.

[26] These reportedly included an actress introduced to him in 1948 by Wang Dongxing named Yu Shan, with whom Mao was so smitten that he installed her in the palace of Zhongnanhai and had Jiang Qing sent to the USSR for rest and recuperation (like her predecessor He Zichen); and a beautiful young woman (also introduced by Wang) named Zhang Yufeng, with whom he became infatuated in the 1970s. Both affairs had an impact on policy, the first by temporarily severing Kang Sheng's connection to Mao, the second by exacerbating the estrangement between Mao and Jiang Qing in the mid-1970s. See Roger Faligot and Remi Kauffer, *The Chinese Secret Service*, translated by Christine Donougher (London: Headline Books, 1989), pp. 216, 262, 389. The authoritative source on this dimension is of course Zhisui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Inside Story of the Man Who Made Modern China* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994).

[27] Aside from Kang Sheng, Jiang is alleged to have "became quite brazen about her intermittent bouts with Zhuang Zedong, the dashing young table tennis champion (who found himself rewarded with a meteoric rise to the post of Minister of Sports)". See Terrill, *The White-Boned Demon*, pp. 316–17. Other writers, however, dismiss the possibility of any extra-marital activity on Jiang Qing's part, due to her unpopularity and extreme dependence on Mao's favour; e.g., see Jin Qiu, *The Culture of Power: The Lin Biao Incident in the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

Qingshi's secretary;[28] after 1956 Jiang Qing became Mao's fifth secretary in charge of international affairs).[29] Also included are miscellaneous staff personnel, such as Mao's former bodyguard Wang Dongxing.[30] We may refer to the relatively purely informal recruit as the "favourite", as in monarchical court politics, and to the formal-informal mix as "regular" patronage.

An example of regular patronage was the coalescence of Bo Yibo, Peng Zhen, Yao Yilin, An Ziwen and the other cadres around Liu Shaoqi, who had recruited and led them in the White Areas; or the concatenation of Hu Qili, Rui Xingwen, Hu Jintao and others into Hu Yaobang's "Youth League Faction" (*Qingtuan pai*). The main difference between the two examples is that whereas favourites are exclusively dependent on their patron, clients in a regular patronage relationship may have other patrons, and in any case their own qualifications and background provide career insurance. Thus favourites are inclined to be more personally loyal, as their patron is their lifeline and they are apt to find it difficult to extend their base beyond him or her (cf. Chen Boda's catastrophic attempt to cultivate Lin Biao's support). This has certain advantages for their patron, who may more readily entrust a favourite with maverick personal missions that an established bureaucrat would not touch. In fact, favourites may deliberately cultivate those aspects of their patron's agenda apt to exacerbate friction with the bureaucratic apparatus and thus enhance their own indispensability to their patron (thus Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and others enhanced their own strategic importance and informal career prospects by giving voice to Mao's anti-

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[28]   Zhang Chunqiao utilized his connection to Ke Qingshi to gain access to Mao, Ke's patron. By reading Ke's reports to Mao, he was able to divine Mao's intellectual interests, and on this basis proceeded to draft an essay ("Destroy the Bourgeois Right") for publication in Shanghai's *Jiefang ribao* [Liberation Daily]. Mao read the essay, liked it, and instructed that it be published in *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), 13 October 1958, with his own commentary attached. Ye Yonglie, *Chen Boda*, pp. 105, 208–9.

[29]   On Jiang Qing's appointment, see Ye Yonglie, *Chen Boda*, p. 163; on the more general importance of secretaries in Chinese politics, see Wei Li and Lucian Pye, "The Ubiquitous Role of the *Mishu* in Chinese Politics", *The China Quarterly*, No. 132 (December 1992), pp. 913–37; and Wei Li, *The Chinese Staff System: A Mechanism for Bureaucratic Control and Integration* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, Monograph No. 44, 1994).

[30]   Mao first recruited Wang as a personal bodyguard in the Jinggang Mountains when Wang was only 17, and Mao became almost a father to him. Wang cared for Mao when he was sick, and Mao taught Wang to read and write. As Mao's career advanced, he took Wang with him: first to lead the growing security contingent (eventually the "8341" team), then (upon Yang Shangkun's purge in the Cultural Revolution) to serve as director of the General Office of the Party Central Committee. Wang became an alternate Politburo member at the 9th Party Congress, and a full member at the 10th. See Du Feng, "Wang Dongxing, weishemma hui xiatai?" (Why did Wang Dongxing Fall?), *Zhengming* (Hong Kong), No. 30 (April 1980), pp. 34–40.

bureaucratic impulses).[31] Career officials are more likely to balance their patron's requests against their own bureaucratic interests.

The distinction is in reality not sharp and there are all sorts of mixed types. Take Kang Sheng, for example, who had a distinguished *zige* but exclusively in an area of secret police and cadre screening that alienated him from most of his colleagues. He therefore boosted his later career prospects by acting as a favourite, regaining access to the Chairman through Jiang Qing. An interesting mixed type to have emerged since the late 1980s is the so-called "third generation"—and, following them, the so-called princelings party (*taizi dang*). On the one hand, this younger generation of officials fits the category of formal, categorical recruitment, as their upward mobility was launched by the policy of bureaucratic rejuvenation introduced by Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang in the mid-1980s. On the other hand, a rather conspicuous proportion of them are closely related to veteran cadres, beginning with Li Peng and Zou Jiahua, giving rise to suspicions of an underlying informal bias.[32] These "hybrids" may be expected to behave like favourites so long as their relatives are still in a political position to help them out, then to sink or swim based on the power bases and *zige* they have or have not been able to accumulate in the meantime.

Unlike most Western countries, where formal politics is clearly dominant over informal politics and the relationship is one of "imposition and resistance",[33] the Chinese informal sector has been historically dominant, with formal politics often providing no more than a façade for decisions made behind the scenes. Informal politics plays an important part in every organization at every level, but the higher the organization the more important it becomes. At the highest level, because the

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[31]   For example, Chen Boda reportedly promoted the concept of the "people's commune" in print even before Mao uttered his famous oral endorsement at Zhengzhou (in the article "Entirely New Society, Entirely New People", published in *Hongqi* [Red Flag], No. 3 (1 July 1958). Thus, when criticized by Peng Dehuai at Lushan, Mao declared: "I have no claim to the invention of the people's commune, though I made some suggestions". Ye Yonglie, *Chen Boda*, pp. 203, 208–9.

[32]   Among the "third generation", Li Peng is Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao's adoptive son, and Zou Jiahua, Vice-Premier and (after the 14th Party Congress) full member of the Politburo, is Ye Jianying's son-in-law; Jiang Zemin's relationship to Li Xiannian was so close that Chinese rumours (inaccurately) imputed kinship. See *China Information*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer 1989), pp. 64–68; and *South China Morning Post*, 11 April 1992. For a comprehensive analysis, see M. S. Tanner and M. J. Feder, "Family Politics, Elite Recruitment, and Succession in Post-Mao China", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 30 (July 1993), pp. 89–119; and He Ping and Gao Xin, *Zhong gong taizi dang* [Chinese Communist "Princeling" Party] (Hong Kong: Ming Qing, 1992). It should be noted that there is evidence of widespread resentment of the "princelings".

[33]   Haruhiro Fukui and Shegeko Fukai, "Election Campaigning in Contemporary Japan", unpublished paper presented at the annual Association for Asian Studies meeting, 2–5 April 1992, Washington DC, p. 1.

tasks to be performed are relatively unstructured, the area of discretion large, personal judgment crucial, the demand for quick decisions great, and secrecy imperative, informal politics prevails. This informal sphere is distinguished from relations within the host organization as a whole by its more frequent contacts, greater degree of goal consensus, loyalty to the informal group, and ability to work together.

An adept leadership, while using informal politics to cobble together a majority within the formal apparatus, will then turn to formal politics to ensure rigorous public policy implementation. This is particularly so since the death of Mao, inasmuch as the diminution in the relative importance of ideology has led leaders to resort to formal-legal rationality as a potent means of legitimation. Whereas previously an official could be dismissed on the grounds of ideological deviation (as defined *ex cathedra* by a Caesero-papist leader), ideology in the post-Mao era has atrophied as grounds for dismissal. Now the exit ramps must be greased with elaborate bureaucratic machinations (as in the case of Hua Guofeng), sometimes even providing a legal façade (as in the trial of the "gang of ten"). Despite such interruptions as Tiananmen, the overall thrust in the reform era has been toward increasing formalization, as measured by the frequency, length and regularity of meeting sessions, and the number of people or procedural stages involved in drafting legislation.

Formal norms also serve a gate-keeping function, defining who can and cannot play. As noted above, without a formal position an informal base has little leverage; thus normally a factional network can be destroyed simply by removing its leader(s) from the formal positions in the organizational "trellis" along which loyalties and informal relations are extended. There are two fascinating exceptions to this generalization that warrant consideration: the two political resurrections of Deng Xiaoping, and the comeback of the veterans who had been "retired" in the mid-1980s to bring down first Hu Yaobang and then Zhao Ziyang. Deng's first and second comebacks, in 1973 and 1977, while greatly facilitated by his informal connections, were both achieved in conformance with the normative rules of the game (that is, by throwing himself upon the mercy of the Supreme Leader). True, neither of his self-criticisms (the letters, needless to say, have not been included in his official *Selected Works*) was sincere. After helping bring the PLA to heel by rotating military region commanders upon his first rehabilitation, Deng essentially abandoned Mao to work intensively with Zhou Enlai, promoting his Four Modernizations program in such a way as to undermine the radical program of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat". He violated the terms of his second rehabilitation under Hua Guofeng by subtly differentiating his own position on various issues (for instance, on the treatment of intellectuals, on the personality cult, and on the treatment of Mao's legacy) from that of Hua, thereby presenting himself as an alternative and eventually wresting *de facto* leadership from Hua's grasp. Strictly speaking, neither comeback was a pure case of informal politics overcoming a formal verdict; instead, formal norms were skillfully massaged to legitimate a reversal of verdicts. Deng's informal base counted as a potent tool in this operation in two respects: some of his connections (notably Zhou Enlai in the first instance and Ye

Jianying in the second) undoubtedly lobbied on behalf of his return, and Deng's value to Mao (or to Hua) was not purely personal but an ensemble that took into account his vast military and civilian networks.

The second case, the comeback of the "sitting committee" from positions of nominal retirement in the Central Advisory Committee (or even from positions of complete withdrawal from all formal positions) to bring down Hu and Zhao can be explained by three circumstances. First, Deng's own retirement was only nominal, thereby setting an example that legitimized others' reactivation. Second, their retirements had been predicated on their right to name their own successors, in a tacit deal in which the latter continued to welcome their predecessors' "advice". Last but by no means least, their comeback was not a pure case of informal influence overcoming formal power but rather a convergence of informal and formal power. Their informal patron can be assumed to have been Deng Xiaoping, which explains their willingness to be pushed into retirement in the first place; and just as Deng obliged them to retire, he could now invite them back. This was formally legitimated by the device of the "expanded" meeting, which they could attend as observers at the invitation of the convener. In view of the fact that votes were sometimes not taken in such sessions the distinction between full members and observers was minimal.[34]

Thus at the January 1987 meeting urging Hu Yaobang to resign, no fewer than seventeen veteran leaders attended from the Central Advisory Committee and two from the Central Disciplinary Inspection Commission to augment eighteen Politburo members, two alternate members, and four Secretariat members. Bo Yibo, though no longer a member of the Politburo, was delegated to present the case for the prosecution. Deng, who convened the meeting, determined the roster and set the agenda. Ostensibly retired officials played an even more crucial role in the events leading to the crackdown at Tiananmen and the purge of Zhao Ziyang at the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Central Committee.[35]

It would appear that the long-term historical trend is toward political formalization: for example, compare the death of Lin Biao with the trial of the Gang of Four, or the unconstitutional demotion of Hu Yaobang with the Central Committee's plenary dismissal of Zhao Ziyang (actually, the dismissal of Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili had already been decided upon by the elders a month before, but the fact that such pains were taken to hide this and to convey the impression

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[34]   Chen Yizi et al (eds), *Zhengzhi tizhi gaige jianghua* [Talks on Political Restructuring] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1987), p. 46.

[35]   However, according to recently available documentation, the decision to invoke martial law at Tiananmen Square in May 1989 was made by a formal vote of the Politburo Standing Committee and the informal members did not vote. See *The Tiananmen Papers*, compiled by Zhang Liang, edited by Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

of legal procedure is in itself significant).[36] Overall, informal politics remains much more potent in China than in other countries and may be expected to prevail at the highest level well after formal-legal rationality has been superimposed in other areas. The formal rules of the game have the best chance of prevailing when they coincide with informal loyalties. When they do not, a clash may occur in which formal rules will be breached and the depth and breadth of one's informal base is likely to be the most decisive factor. Yet even in the event of such a clash, the winning faction will probably (1) use formal-legal norms and institutionalized expedients (such as Deng's self-criticisms) to augment informal resources prior to the clash, and (2) legitimize victory *post hoc*, via constitutional engineering and the proclamation of new formal norms.

Politics within the highest echelons of the Party is supposed to proceed according to what Teiwes calls "rules of the game", some of them written in such canonical texts as Mao's 1941 speech calling on cadres to rectify their methods of study and Liu Shaoqi's *On Inner-Party Struggle*, published the same year. Among these are the norms of collective leadership and democratic centralism. It is true that all Politburo members are formally equal in the sense that each (including the chair) has but one vote. Yet each member may be assumed to have not only a relatively broad and deep informal base, but to preside over a formal hierarchy as well. (Zhou Enlai for many years controlled the State Council and the foreign ministry; Mao the PLA; Liu and Deng the Party apparatus; Kang Sheng the security apparatus. From the October 1992 14th Party Congress to the 15th Congress five years later, Jiang Zemin was assumed to control the Party apparatus, Qiao Shi the National People's Congress and public security, Liu Huaqing the military, Qian Qichen the foreign ministry, Li Peng and perhaps Zhu Rongji the government bureaucracy.) Though the combination of formal and informal power bases rendered each member of the elite extremely powerful, there was an intra-elite balancing process, in which the functional division of labour and a rough equality consonant with the formal norm of collective leadership were in constant tension with the need for hierarchy.

This need for hierarchy is an informal norm cemented by patron-client relationships within the leadership and activated by a fear of "chaos" (*luan*) outside it: order means hierarchy. Paradoxically, although collective leadership is indeed a Party "norm", it is deemed unstable and a source of potential vulnerability (a "sheet of loose sand") even by many Chinese participant-observers. Thus the "normal" relationship among the Party elite is hierarchical, as indicated by the punctilious observance of protocol on ceremonial occasions (who appears, who mounts the dais in what order, who speaks in what sequence, who stands next to whom in photographs, the sequence in published name lists, and so

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[36]   *Tiananmen Papers*, pp. 308–14. At the same meeting, on 27 May, the elders reportedly decided upon Jiang Zemin as Zhao's successor, all of which was inconsistent with the Party Statutes.

forth. The implicit cultural model for Chinese elite politics is the imperial court system,[37] the role of emperor being played by what Deng called the Party "core",[38] but which could be termed the "Supreme Leader". The Party hierarchy is somewhat looser than the imperial court, partly because it is informally based and in constant tension with the formal norm of collective leadership, partly because of the ongoing "musical chairs" competition for reallocation of formal hierarchies, and partly because the question of succession is never permanently settled. Yet the need for hierarchy has deep cultural roots, and any challenge to it is apt to provoke panic and extreme responses. *The perceived stability of this leadership hierarchy*, I submit, *is the decisive determinant of whether leadership differences will be settled through negotiated compromise or through a zero-sum struggle*, perchance involving mass publics and resulting in major organizational or "line" changes. Accordingly, I draw a clear analytical distinction between what I call "periods of hierarchical stability" and "periods of hierarchical turbulence". Leadership stability is in turn a function of the magnitude of the various elite cross-pressures alluded to above.

Second, it would seem that despite formal norms of collective leadership, the distribution of actual power within the Party leadership is steeply skewed, relative either to elected (or appointed) executives in pluralist systems or even to Communist Party leaderships in other socialist countries, such as the former East European "people's democracies" or the Soviet Union. There is ample evidence demonstrating that the Supreme Leader has greater access than anyone else at that level to both the intramural levers of bureaucratic power and to the media and symbolism capable of moving the masses in the public arena. In this sense we

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[37]   Much of the responsibility for this lies with Mao Zedong, who immersed himself deeply in such dynastic histories as the *Shi ji* [Records of this Historian], which covers the period from the Yellow Emperor to the Han dynasty, and *Cu chi tang qian* [General Mirror for the Aid of Government], compiled in the eleventh century, which covers 1,300 years of imperial history, from 403 BC to AD 959). He quoted generously from the classics and generally modeled himself after China's great emperors. See Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992), pp. 8–9. In his final year, Mao was going through the *Cu chi tang qian* (which in its standard modern edition runs to 9,612 pages) for the eighteenth time, according to Guo Jinrong, *Mao Zedong de huanghun suiyue* [Mao Zedong's Twilight Years] (Hong Kong, 1990), as cited in W. J. F. Jenner, *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1992), p. 38.

[38]   In an "internal" (*neibu*) speech on 16 June 1989, Deng classified Mao as the leadership core of the first generation and himself as the leadership core of the second generation and designated his client Jiang Zemin as the leadership core of the "third generation". *Zhongguo wenti ziliao zuokan*, Vol. 14, No. 392 (20 November 1989), p. 36.

would agree that the Chinese Communist Party indeed is governed by a Fuehrerprinzip, albeit an informal one.[39]

Inner-Party Debate: Mao expressed himself frequently on the need for full and open debates within the Party, and at the Lushan conference in 1959 he began his counterattack on Peng Dehuai by enjoining his supporters to "listen to bad words". He tried to maintain the impression that there had been full and free debate even at Lushan: "You have said what you have wanted to say, the minutes attest to that. If you do not agree with my views, you can refute them. I don't think it is right to say that one cannot refute the views of the Chairman". Yet close scrutiny of the available records reveals that there were many limits on freedom of discussion. First, Mao had an irascible and domineering personality. He could explode in anger and abuse, as he did in the summer of 1953 in response to some remarks by the venerable Liang Shuming, shouting that Liang had "stinking bones'; or as he did in response to Peng Dehuai's relatively mild and tactful criticisms in 1959 at Lushan.[40] Although Chen Yi claimed in his Cultural Revolution self-criticism that he had "opposed Chairman Mao several times", he

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[39]   See Leonard Shapiro and John Wilson Lewis, "The Roles of the Monolithic Party under the Totalitarian Leader", in J. W. Lewis (ed.), *Party Leadership and Revolutionary Power in China* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[40]   The system of hierarchy and the tradition of respect for one's superior put critics in a disadvantageous position. Those in a subordinate position assume a respectful attitude and understate their case, while those in a superior position can take advantage of their position to use forceful language to display their power or even temper. Thus, in his letter, Peng began by writing, "whether this letter is of value for reference or not is for you to decide. If what I say is wrong please correct me". He then confirmed the achievements made in the Great Leap Forward, before pointing out the shortcomings and errors committed by the Party. Even regarding the backyard furnaces, which everyone (including Mao) agreed were a disaster, he merely wrote "there have been some losses and some gains", making his point subtly by reversing the usual order. And he went out of his way to declare these shortcomings and errors were unavoidable and to observe that there were always shortcomings amid great achievements. He attributed these mistakes not to Mao but to the misinterpretation of Mao's instructions by officials and cadres. He asked for a systematic summing up of achievements and lessons gained in the several months since mid-1958 and wrote that "on the whole, there should be no investigation of personal responsibility". He noted finally that now the situation was under control and "we are embarking step by step on the right path". At the end of his letter he quoted Mao's assessment: "The achievements are tremendous, the problems are numerous, experience is rich, the future is bright". In contrast, Mao's criticism of Peng Dehuai was direct and blunt. Peng's letter "constituted an anti-Party outline of Rightist opportunism. It is by no means an accidental and individual error. It is planned, organized, prepared and purposeful. He attempted to seize control of the Party and they wanted to form their own opportunist Party. Peng Dehuai's letter is a program that opposes our general line although it superficially supports the people's communes ... His letter was designed to recruit followers to stage a rebellion. He was vicious and a hypocrite".

contradicted himself later: "Who dares to resist Chairman Mao? No one can do that, because Chairman Mao's prestige is too great". Indeed, if the conversations published in the *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* volumes are analysed to determine the role of Mao's interlocutors, the Chairman rarely heard any discouraging words, even from those "XXX's", presumably so designated because they were later discovered to be his enemies. Zhang Wentian complained to Peng Dehuai that Politburo meetings "were only large-scale briefing meetings without any collective discussion", and Peng agreed that "in reporting to the Chairman on the current situation, one talks only about the possible and advantageous elements".

Deng disliked Mao's patriarchal leadership style so much that he never sat near him during meetings even though he was deaf in one ear (and when he did sit next to him it was with his deaf ear to Mao), a fact Mao took note of. Yet Deng himself, once rid of Hua, became much more respectful of Mao's legacy than before, and certainly showed in his tactical maneuvers that he had learned from the Helmsman.[41] Indeed, Deng was probably an even more proficient manipulator of bureaucratic levers than Mao, who repeatedly had to resort to outside forums (such as provincial officials, or the "broad masses") to get his way. Deng's gradual seizure of power from a seemingly solidly entrenched Hua Guofeng in 1978–82 was a masterpiece of bureaucratic intrigue. His very bureaucratic virtuosity ultimately made him a rather indifferent supporter of political reform, tearing down many of the reform institutions he had helped to construct when he found it expedient to do so. Thus, paradoxically, he left the paramount leadership role, whose prerogatives he originally decried (and whose formal position he never occupied), stronger and more autonomous than it was when he found it.

Public Contests: The Supreme Leader can use his formal authority to undercut the authority of an opposing faction. The clearest illustration of this is the way Mao handled the case of Lin Biao. At the Second Plenum of the 19th Central Committee at Lushan in August-September 1970, a dispute unexpectedly surfaced between Mao and Lin Biao-Chen Boda over whether the post of Chief-of-State should be abolished, after Mao thought he had disposed of the issue by disavowing interest in the post during preliminary negotiations. After that, Mao systematically used his control over the communication of important documents

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[41]   "The second fall, it is known, took place at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution . . . Well, this time, too, Chairman Mao tried to protect me. Without success, though, because Lin Biao and the Gang of Four hated me too much. Not as much as they hated Liu Shaoqi, but enough to send me to Shanxi province to do manual labour . . . Even when I was sent to Shanxi . . . Chairman Mao had someone watching over my security. Foreign friends often ask me how it was possible for me to survive all those trials and tribulations, and I usually answer: 'Because I am the sort of person who does not get discouraged easily, because I am an optimist and know what politics is'. But this answer is not the real answer, the complete answer. I could survive because deep in my heart I always had faith in Chairman Mao". Cf. Deng's 1980 interview with Oriana Fallaci, reprinted in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, pp. 326–35.

to lower-level organizations and his power of appointment to undermine the influence of Lin and his supporters. "Throwing stones", as Mao phrased it, referred to Mao's strategic use of various documents that had an important bearing on the conflict. He took various documents written by Chen Boda, added his own critical comments, and distributed both to lower levels, and he approved the distribution of other documents such as the self-criticisms of military leaders under Lin—Huang Yongsheng, Wu Faxian, Li Zuopeng and Qiu Huizuo—with Mao's marginal criticisms. He also made an inspection trip during which he criticized Lin Biao and Chen Boda in speeches to local officials and commanders.[42] In contrast, the informal channels of communication available to the opposition reached only a very limited number of persons, as the need for secrecy constrained their communications. "Blending sand with soil", again quoting Mao's own wording, referred to Mao's use of his power of appointment to put his own men into the "management group" of the Central Military Commission, which had been staffed exclusively by Lin's followers. "Digging up the cornerstone" referred to his reorganization of the Beijing Military Region. Mao knew that informal groups depend on the formal organizational structure as a "trellis", in Nathan's words, and they can be undermined by invoking formal organizational sanctions to dismantle the trellis.

Though this was not Deng's preferred *modus operandi* and he had less need to do so in view of his consummate mastery of intramural political tactics, Deng was also quite capable of manipulating the *vox populi*. Thus he gladly accepted public support during the first Tiananmen incident of 1976 and in the early phase of the Democracy Wall movement, even giving the young participants clandestine backing. So, too, the article launching the summer 1978 "criterion of truth" debate was written in close collaboration with Hu Yaobang, just as Yao Wenyuan's article launching the Cultural Revolution had been reviewed by Mao. Deng's gradual retirement from formal positions after 1986 put him in a somewhat more awkward position to command public support, as access to the mass media is normally monopolized by formal incumbents. Yet just as Mao created an alternative channel to the media from his informal base in Shanghai, in 1991 Deng arranged through his daughter Maomao (Deng Rong) for a Shanghai newspaper to publish pseudonymous articles attacking conservative policy arguments.And just as Mao took advantage of the (somewhat misleading) impression that he had prematurely been shoved aside by ungrateful colleagues to justify his assault on them in the Cultural Revolution, in Deng's spring 1992 tour of the south (*nan xun*) he capitalized on his lack of formal positions to play the outsider to prod policy reversals by an entrenched centre. Though his conservative opposition did not surrender without resistance, Deng had chosen his symbolic weapons shrewdly, positioning himself in favour of "reform" and

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[42]   See Michael Y. M. Kao, *The Lin Piao Affair: Power Politics and Military Coup* (White Plains: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975), *passim*, especially the "Introduction".

accelerated economic growth. His position was like that of an emperor, whom no one could openly challenge with impunity but must proceed by indirection (for instance, by impugning a surrogate, or heir apparent).

In sum, the informal role of Supreme Leader is endowed with the following assets: (1) a public image (symbolized since the imperial era by the sun) of not just goodwill but political flawlessness (thus Red Guards deemed any reference to "sun spots" evidence of *lèse majesté*); (2) the final word in the construal of official ideology; (3) a free ambit to act in concert with any combination of colleagues or subordinates at any level in any hierarchical network without fear of accusations of "factionalism"; and (4) privileged access to both internal bureaucratic document flows and public media networks. This has been true throughout the reigns of both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. The implication is that if and when a cleavage occurs, the Supreme Leader was far more likely to prevail than his challenger, and more likely to win than the incumbent in other Communist party-states in the maneuverings to determine a successor.

This is not to say that the other members of the leadership are completely powerless; were that the case, no elite cleavage would ever materialize. The resources of the Supreme Leader's colleagues are sufficient to stymie his initiatives in a protracted fashion during periods of hierarchical stability, or (at risk of purge) to mount a frontal challenge during a period of hierarchical unrest. The relative power of other Politburo members is a product of (1) their informal connections (*guanxi*) to the Supreme Leader, retaining his "favour'; (2) their formal executive positions beyond Politburo membership (such as Premier or National People's Congress Standing Committee chair); (3) their formal credentials (*zige*); (4) the depth and breadth of their informal bases; and (5) any adventitious situational opportunities that might arise (for example, the Supreme Leader's absence from the capital or serious illness). The Supreme Leader might be thought to control the first two of these resources by dint of his power of appointment and dismissal. But appointees are assumed to have a career-long tenure barring purge, and purge may be politically costly—particularly if a Politburo member has a relatively exalted prestige and a broad informal base (for example, the purges of Peng Dehuai, Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao alienated many of the cadres in their respective "tails"). Thus a veteran leader may pose a sufficient challenge to a sitting Supreme Leader for the latter to postpone a showdown (as Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun avoided a confrontation) or to wage a fairly fierce struggle if an open cleavage should eventuate. Yet the power balance is such that the ultimate outcome is not normally in doubt.

The basic leadership configuration within the Politburo may thus vary along two axes: the distribution of agreement and the distribution of power. Although both are continua with many intermediate positions, the polar alternatives may be depicted as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1:   Patterns of Elite Alignment

Distribution of Agreement

		Cleavage	Solidarity
Distribution of Power	Hierarchy	hierarchical discipline	primus inter pares
	Collegiality	factionalism leadership	collective

Intra-elite cleavage necessarily emerges only when the Supreme Leader becomes engaged; otherwise rivalries may fester for years (like the Kang Sheng-Chen Yun or Jiang Qing-Wang Guangmei grudges). The single issue with the greatest potential to generate a cleavage is that of succession, a triangular affair pitting the Supreme Leader against his heir apparent and also implicating other potential successors. Yet the Supreme Leader is not necessarily the original focus of the dispute. If we review the ten "great line struggles" frequently listed during the Maoist era in Party history texts, few involved an immediate attempt to usurp power. The more typical pattern was for competition in the line of succession to focus on the designated heir apparent, leading the Supreme Leader to purge either the heir or the challengers. (As in traditional imperial court politics, which lacked Western primogeniture rules, maneuverings regarding succession are most likely during the time when a Supreme Leader is perceived to be approaching death, but they can emerge at any time). The purge of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi followed their attempt to displace Liu and Zhou at a time when Mao was introducing arrangements to retire to a "second front'; the Lushan plenum occurred immediately after the installation of Peng Dehuai's old nemesis Liu Shaoqi as heir apparent;[43] and the Cultural Revolution involved Lin Biao's displacement of Liu Shaoqi from that position.

The "September 13 incident" in which Lin Biao died in 1971 involved a more bipolar split between the sitting Supreme Leader and heir apparent, but

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[43]   Peng's antipathy for Liu apparently dated back to 1940, when Liu presided over a long and gruelling criticism session of Peng after the failed Hundred Regiments campaign. (See Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court*, p. 68.) Of course, the purge of Peng Dehuai at Lushan involved many issues, some of them far more salient; the point is merely that succession was among them.

there was also conflict between the Gang of Four and the PLA, as well as friction within Lin's own family.[44] In the reform era, there have been two elite cleavages clearly involving succession. Whereas the purge of Hu Yaobang occurred in the context of a generalized resentment among veteran cadres toward Hu's Party reform program (which had moved them into retirement) and his anti-corruption drive (resulting in the prosecution of some of their children) and was reportedly preceded by friction between Hu and Zhao Ziyang (who criticized Hu's work style in a late 1984 letter to Deng that was read in the meeting deciding upon Hu's demotion),[45] the decisive factor in his fall was Deng's willingness to abandon him to his enemies, probably in response to Hu's attempts to ease Deng into retirement.[46] Zhao Ziyang's fall came in the context of clear signals of his sympathy for democracy activists who were publicly calling for Li Peng's purge and Deng's retirement, and was anticipated by a sharp Zhao-Li Peng rivalry dating from Li's takeover of Zhao's economic portfolio after an inflationary binge the previous summer. All of the above were pre-mortem succession struggles; a post-mortem conflict tends to involve more evenly balanced forces at a time when no Supreme Leader has yet emerged.

A second type of hierarchy disturbance may occur when the Supreme Leader seeks to delegate authority as a way of exploring policy options or circumventing bureaucratic impediments, testing loyalties, or even justifying an intended dismissal—a sort of "unguided missile" launch. The Supreme Leader may thus assign different elites to do contradictory things, delegate several people to perform the same task, violate the chain of command and hold briefings with subordinates without informing their chief. Mao did all of these and more.

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[44]   See the memoirs of Lin Biao's former secretary: Jiao Hua, *Ye Qun zhi mi: Ye Qun yu Lin Biao* (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1993). Ye Qun, Lin Biao's wife, appears to have been a proud and ambitious woman, which may have helped precipitate the 1966 fall of of Lu Dingyi (due to friction between Ye Qun and Su Huiding) and later brought her into conflict with both Jiang Qing and her own daughter, "Doudou".

[45]   See Ruan Ming, *Deng Xiaoping diguo* [Deng Xiaoping's Empire] (Taiwan: Shibao Wenhua Chuban Qiye Youxian Gongsi, 1992), pp. 188–91. Hu Qili reportedly also provided information for the January meeting critical of his erstwhile patron.

[46]   Hu, having been appointed Party Secretary-General, was apparently under the delusion that he was really in command. So he reportedly went to Deng and asked him to cede his power: "Be an example. I cannot work efficiently while you are still in power". Moreover, he allowed his ambitions to become public. When Lu Deng asked him in 1986, "Why do you have to wait until Deng dies to become Central Military Commission chair?" he was silent. Not too long afterward, the *Washington Post* interviewed Hu: "Who is going to replace Deng as chair of the Central Military Commission?" Hu replied: "We will solve this problem once and for all at the Party's 13th Congress. No one can be in a post forever". See Pang Pang, *The Death of Hu Yaobang*, translated by Si Ren (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Centre for Chinese Studies, 1989), pp. 42–3.

For example, Mao reportedly complained to Gao Gang about Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and other White area cadres at the time he was setting up the "two fronts" within the Politburo, giving Gao grounds to hope he might displace them.[47] The Chairman consorted with Bo Yibo in formulating the Ten Great Articles without first clearing this with Bo's superior, Zhou Enlai.[48] During the Cultural Revolution, Mao simultaneously delegated a central work conference in October 1965 to look into the case of Wu Han and instigated an informal group in Shanghai to launch its own inquiry and to write a polemical article assailing Wu (keeping his involvement with the Shanghai group secret). He set up the Cultural Revolution Group under Peng Zhen's chairmanship, and Peng circulated the "February (1966) Outline Report on the Current Academic Discussion" ("February Outline Report" [*Eryue tigang*]) only after travelling to Wuhan on 5 February to get Mao's approval. But meanwhile Mao personally supervised the February Summary (*Eryue qiyao*) based on a more radical meeting on literary and art work in the armed forces conducted by Lin Biao and Jiang Qing in the period 2–20 February 1966. Mao personally revised this latter the document three times before having it circulated through inner-Party channels, and a few months later he discredited the February Outline and disbanded the Cultural Revolution Group. At a time when he was covertly inspiring a Red Guard insurrection against the cadre work teams launched by the "bourgeois reactionary headquarters" of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, he was also apparently suspicious of his latest chosen successor, Lin Biao, as he confided in a confidential letter to Jiang Qing.[49] Three years later, while still naming Lin Biao his successor in the Constitution of the 9th Party Congress, he also made a bid to the radicals, telling Lin that as he was getting old, Lin, too, should have a successor—Zhang Chunqiao would be a good candidate.[50] Mao seems to have encouraged the Gang of Four to formulate a slate of government appointments for the 4th National People's Congress in early 1975, while to his senior colleagues he expressed nothing but scorn for these efforts. During Mao's final year in power his actions were typically ambivalent: he backed Deng's measures to carry out the Four Modernizations program and defended him from the Gang, but simultaneously he allowed his own inflammatory ideological comments to be propagated, while sanctioning the efforts of such would-be theorists as Zhang

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[47] Du Feng, "Can the Gao Gang Dilemma Be Resolved?" *Zhengming*, No. 37 (1 November 1980), pp. 18–19.

[48] I am indebted to Professor Peter N. S. Lee for this point.

[49] Mao wrote the letter revealing his uneasy state of mind on 8 July 1966, though it was not publicly revealed until after Lin Biao was killed on 13 September 1971. He was apparently perturbed by Lin Biao's speech at an extended meeting of the Politburo on 18 May 1966 warning against *coups d'état*. Ye Yonglie, *Chen Boda*, p. 280.

[50] Wang Nianyi, *1949–1989 niande Zhongguo: datong luande niandai* [China in 1949–1989: An Era of Harmony and Chaos] (Henan: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988), pp. 387–8.

Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, who wrote major exegeses on class struggle and proletarian dictatorship that could not have been so widely publicized without his endorsement. Both Liu Shaoqi during the various struggle sessions against him in the Cultural Revolution and Jiang Qing during her trial a decade later insisted resolutely that they were doing only what Mao had told them to do; though Mao had publicly repudiated one and not the other, both may have been right.

Deng Xiaoping seems to have been less apt to delegate various subordinates to conflicting (or identical) assignments, but no less willing to give them relatively "hot potatoes" for which he would then claim credit if they succeeded or scapegoat them if they failed. Certainly, Hu Yaobang had grounds to assume he had Deng's support in his campaign to rejuvenate the Party and to retire Party elders. Zhao Ziyang also claimed to have had Deng's authorization to pursue a soft line toward the protesters during the first two weeks of May 1989. Yet both found themselves abandoned when their opponents saw an opportunity to counterattack. Both the 1986 campaign for political reform and the summer 1988 experiment with price reform also appear to have originated with Deng, who left first Hu and then Zhao holding the bag.

A third type of elite cleavage consists of the continuation of policy debate by other means, to parody Clausewitz. Policy disputes tend to escalate when the leadership is in a quandary—an open-ended situation offering several feasible options, with chances for relative gains by various factions. Indeed, the more serious the problems confronting the Party, the greater the legitimacy of raising differing views and alternatives about which groups might differ. In the first half of 1962, in the wake of the Great Leap Forward's failure, redistributing land to the individual household was suggested, as was the foreign policy alternative of reconciliation with imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries, and cutting off aid to national liberation movements. As we now know, this was at a time of perhaps the gravest crisis in Party history, when millions of people were starving to death as a consequence of the Great Leap Forward (some thirteen and a half million, according to official PRC statistics).

The issues raised by the democracy marchers in April-May 1989 were also far-reaching, involving the legitimation of autonomous associations within a bounded civil society. Such policy issues provide the provocation for a dispute, but do not necessarily define the contending parties. Thus Zhou Enlai's position on the Cultural Revolution (as on most policy issues) coincided more closely with that of Liu and Deng than with Mao's, but he switched his position in time for the Eleventh Plenum of the 8th Central Committee and threw his lot in with the radicals.

In short, disagreement may begin over policy issues, but at some point fairly early in the struggle a weighing of the political capital controlled by the various contenders occurs and parties to the conflict choose sides strategically, eventually precipitating a bandwagon effect based on opportunistic considerations. The more evenly matched the factional contenders, the more protracted and bitter the struggle is likely to be (cf. the 1930s conflict between Mao and the so-called Returned Students); the more imbalanced, the shorter and more easily resolved (cf. the Deng-Hu and Deng-Zhao splits). In such confrontations, *ceteris paribus*,

the faction chief with the broadest and deepest base and most distinguished *zige* will prevail. As noted above, this tends to skew the outcome in favour of the Supreme Leader. Yet even at the height of polarization there is a large group of individuals who do not belong to any of the principal factions. Most leading officials are neither "leftists" nor "rightists", but somewhere in between. The existence of this group of "free-floaters" (*zhuzhong tiaohe pai*) exercises a certain constraint on the "leftists" and "rightists", who are relatively few in number but exercise a disproportionate influence in politics. Finally, policy disagreements were "normally" resolved within the elite without including outside forces. That has been the norm since the publication of Liu's *On Inner-Party Struggle* in 1941, and after the Cultural Revolution and Mao's death the Party has sought to reaffirm that norm. The most explosive confrontations are those that are publicly vented, giving one faction the option of manipulating the masses against another. In such cases (cf. the 1966, 1976, 1978, 1986 and 1989 clashes), rhetorical and promotional skills may also play a role in the outcome.

The Impact of Reform

The question of the impact of reform is of course complex, deserving far more empirical research than has yet been conducted,[51] but a few preliminary hypotheses may be suggested. First, the overall decline in the perceived efficacy of ideology (with the inadvertent assistance of the regime) and the increasing importance of purpose-rational relationships have had both an emancipatory and a corrosive impact upon *guanxi*: emancipatory because with the relaxation of constraints on lateral communication brought about by the end of "class struggle" and the spread of the market economy, contacts of all types are multiplying. At the same time, the reform's impact is corrosive in the sense that such connections have become suffused with utilitarian considerations. As a consequence, the dichotomy introduced earlier between value-rational and purpose-rational relationships has tended to break down. A new type of connection has emerged that is at once more instrumental and less sentimental (see Figure 2).

In this figure, the "pure" or Weberian types of relationship are either purpose-rational (highly purposive, low in value: "commodified") or value-rational (low in purpose, high in value: "sentimental"). "Bureaucratism" (a term for relationships neither value- nor purpose-rational) has been (for obvious reasons) negatively valued in both the Maoist and reform eras. The new hybrid *guanxi* is, however, *both* value-rational and purpose-rational, to the consternation of more traditional types who deplore the adulteration of value-rational relationships with considerations of short-term material interest. Here, one uses

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[51]   See Peter N. S. Lee, "Informal Politics and Leadership in Post-Mao China", unpublished paper presented at the annual Association for Asian Studies meeting, Washington DC, 2-5 April 1992.

Figure 2:   Reform and Informal Relationships

Mixed Relationships

Purpose

		High	Low
Value	High	*guanxi* (new) "hybrid"	*guanxi* (old) "sentimental"
	Low	market "commodified"	bureaucratic (neutral)

connections cultivated for their intrinsic value as an instrument to achieve other ends, or even cultivates "connections" with material gains in mind. This is particularly noticeable at lower levels, where cadres with direct responsibility for managing the economy are constantly offered new opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour. The other tendency is for networks of connections to metastasize throughout society at large, with the breakdown of the previously impermeable boundaries of the "basic work unit". The ultimate upshot remains to be seen, of course, but the trend is for *guanxi* to become indistinguishable from collegial or other superficially affective business associations.

At the highest elite levels, still protected from the market by a combination of reasonably high salaries and a comprehensive free-supply system, material interests have not yet adulterated value-rational relationships in any obvious way. Yet, an increasing purpose-rationality has also made its appearance here.

Previously, factions were primarily motivated by personal security considerations, as Pye has noted. But in the course of reform, security is no longer in such short supply; on the contrary, there has been an attempt to legalize tenure arrangements and to restore popular respect for officialdom. The bloody crackdown on the "masses" at Tiananmen should not blind us to the fact that disciplinary measures against members of the political elite have become much milder than before. The Liuist barriers shielding the Party from populist monitoring (from mass protests and big-character posters, for example) have been re-erected, and whereas rectification campaigns and purges have not been altogether discontinued, they have been far less sweeping than before, sparing the leading "targets" from public humiliation and other severe sanctions.[52] Hua

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[52]   For a perceptive review of Party rectification under the 1980s reforms, see Ch'i Hsi-sheng, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978–*

Guofeng retained a seat on the Central Committee, Hu Yaobang died a full member of the Politburo, and even Zhao Ziyang retained Party membership and has been seen on the golf course. Moreover, the secularization of Mao Zedong Thought that has accompanied Deng's pragmatic focus on growth at any cost, and the attendant dismissal of the spectres of a "struggle between two lines" and "people in the Party taking the capitalist road", have reduced the ideological barriers to the operation of factions. Though still denied and forbidden,[53] factional behaviour has become somewhat less clandestine. The upshot is that contemporary elite factions have begun to engage in the active pursuit of policies that are perceived to enhance the interests of their constituencies, not merely in furtive self-defense and attack maneuvers.

Figure 3:   Reform and Elite Coalitions

Action

		General	Particular
Structure	Formal	bureaucratic politics	independent kingdom
	Informal	policy group	faction

In the course of reform, though, the dominant trend has been, clockwise, from factions toward bureaucratic politics. Independent kingdoms have always been taboo, and their empirical incidence seems to have declined since Liberation, given the centre's enhanced power to rotate cadres. At present, the emergent operational form is the "policy group". This is informally constituted but takes coherent positions on policy issues of interest to its constituency. Take,

1989 (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), pp. 170–257. In this connection, it is noteworthy that when Liu Shaoqi's works on Party rectification were republished after his posthumous rehabilitation, the "unity" (*tuanjie*) and conciliatory themes (already ascendant) were emphasized, while discussions of contradiction and inner-Party struggle were toned down.

[53]   Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping, for example, all emphasized the non-existence of factions within the Party leadership in speeches immediately after the 13th Party Congress in 1987. See Suisheng Zhao, "The Feeble Political Capacity of a Strong One-Party Regime: An Institutional Approach toward the Formulation and Implementation of Economic Policy in Post-Mao Mainland China" (Part One), *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 1990), pp. 47–81.

for example, the so-called petroleum faction (Yu Qiuli, Gu Mu, Li Shiguang, Kang Shi'en). Though classically constituted via loyalties formed while exploiting the Daqing oil fields in the early 1960s, this grouping cohered in defense of energy, heavy industry and central planning. Though purged in the mid-1980s, it was succeeded by a new functional grouping headed by Chen Yun. Or consider the 1980s coalition of Deng Liqun's propaganda apparatus with Chen Yun's planning and heavy industry group in defense of complementary bureaucratic interests.[54] A policy group is a hybrid association that is on its way to bureaucratic politics but has not yet arrived. Recruitment to a policy group still seems to be based on patronage rather than issue-orientation, and loyalty to the patron tends in the event of elite cleavage to override bureaucratic interests. This, then, is a "half-rationalized" (that is, policy-oriented but still personalistic) form of factionalism corresponding to the "half-reformed" status of the Chinese political system.

A second result of reform is that with increasing decentralization and market autonomy, there is growing latitude for various forms of cleavage to come into increasingly open competition. This may involve conflicts among informal relations: splits among groups based on repressed cleavages—class background, geographic origin, Tiananmen, Democracy Wall, the Cultural Revolution; or conflict between formal and informal bases (Deng Xiaoping mobilizing old cronies to purge Hu and Zhao). Decentralization opens the way to conflicts among formal bases: central versus local, region versus region (such as the rich and cosmopolitan eastern seaboard versus the poorer internal provinces), and market versus planning bureaucracies. At least three factors have made it likely that these conflicts will not be suppressed, as has often been the case in the past, but instead increasingly openly aired. First, the decline of ideology renders more options legitimate, more arguments open to discussion. The "pragmatization" of Mao's thought entails that nationalism, regionalism, avocational pursuits (stamp collectors, martial arts devotees) and other particular interests all operate according to their own "laws" and need no longer be repudiated. Second, the extraordinary growth of the market and the existence of extrabudgetary funds, independent financial accounting and so forth implies that there are ample resources available to the contending forces in any such cleavages. At the same time, marketization tends to remove from the political game the traffic in material commodities (these are now openly available through the price system), reserving

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[54]   See Charles Burton, *Political and Social Change in China Since 1978* (New York: Greenwood, 1990), pp. 63–4. It soon became clear to Deng Liqun that most threatening to the interests of the constituency of propaganda workers was devolution of authority to lower levels, because maintaining an "orthodoxy" demands uniformity though central coordination (namely, the "Party's unified leadership"). This threw Deng Liqun into the arms of Chen Yun. The conditions defined by the reformers as necessary to economic development were seen to be antagonistic to those required for effective political and ideological work.

the use of factionalism more exclusively for political and other extra-market transactions. Third, the impact of Tiananmen haunts not only would-be protesters with the spectre of violent suppression; a national leadership increasingly dependent upon international capital and upon commodity and service markets also has become more sensitive to the need to avoid ostracism and sanctions.

Conclusions

To sum up, informal politics can be defined on the basis of a combination of behavioural, structural and cyclical criteria. Behaviourally, informal politics consists of value-rational as opposed to purpose-rational relationships functioning in the service of a personal base. Informal politics tends to be implicit and covert (*neibu*) rather than explicit and public. It tends to be flexible, casual and irregular rather than institutionalized. Structurally, informal politics may be assumed to affect the leadership strata more than routine administration, and high-level leadership more than low-level. This informality is a function of discretionary latitude and is limited to small, closed groups. The structural circumstances most conducive to informal politics are those in which the leadership is beset by a crisis not resolvable through standard operating procedures, permitting the existing hierarchical monopoly to break down into a more open competition among elites. Informal politics tends to occur at those times in the political cycle when this type of structural breakdown is most likely to occur—particularly leadership successions, of course, but other national crises as well.

Is the political cycle of stable hierarchy versus polarized conflict correlated to the business cycle that has materialized under the economic reforms?[55] Looking back in time for clues, elite cleavages appeared in the past at or near times of economic boom (Gao Gang, the Cultural Revolution, Hu Yaobang) and bust (Deng Xiaoping's second comeback in December 1978, Zhao Ziyang's fall). More important than the market's top or bottom, perhaps, is whether the cycle has reached an outer limit at which at least one faction within the leadership is prepared to fight "against the current" for a correction.

As a political form, informal politics in contemporary China is Janus-faced. It tends to be substantively "progressive", as its flexibility facilitates more rapid change by offering short-cuts to standard bureaucratic procedures. This has helped make China an extraordinarily well-led country compared to others in the Third World (albeit not always wisely governed). Paradoxically, it is at the same time "reactionary" in its procedural implications, tending to reinforce traditional hierarchical relationships (including the "cult" of leadership inherited from the empire) and culturally embedded political relationships more generally (for

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[55] This question is taken up in Lowell Dittmer, "Patterns of Leadership in Reform China", in Arthur L. Rosenbaum (ed.), *State and Society in China: The Consequences of Reform* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), pp. 529–36.

instance, time-honoured primordial "connections"), at the expense of rational-legal and meritocratic arrangements.

The outlook is further complicated by the fact that informal politics must be assumed to have been evolving along with everything else. Generally speaking, we would conclude that informal politics under Deng was undergoing a process of rationalization, with a tendency to backslide during periods of crisis. This is visible, first of all, in the growing institutionalization of various bureaucratic "systems" at all but the highest levels. These became increasingly dependent on explicit rules, procedural regularization, and so forth. Second, as noted above, informal groups have become increasingly oriented not merely to the maximization of power and the minimization of risk but to the promotion of policies designed to enhance their bureaucratic interests. Thus, at the mass level, informal groups seem to be undergoing a transition to professional, avocational and business groupings; and at the elite level, to political pressure groups or even quasi-parties (that is, "reformers" versus "conservatives"). Yet as indicated, myriad qualifications and exceptions are in order: this will be a "march of 10,000 li". That was plainly visible in the crises that provoked the ejection of first Hu Yaobang and then Zhao Ziyang from the line of succession, which involved a bureaucratically irrational splintering of the so-called reform grouping.