

PROVISIONS FOR LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN THE P.R.C.

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## Abstract

Most analysts study leadership succession in communist states as a "crisis" which ensues after the death of a dominant leader. This study takes an alternative approach. It is a survey of provisions for leadership succession in the People's Republic of China. This involves a comparison of the strategies and motivations of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in providing for their own succession.

Deng Xiaoping's more extensive provisions for leadership succession during the CCP's transition towards a more institutionalized one-party bureaucratic rule are likely to be more durable than Mao's provisions in the earlier period. Nevertheless, guarantees of smooth and regularized succession, especially of proteges promoted on the basis of personal ties within the leadership core, may be impossible to obtain.

Mao's provisions were aimed largely at what he saw as a probable, but deplorable, bureaucratic future of the PRC. Deng, on the other hand, perceives an element of opportunity in the succession process. He has tried to provide leadership that will, in his estimation, be better able to bring about China's modernization. In both leaders' provisions for succession, the elevation to the status of "heir apparent" of individuals has been a political liability to those individuals, especially when their promotion is perceived to be based largely on personal ties

to the dominant leader. This liability becomes more pronounced in a period of bureaucratic, collective leadership.

Because of his shifting policy preferences, his status as charismatic leader, and the ambitious nature of his proteges, Mao Zedong was unsuccessful in providing for his own succession. Deng Xiaoping, on the other hand, has been successful in cultivating a reserve of young, well-educated cadres. These provisions, because they are extensive and exist in a more subdued, consensus-oriented political environment, may well be Deng's most enduring legacy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of leadership succession in communist states is a particularly troublesome topic of study. To date, no communist country has institutionalized an orderly process whereby a new senior leader (or leaders) takes over the reins of power after the death of a dominant leader. Moreover, many leaders, if they have tried to provide for their own succession at all, have encountered considerable difficulties in establishing a "succession generation" of lower level officials to carry out their preferred policies after their own death. If informal rules of succession evolve in what one analyst calls the "bureaucratic leadership" period (as opposed to an earlier "heroic leadership" period), then the application of those rules will likely be hidden from public view. Indeed, succession struggles or deliberations tend to be among the most secretive of political processes.

This secrecy notwithstanding, opportunities to study the succession process in communist states do exist. Many analysts have approached the problem by engaging in after-the-fact analysis of the "crisis" or debates which ensue upon the death of a dominant leader. Some writers have identified stages or phases in these succession struggles. This approach is useful, perhaps even essential, for our understanding of the succession phenomenon. An alternative focus, however, may be equally

valuable. In some communist states (most notably Yugoslavia and China), aging leaders have made obvious efforts to prevent a succession "crisis" by placing a favored protege, supported by a network of sympathetic lower officials, in a position to succeed them when they die. Hence, an analysis of provisions for leadership succession seems to be in order. An understanding of events which take place before a dominant leader's death will help us understand what happens afterwards. This "provisions approach" to studying leadership succession has been applied to China by (among others) Myron Rush and by various authors in Issues and Studies. These writings are out of date, however, and do not extensively examine the efforts of both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in this regard.

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), both Mao and Deng have made very obvious efforts to provide for their own succession. In this thesis, I will compare and contrast the strategies and motivations of these two leaders in their attempts to provide for a smooth transfer of power at their passing. This, of course, will require a review of much of the history of elite politics in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) with a focus on each leader's provisions for succession. In this endeavor, I will keep the following two broad questions in mind: What methods or strategies have Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping used in attempting to provide for their own successions



and to what extent is it possible to ensure the success of such provisions in a communist state?

Some subsidiary questions will include the following: What factors affect the success or failure of such attempts in China? Is it inherently more difficult for a founding "heroic" leader such as Mao to provide for his own succession than it is for subsequent leaders? How do the peculiarities of Chinese politics (i.e. guanxi, the imperial legacy and factional ties) affect the leader's strategies? Did either leader envision a more collective leadership after his passing? What attempts were made to institutionalize the succession process? Does designation as an "heir presumptive" (to use Rush's phrase) detract from a proposed successor's chances of a long term of office?

My general thesis is that provisions for leadership succession, especially from a generational point of view, will have more effect under "bureaucratic", rather than "heroic", leadership. In other words, Deng Xiaoping's more extensive provisions for leadership succession during the CCP's transition towards a more institutionalized one-party rule are likely to be more durable than were Mao's provisions in the earlier period. Nevertheless, guarantees of a smooth and regularized succession, especially of favored proteges within the leadership core, may be impossible to obtain. I will also argue that Mao's provisions were largely aimed against what he saw as a probable,

but deplorable, future of the PRC. Deng, on the other hand, perceives an opportunity to provide leadership for the future. Finally, I will also suggest that elevation to the status of "heir apparent" seems to be a political liability to a protege, especially if his promotion is perceived to be based largely on personal ties to the dominant leader. This liability becomes more salient as the transition to a more institutionalized form of rule progresses.

In Chapter One, I will outline a conceptual framework for the study of succession in China. This will include some generalizations about succession in authoritarian and communist regimes as well as explanation of some specific characteristics of Chinese history, society, and politics which have relevance to provisions for succession. Chapters Two and Three will contain description and analysis of the provisions for succession implemented by, respectively, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In Chapter Four, a broad comparison of the two leaders' strategies will be made, brief speculation about the Chinese future will be entertained, and some conclusions will be drawn about leadership succession in China.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### General Considerations

It is often asserted that in authoritarian regimes the question of leadership succession is a "problem" or that the death of a dominant leader will produce a "crisis". Admittedly, the near universal lack of politically relevant succession arrangements in the world's non-democratic systems foments a certain amount of anxiety among both decision makers and analysts who anticipate the deaths of important leaders. As Myron Rush notes, succession in communist regimes is problematic because "there is no established center for making decisions whose authority is recognized at all times [and] no reliable means for the transfer of power has yet been devised."

Life-long tenure within communist parties tends to inhibit generational turnover. Moreover, confusion may exist as to whether supreme power rests in the party or the government. And even if such an allocation of authority is clear, the prevailing mode of governing in communist states has been personal rule; true oligarchy occurs only sporadically.<sup>1</sup> Since personal rulers in Leninist states have generally had no constitutional way of legitimizing their own rule, their authority cannot be transferred to a successor by what Rush calls a "regulated

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<sup>1</sup>Myron Rush, How Communist States Change Their Rulers (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 13-18.

succession."<sup>2</sup> Thus, departing leaders search for other methods of legitimization, and their deaths inevitably bring uncertainty and excitement to the political scene.

That excitement, ironically, is also linked to an alternative way of viewing the succession process. The same uncertainty which causes some to view succession as an inevitable crisis is interpreted by others as an environment of opportunity. It has been argued that periods of succession in socialist states are unique opportunities for policy innovation.<sup>3</sup> It has even been claimed that

it is precisely at the point of succession-at the alleged moment of "crisis"-that the system finds the critical opportunity for the flexibility that ensures its own survival. The succession process thus proves to be one of the keys to the strength and stability of communist state systems.<sup>4</sup>

Some leaders have recognized the impending crisis or opportunity aspects of their own demise. This recognition will likely be reflected in their attempts to provide for their own succession. Usually these provisions involve choosing an individual (or small

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Valerie Bunce, Do New Leaders Make A Difference: Executive Succession and Public Policy under Capitalism and Socialism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 179-221 cited by Joseph W. Esherick and Elizabeth J. Perry, "Leadership Succession in The People's Republic of China: 'Crisis' or Opportunity?", Studies in Comparative Communism 16 (Autumn 1983), p.172).

<sup>4</sup>Esherick and Perry, p.172.

group) to succeed to the top party position as well as promoting a host of lower level officials as a supporting cast. Ostensibly, a major aim in this endeavor is policy continuity. An aging leader chooses successors who are sympathetic to his views and who will continue to promote his programs or ideals. Since a personal ruler, by definition, has a great deal of influence in major personnel appointments, he is usually in a favorable, though not unopposed, position to aid the promotion of his chosen successor(s).<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding this favorable position, the ability of a leader to ensure the longevity of his succession provisions is limited. Richard Betts and Samuel Huntington concluded from their survey of long-term authoritarian regimes that "no significant [positive or negative] relation appears to exist between pre-death succession arrangements and post-death instability."<sup>6</sup> Thus, whether aging leaders are influenced by cultural predispositions, concerned foresight, or a desire for a favorable place in history, their leadership succession plans often dissolve after their death. Attempts to provide an

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<sup>5</sup>Rush, p.14.

<sup>6</sup>Richard K. Betts and Samuel P. Huntington, "Dead Dictators and Rioting Mobs: Does the Demise of Authoritarian Rules Lead to Political Instability?", International Security 10 (Winter 1985-86), pp. 127-28.

enduring institutionalization of the succession process for top leaders are thwarted by the cooptive nature of the Central Committee membership.<sup>7</sup> Because CC members are selected by the Politburo, a departing leader can create support for his chosen heir by "stacking" the CC with sympathetic politicians. However, for true institutionalization to take place, CC members would have to select Politburo members, perhaps from among their own ranks. In this way, widely supported leaders could rise to prominent positions without necessarily having a specific high-ranking mentor behind them. Also, it is virtually impossible ideologically to justify a personal transfer of power in terms of Marxism-Leninism. Rule through the party and democratic centralism, rather than personal rule, are the officially sanctioned modes of governing.

Ideological prescriptions, however, are not the only factors which come to bear on attempts by communist leaders to provide for their own succession. Two other broad considerations must be taken into account when considering succession arrangements. First, communist regimes have exhibited an evolutionary character; the nature of communist leadership in revolutionary

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<sup>7</sup>See Frederick C. Tiewes, Leadership, Legitimacy and Conflict in China (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1984), p. 88.

times is markedly different from the leadership which evolves after consolidation of power. Second, legitimacy is not gained solely through ideological or constitutional means. I will now elaborate on these two ideas as they relate to provisions for leadership succession.

At different stages in the history of revolutionary movements, different types of leadership are in evidence. Alfred G. Meyer has outlined two broad and overlapping periods (or types) of communist leadership. The first of these is what he calls a period of "heroic leadership". During this stage, leaders tend to exhibit heroic stature - those characteristics commonly associated with "greatness".<sup>8</sup>

Of these "heroic" leaders, Meyer further identifies two potentially overlapping sub-types. First, there are charismatic revolutionaries who "rode out the storms of revolution and civil war" to establish a communist party in power. Lenin is the prototype of Meyer's charismatic revolutionary. The second ideal type of "heroic" leader is a state-builder, or in other words, someone like Stalin who transforms an underdeveloped country into a major actor on the world stage.<sup>9</sup> These sub-types may also overlap; Mao Zedong was both a revolutionary and a state-builder.

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<sup>8</sup>See Alfred G. Meyer, "Communism and Leadership," Studies in Comparative Communism 16 (Spring/Summer 1983), pp. 165-69.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

When the "heroic" leadership passes from the scene, they are eventually replaced by men who can best be described as "bureaucratic" leaders. Although these leaders may, like their predecessors, be experts in political infighting or promoters of certain aspects of the personality cult, they differ from heroic leaders in that they have not risen in the party ranks through revolution. They have gained their positions and experience through service to the state. They stay in office by generating support rather than by creating fear. These leaders can be thought of as system managers rather than system builders. Again, taking the Soviet Union as the example, the post-Stalin leaders, their individual differences notwithstanding, can all be classified as bureaucratic leaders; they rose to power through a bureaucratized party system.<sup>10</sup>

The period of transition from charismatic to bureaucratic, or institutionalized, rule may vary in duration and form. Typically, leaders who are of the revolutionary or system-building generation, but who lack the "heroic" leader's stature, come to the fore sometime during this transition. Jurgen Domes notes that this period may be described as a "monocracy," where purges and the domination of one leader remain the norm, or as a

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.167.



"transitional crisis system," where confrontations occur within various sub-systems and are signalled mostly by terminological differences rather than widespread purges.<sup>11</sup>

In conjunction with these broad classifications of communist rule, Meyers makes several points which are particularly germane to this study of provisions for succession. First, he notes, heroic leaders are "a hard act to follow." The death of heroic leaders generally marks a transition of more than personnel; it seems to be the transfer of one kind of leadership to another. Further, these transitions from revolutionary leadership to state-building, or from state-building to system management, can be characterized as struggles against power as much as struggles for power.<sup>12</sup> This is to suggest that "heroic" leaders will have difficulty in providing for their own succession not only because potential successors lack their stature and charisma, but also because subordinates may conspire to prevent a single great leader from rising again. Although this scheming may only temporarily succeed in thwarting personal rule, it nevertheless has the potential to abrogate an aging leader's provisions for leadership succession.

A period of bureaucratic leadership, alternatively, may provide an environment in which compromise is more possible and

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<sup>11</sup> Jurgen Domes, The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 249-50.

<sup>12</sup> Meyer, p. 166

even more expected. To a limited extent, informal "rules" of leadership succession may come to be accepted while attempts to institutionalize generational turnover are made. Bureaucratic leadership arises during a process that Richard Lowenthal terms "post-despotic normalization".<sup>13</sup> This phase begins when efforts to institutionalize revolution become exhausted due to the demands of modernization. Domestic policy debates in this period can be characterized more as conflicts between the goal of economic development and the curse of economic stagnation than as ideological conflicts.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the scope of policy debate narrows and compromise becomes increasingly possible. The likelihood of consensus building around a certain succession candidate, therefore, is greater in this bureaucratic period.<sup>15</sup>

Earlier it was mentioned that the legitimacy of communist leadership is not solely based on ideological or constitutional grounds. Although legal authority (of the Weberian type) is

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<sup>13</sup>Richard Lowenthal, "The Post-Revolutionary Phase in China and Russia," Studies in Comparative Communism 16 (Spring/Summer 1983), p. 191.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>15</sup>This is not to suggest that opposition to designated successors disappears. Political infighting still persists even though, contrary to Meyer's assertions, trends toward collective leadership may also endure. The key point is that, as Rush suggests, struggle in the bureaucratic period is waged in accordance with rules which limit its destructiveness. See Rush, p. 329.

important, it is not likely to be the imperative source of legitimation for succession arrangements. Legal authority may increase in importance in periods of bureaucratic rule, but even then other legitimizing forces come to bear. Charismatic and traditional authority play key roles in the legitimization of success arrangements. I will now outline how Weber envisioned the relationship between charisma and succession. A discussion of traditional authority and legitimacy in the Chinese context will then be offered in the next section.

"Heroic leadership" implies leaders which Meyer referred to as "charismatic revolutionaries". Weber described charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from other men...[and] endowed with specifically exceptional powers or qualities."<sup>16</sup> He includes war heroes as an example of the most basic type of charismatic leader. Thus, the inclusion of charisma as a defining characteristic of early communist leadership, especially in those countries where the communist regime was established by indigenous revolution, is especially appropriate. Charismatic authority, however, is unstable and eventually becomes rationalized or traditionalized, or both.<sup>17</sup> Although this rationalization process may begin

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<sup>16</sup>Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1947), pp. 358-59.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 356-66.

earlier, the actual death of a charismatic leader creates an authority vacuum which may speed up the process. Charisma does not dissolve instantly, however, so the way in which a subsequent leadership deals with the deceased charismatic leader becomes a key to their own legitimacy. Weber envisioned several ways in which the legitimizing link between departing charismatic leaders and their successors might be enhanced.<sup>18</sup>

First, a new charismatic leader can be sought who embodies the characteristics which qualify him for a position of authority. In this situation, the legitimacy of a new ruler is attached to certain distinguishing characteristics; rules of leadership selection based on these traits become codified. In other words, someone who resembles the original leader is chosen as successor. In a transitional communist system, this method of selection may result in the selection of a leader unqualified for the demands of the times.

An alternative method of charismatic leader selection is by personal designation by the original leader. This method would be successful only if the original followers recognize this form of designation. A third way in which charisma may be transferred is if a "charismatically qualified" administrative staff selects a

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

successor. This is not done through a free vote; deliberations often continue until unanimity is achieved. Even in this situation, legitimacy can take on the character of an acquired right by application of certain "standards of correctness". In "pre-bureaucratic" communist regimes, such standards may include revolutionary war experience or some other unique pre-victory experience.

A fourth method for the transmission of charismatic authority is through heredity. Among modern authoritarian regimes, North Korea and Nationalist China have demonstrated tendencies towards this kind of power transfer. It is well to observe that many now-communist countries have imperial pasts in which hereditary transfer of power was the norm. Finally, charismatic authority may be transferred through ritual means by passage from one bearer to another. The traditional forms of this transfer involve anointing, consecration, or the laying on of hands. These actions may be meant to supplement any of the other successor selection techniques. In modern communist states we might expect subtler, more imaginative variations of this type of transfer, some of which could be generated in propaganda offices rather than through actual events.

These methods of charismatic authority transfer should be viewed as patterns or ideal types. Various combinations and modern manifestations are possible. Although it may be impossible, or even impractical, to maintain the presence of a

true charismatic leader, subsequent generations of leaders will rely on the charisma of heroic leaders in ways similar to those outlined above. As circumstances change during the transition from heroic to bureaucratic rule, however, this "borrowing" of charismatic authority becomes an increasingly difficult task. Successors face the unenviable job of balancing the faults and obsolescence of their predecessor with his utility as a source of legitimization. Ideally, then, provisions for succession will include ways to lessen a chosen successor's dependance on his mentor while still allowing him to benefit from their relationship.

Charismatic authority, as suggested above, may become traditionalized. Manifestations of traditional authority patterns often appear in "modern" political systems. The Chinese Communist political system has, due to both traditional and systemic influences, developed its own peculiar characteristics. These traits, as they relate to leadership succession, will be discussed in the next section. The power bases and attributes of political actors which are relevant to succession in China will also be considered.

#### The Chinese Communist Context

While some historical writers may overemphasize the influence of the imperial legacy on modern-day Chinese political affairs, it is safe to say that strands of traditional behavior,

thought and discourse have been woven into the fabric of post-1949 Chinese socialist society. Many of these traditional influences relate directly to leadership succession and the designation of chosen heirs.

In theory, the relationship between Confucian emperors and their official advisors was one of mutual obligation. Court officials were expected to be loyal to the dynastic throne and offer honest advice to the emperor whenever they saw fit. The emperor was expected to rule righteously and consider the advice of his knowledgeable officials. A court official's disloyalty to the throne was the ultimate dishonorable act. An emperor who refused to listen to the remonstrations of officials deeming him to be in error engendered the possibility of his losing heaven's mandate, and thus the right to rule. In practice, however, unguarded criticism of an erring emperor could put an official in bodily danger. Also, although the transfer of power was commonly hereditary within a dynasty, during the Qing period the practice of successor "designating" evolved and legitimacy was granted to non-hereditary heirs.<sup>19</sup>

The potential effects of these traditions on the modern succession process can be described as follows. First, the overt personal designation of a successor by an aging leader may initially enhance that heir presumptive's claim to the top

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<sup>19</sup>Teiwes, p. 59.

leadership post when his mentor dies. However, the required loyalty of subordinates and traditional Chinese respect for the dead would require that an heir presumptive would necessarily have to refrain from criticizing the leader too harshly both before and after the leader's death. Failure to show such restraint would diminish the protege's legitimacy and put him at risk of losing his recognition as "heir". Furthermore, in light of these constraints, the very designation of a certain subordinate as chosen successor would give him a high profile and make his behavior subject to greater scrutiny by his peers.<sup>20</sup> Public and personal designation, therefore, may also increase an heir apparent's chances of losing his position. The generally unchallenged position of a dominant leader is strengthened by the absence of a clear successor. Once an obvious succession candidate is named, an "accelerating shift of loyalties is felt" and the incumbent's position is endangered to some degree.<sup>21</sup> Especially in the succession to a charismatic leader,

the heir presumptive has a thin line to walk between becoming a robot at the command of the ruler and asserting his own will in ways that may awaken his patron's fears and suspicions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>This phenomenon of course, is not peculiar to the Chinese system.

<sup>21</sup>Eberhard Sandschneider, "Succession in the People's Republic of China: Rule by Purge," Asian Survey 25 (June 1985), pp. 643, 650.

<sup>22</sup>Rush, p. 321. These constraints are also not unique in China, but are perhaps exaggerated by the Confucian ethics described above.



Thus, heir designation creates problems for both the heir and the incumbent. Also, an heir presumptive may, due to personal ties or perceived constraints of collective leadership, feel obligated to consider the advice of his peers. This advice may conflict with the precepts of his patron. The way in which these differences are dealt with by both the heir and the departing leader will affect the legitimacy and support of both leaders. While Confucian tradition provides a precedent in heir designation, the obligations imposed by that tradition make both the heir and the incumbent somewhat vulnerable. Put another way, departing leaders must choose someone who is strong enough to stand on their own, but loyal enough to wait their turn. This is no easy task.

Succession candidates in China are elevated to prominent positions based, in part, on guanxi and factional ties. Indeed, since it is not necessary, at least in the short term,<sup>23</sup> for a successor to attain the top party position, promotion of successors can be seen as a situation in which formal positions tend to act as supplements to informal power.<sup>24</sup> An understanding of factions and guanxi as well as the "rules" which are implied

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<sup>23</sup>Deng Xiaoping initially made his latest comeback through the state apparatus.

<sup>24</sup>For a detailed discussion of the distinction between informal and formal power in Chinese politics, see Lowell Dittmer, "Bases of Power in Chinese Politics: A Theory and Analysis of the Fall of the 'Gang of Four'," World Politics 31 (October 1978), pp. 26-60.

by their existence, then, will be helpful in the analysis of provisions for leadership succession.

Lucian Pye describes factions as "clusters of officials who, for some reason or other, feel comfortable with each other, who believe that they share mutual trust and loyalties, and who may recognize common foes."<sup>25</sup> They are an outgrowth of the mutual dependency felt between superiors and subordinates, and are based on common experience or social interaction. Pye further asserts that career self-interest and the sentiments associated with personal bonds of acquaintanceship and belonging (guanxi) predispose officials to indentify with a particular leader. These bonds act as the glue that holds factions together.<sup>26</sup> The guanxi relationship, however, is not as one-sided as the patron-client relationship which is often associated with many other societies in Asia. Since the relationship is based on some shared experience, origin or acquaintance, there is a sense of equality, subtle recognition of superior and inferior roles notwithstanding, which is not present in, for example, the Japanese case. This implies that the potential for a subordinate to victimize his superior exists. The existence of these relationships also suggests that while policy preferences,

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<sup>25</sup> Lucian Pye, Dynamics of Chinese Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Gun and Hain, 1981), p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 7. For a review of the debate about the relevance of factional analysis to Chinese politics, see Tang Tsou, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Informal Groups in CCP Politics," China Quarterly 65 (March 1976), pp. 98-114.

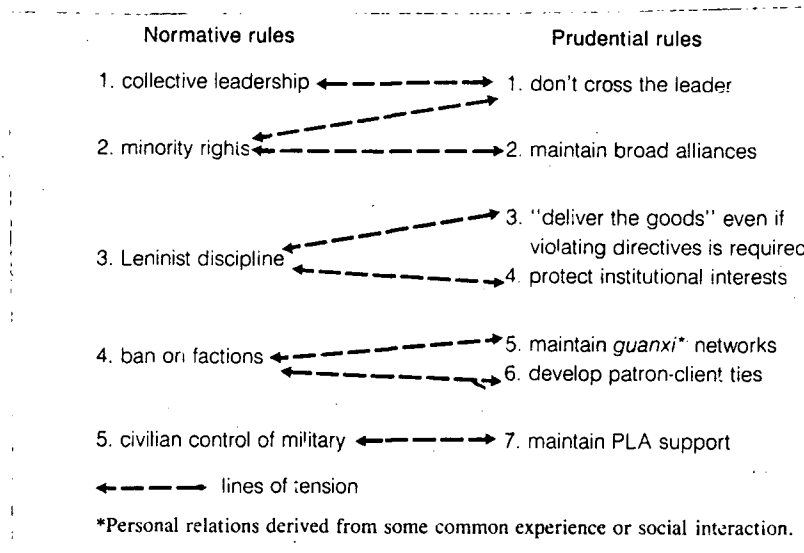
bureaucratic identification, generational cleavages, ideological disputes, and geographical bases all play significant roles in the formation of conflicting elite groups in CCP politics, personal ties (guanxi) and factionalism will obviously be, both as party discipline problems and as a means of support mobilization, very prominent features in any plan for provisions for succession.<sup>27</sup> Aging leaders tend to promote those with whom they are the most familiar. In other words, despite the official proscription of the promotion of officials on the basis of factional ties, the influence of these ties on officials' career paths cannot be denied.

This tendency suggests a certain tension between the "normative rules" imposed by Leninist ideology and the "prudential rules" which have their roots in Chinese culture.<sup>28</sup> Alternatively, this can be seen as a conflict between Weberian legal-rational authority and traditional authority. Frederick Teiwes' useful conceptualization of these tensions can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>27</sup> Because of the importance of guanxi in support mobilization, the cultivation of supporting "successor generations" is crucial. See Michael Yahuda, "Political Generations in China," China Quarterly 80 (December 1979), pp. 793-805 and William de B. Mills, "Generational Change in China," Problems of Communism (November-December 1983), pp. 16-35.

<sup>28</sup> Teiwes, pp. 94-99.



Source: Teiwes, p.96

Each of these contradictions should be a point of concern for a dominant leader trying to provide for his own succession. For his provisions to have any efficacy at all, the departing leader and his chosen successor must both walk a fine line between the two sets of rules. Difficult questions will inevitably arise. For example, with reference to the first rule in both columns, how much authority can a departing leader grant his intended successor before his own power is eclipsed, and to what extent can consensus within a supposedly collective leadership be

achieved on a decision to promote potential successors to top positions?<sup>29</sup> There are no easy answers to these questions.

The choice of a protege who is capable of establishing his own legitimacy is a key task of a departing leader wishing to ensure a smooth succession. Although, as suggested earlier, association with a former leader may be a source of authority for a succession candidate, it is likely that that authority alone will be insufficient for long-lasting legitimacy. A potential successor must be able to defend and legitimize his own prominent position even when his mentor is gone. Eberhard Sandschneider has suggested that the following characteristics are crucial (but perhaps not sufficient) for the maintenance of a strong successor position in China:

1. undisputed reference to Mao Zedong thought as the ideological source of legitimization;
2. long-standing career experience in important sub-systems;
3. membership in the inner leadership core;
4. maintenance of a strong local power base;
5. extensive network of formal and informal power afflations;
6. ability to mobilize power bases and constituencies.<sup>30</sup>

To these, Sandschneider adds difficult-to-observe personal traits such as close ties with leadership groups in the People's

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<sup>29</sup>For the historical roots of this dilemma, see *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup>Sandschneider, p. 699.

Liberation Army (PLA), an inclination for self-preservation, lack of accumulation of enemies and public approval.

It is conceivable that movement towards bureaucratic leadership would require some alterations or additions to this list. For example, technical understanding or demonstrated troubleshooting ability will grow in importance.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, references to Mao could become more diluted and selective as the number of former leaders, and thus the pool of legitimizing sources, becomes larger.

These qualifications for systemic evolution notwithstanding, it is evident that provisions for leadership succession in any era must be complex and extensive to meet with any degree of success. A departing leader must consider the following three formidable requirements in providing for his own succession: a successor must possess a large number of legitimizing characteristics; two lists of conflicting rules must be balanced by both mentor and protege; and the future needs of an evolving system must be accommodated through generational succession.<sup>32</sup> I will now outline how Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping each pursued this challenge and then compare Deng's prospects for success with the results of Mao's attempts.

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<sup>31</sup>Thomas W. Robinson, "Political Succession in China", World Politics 27 (October 1974), p. 15.

<sup>32</sup>This is not to imply that either leader conceived of their task in these terms. I only suggest that these factors will have a bearing on the success of their efforts.

CHAPTER TWO:  
MAO'S PROVISION<sup>1</sup>

Mao Zedong was quite aware of his own unique stature as a charismatic leader. This knowledge motivated him persistently to pursue succession arrangements for over two decades. His concern for a smooth succession became clear not long after the establishment of the People's Republic. However, Mao also recognized the tendency of communist societies to become bureaucratized and lose their revolutionary fervor. This he deplored. His later succession arrangements reflected this attitude and served primarily to destabilize political life in China. Also, Mao's ambivalent feelings toward his chosen successors helped to erode his provisions for succession. The first victim of that erosion was long-time party stalwart, Liu Shaoqi.

Liu Shaoqi

The relationship between Liu and Mao goes back to the earliest days of the CCP. Liu, along with about fifty other youths from his native Hunan province, followed Mao and his New People Society associates to Beijing in September of

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<sup>1</sup>Much of the discussion in this chapter is drawn from Rush, Chapter Two.

1918.<sup>2</sup> He joined the CCP in 1921 and soon thereafter travelled to the Soviet Union to study. When he returned, he gained grassroots experience in labor union and party work in Hebei and Manchuria. Liu was elected to the Central Committee (CC) in the late 1920s and to the Politburo in 1945. He and Mao worked together in the Anyuan workers movement and presumably throughout the Long March. Liu served in the Political Department of the Eighth Army Corps during this time.

During this period, Liu generally supported Mao Zedong's policy preferences and was no doubt instrumental in Mao's rise to supremacy within the CCP in the 1930s and 1940s. Liu's allegiance to Mao was valuable because of his Soviet education, his abilities as a theoretician and a strategist, and his experience in party work.<sup>3</sup> On several occasions, Liu prepared investigative reports to undermine Mao's opponents within the CCP. Mao quoted Liu's political essays to bolster his own arguments during the Zhengfeng movement (the rectification campaign of 1942-43). Apparently, Liu's

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<sup>2</sup>For a detailed description of Liu's early years, see Li Tien-min, Liu Shao-chi: Mao's First Heir Apparent (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1975).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 45.



reputation for "patient and meticulous work" in his duties as political commissar of the New Fourth Army and secretary of the Central China Bureau, as well as his first hand experience with the Soviets, made him an ideal alliance partner for Mao against the latter's returned-student detractors.<sup>4</sup>

Hints that Liu might obtain a position second only to Mao within the CCP surfaced as early as the Seventh Party Congress in 1945. This was the first congress that Mao personally controlled. Liu's report on the party statute at this meeting was viewed as second in importance.<sup>5</sup> Liu became senior secretary of the Central Committee (CC) at this meeting and on several subsequent occasions filled in for Chairman Mao to conduct meetings when the latter was absent during periods of extended negotiations. In 1950, Liu was named one of six vice-chairmen of the Central People's Government and ranked third after Zhu De in the party hierarchy. Vice-Chairman was somewhat of an honorary position, but Liu's multiple other duties during this time (including president of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association and honorary president of the All-China Labor Federation) made it clear that his personal status was on

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>5</sup>Rush, p. 251.

the rise.<sup>6</sup> From 1945 to 1955, Liu's duties as a member of the Central Committee Secretariat allowed him to become de facto supervisor of routine domestic affairs. Clearly, Mao was allowing Liu's responsibilities to grow.

Significantly, Liu was instrumental in initiating the first meaningful purge in the CCP after 1949. With Mao on vacation, Liu took charge at the Seventh Plenum of the Seventh CC in February 1954. He delivered the Politburo's report which mentioned specifically the political sins of upstarts Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, and urged a fight for party unity. Then, in September 1956, with Gao and Rao expelled from the party, Liu was promoted to second spot in the party hierarchy at the Eighth Party Congress. He also made the political report at this meeting. The creation of an "honorary chairman" position at this time was presumably in anticipation of Mao's retirement. As Townsend and Womack point out, the "Gao-Rao clique was a faction aimed at controlling succession after Mao."<sup>7</sup> Liu's immediate promotion within the party hierarchy after this purge, then, suggests that he was the Politburo's choice to be Mao's successor. This conclusion is supported by the fact that when Mao retreated to the "second line" of

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<sup>6</sup>Li, pp. 101-102

<sup>7</sup>James R. Townsend and Brantly Womack, Politics in China (3rd ed.) (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1986), p. 316.

leadership by declining nomination for another term as chairman of the government of the PRC in 1959, Liu was chosen to succeed him. Liu's opportunities to operate on this "first line" of leadership, especially his assistance in 1958 in launching the "three red flags" (building socialism, the Great Leap Forward and the people's communes) program, gave him a chance to consolidate his control of the party apparatus and gain "pervasive influence over the processes of organization and institution building."<sup>8</sup>

According to some analysts, Mao's retreat to a "second line" of leadership was an integral part of his succession strategy. By stepping back to deliberate on broader questions of ideology and the grand strategy of the revolution, Mao offered his subordinates a chance to become familiar with the details of the regime's administration while at the same time increasing their own visibility and prestige. Mao himself explained his "retreats" of the 1950's this way:

In light of the problems that occurred within the Soviet Union<sup>9</sup> and considering the security of our own country, I have decided to divide the Standing Committee of the Politburo into two lines

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<sup>8</sup>Lowell Dittmer, Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>Mao abhorred the post-Stalin succession developments in the USSR and later branded Khrushchev as a revisionist and phony communist.

...by withdrawing myself into the second and by placing Liu Shao-ch'i and Teng Hsiao-ping in the first. Liu, as Vice Chairman, could conduct certain important conferences and Teng could attend to the daily work (of the CC)... When I retreated into the second line by not conducting the daily work and letting others execute it, my purpose was to cultivate their prestige so that when I have to see God, the country can avoid great chaos.<sup>10</sup>

In support of this line of thought, we are reminded that Mao first publicly suggested his own retirement strategy in 1957, when the Great Leap was gaining momentum -- a period of undoubted strength for Mao.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, Mao's prestige and influence vascillated with the success or failure of political and economic initiatives, but in the pre-Cultural Revolutionary CCP, he was consistently recognized as the ultimate authority by his colleagues.

Other scholars interpret Mao's movement to the "second line" of leadership differently. The above quotation is merely Mao's own after-the-fact explanation of earlier events. Mao's removal from everyday affairs, according to this line of thought, was not entirely his own idea; he was forced onto the "second line" of leadership. Mao's early statements about

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<sup>10</sup>Mao Zedong, Address to Central Work Conference of October 1966, Yomiuri (in Japanese), Tokyo, January 7, p. 3, cited in Gene T. Hsiao, "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," Asian Survey 12 (June 1967), p. 392.

<sup>11</sup>See Teiwes, p. 138, note no. 62.

retirement reflected his desire to concentrate on party matters (he suggested his own resignation from the state chairmanship), not a desire to cultivate Lin's prestige as the party's chosen heir. The CCP elite, on the other hand, may have allowed Liu to take a leading role with the enhancement of his successor position, among other things, in mind.

This view is supported by the fact that, although they had worked together for a long time, Mao and Liu did not always see eye to eye. Liu Shaoqi, as Stuart Schram forcefully argues, differed with Mao on some fundamental ideological interpretations.<sup>12</sup> Several of these longstanding differences of opinion will, in simplified fashion, be outlined here. First, Mao put great faith in the peasants as the driving force of the revolution, whereas Liu, consistent with his background in the labor movement, tended to emphasize the role of the workers in the revolution. Second, Mao and Liu differed in their conception of the role of the party organization; Liu emphasized the organization as the source of authority, whereas Mao had a more personalized idea of leadership. Third, although in the pre-1949 period both leaders seemed to acquiesce to the Soviet Union's leadership of the world communist movement, Liu's educational experience led him to

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<sup>12</sup>See Stuart Schram, "Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-ch'i, 1939-1969," Asian Survey 12 (April 1972), pp. 275-93.

sympathize with the USSR on ideology and policy matters, while Mao was not trusted by Stalin and became increasingly alienated from Moscow.

In light of these differences, it seems that Liu was the party's choice as successor and that Mao, at least temporarily, acquiesced to that decision. Although he lacked Mao's personal popularity and was only five years Mao's junior, Lui was, in some ways, a logical choice for heir at the time. "He was preoccupied with practical affairs rather than great ideas...a useful trait in a leader who is to consolidate a newly established regime."<sup>13</sup> Also, Liu seemed to lack the drive of excessive personal ambition; this quality rendered him ideal as an heir presumptive, if not as an eventual supreme leader.<sup>14</sup>

Rush observes that as

the number-two man in the regime, Liu served well for almost two decades, organizing the implementation of Mao's programs and perhaps discouraging more ambitious men from coveting the succession.<sup>15</sup>

Liu also possessed another characteristic which gave the CCP

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<sup>13</sup>Rush, p. 256.

<sup>14</sup>For a unique exploration of the differences of personality between Mao and Liu, see Lowell Dittmer, "Power and Personality: Mao Tse-tung, Lui Shao-ch'i and the Politics of Charismatic Succession, "Studies in Comparative Communism" 7 (Spring/Summer 1974), pp. 21-49.

<sup>15</sup>Rush, p. 257.

leadership more direct reasons to rely on him. Liu's Soviet experience and connections gave the Politburo the benefit of a member with better Comintern credentials than Mao himself had. These are indications, obviously, that the decision to promote Liu was a collective one. Liu's status as a major figure in the revolution, as well as his apparent longstanding number two position in the party suggest that he was a very acceptable successor in the eyes of the elite.<sup>16</sup>

Another reason that Mao may have allowed Liu to rise to such a prominent position within the party actually stems from the differing perspectives of the two leaders. Mao held the idea that a single personal leader was essential to the revolution. He once commented that:

Both the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary fronts must have someone to act as their leader...Marx is dead and Engels and Lenin too are dead. If we did not have Stalin, who would give the orders?"<sup>17</sup>

When considered in connection with his "two lines" ideas, this passage suggests that Mao envisioned himself as operating above and beyond some kind of lesser collective leadership composed of the rest of the elite. He may have recognized the need for independent power bases for his successors, but saw no need to

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<sup>16</sup>See Teiwes, pp. 28, 68.

<sup>17</sup>Mao Zedong quoted in Schram, p. 278.

create political rivals.<sup>18</sup>

Roderick MacFarquhar's assertions about the proceedings of the 1956 Eighth Party Congress unintentionally support this view. He contends that the most significant promotion at the Eighth Party Congress was that of Deng Xiaoping from the bottom rung in the pre-Congress Politburo to sixth spot. The suggestion is that Deng, at that point in time, was more personally loyal to Mao than Liu, and thus was to be considered a viable succession candidate by Mao.<sup>19</sup> While Mao's consideration of Deng as a successor in 1956 is plausible, the fact that both he and Liu were promoted and were both considered part of the "first line" in Mao's account of these events clearly supports the thesis that Mao was somewhat jealous of his power and preferred not to allow any single subordinate to gain too much power. It also supports the idea the Liu was not Mao's own choice as heir. Deng may have been promoted to counterbalance or dilute Liu's growing influence. Why Mao, in his subsequent personal appointment of heirs, chose to elevate just one candidate, however, remains unexplained. One explanation is that he now knew his death was nearer and

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<sup>18</sup>Roderick MacFarquhar, "Problems of Liberalization and Succession at the Eighth Party Congress," China Quarterly 56 (October-December 1973), p. 641.

<sup>19</sup>Mao later (in 1961) specifically referred to Liu as his successor; see Teiwes, p. 28, note no. 79.



therefore envisioned a successor who also would operate singlehandedly above the other members of the elite.

MacFarquhar also implies that Liu may have obliquely criticized Mao at these meetings by suggesting that Mao's willingness to consult with his colleagues was equally as important as the correctness of his ideas.<sup>20</sup> Such remarks would be consistent with Liu's orthodox Leninist concept of the party and his more literal ideas about collective leadership. Although he recognized Mao's supreme political authority, he also promoted omitting references to Mao Zedong thought from the 1956 constitution. His outspokenness on this matter indicates not open rebellion or brazen disloyalty to Mao, but rather a consistent belief in the merits of collective leadership. It was these ideas about collective leadership and Liu's close association with the bureaucratic machinery of China which eventually came into conflict with Mao's changing goals and caused the Chairman to move against the party's chosen heir.

In 1958, Liu announced the Great Leap Forward (GLF) program to the second session of the Eighth National Congress of the CCP. It was soon after this, in 1959, that Liu was designated as state chairman. The failure of the GLF brought

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<sup>20</sup>MacFarquhar, p. 624.

criticism of Mao from Politburo member Peng Dehuai and his associates. Liu supported Mao in that dispute, but played a sort of mediating role by calling for unity and leniency in dealing with Peng's group. Liu's stature was increased in 1962 by the wide distribution of his essay "How to be a Good Communist," which was serialized in the Renmin Ribao (People's Daily). At the same time, Mao's credibility was reduced by the failure of the ambitious GLF programs. Therefore, although during the period 1962-65 Mao was still influential in the policy-making process, the implementation of his policies became increasingly colored by the bureaucracy controlled by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.<sup>21</sup> Liu's position in the first line of leadership enabled him to convene conferences, select speakers and secure passage of the programs he supported. These programs were reactions to the problems of the GLF. Liu assumed that Mao had accepted the castigation of the GLF programs, but Mao continued to espouse some GLF themes.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the potential for friction between the two leaders increased.

Mao's physical absence from Beijing during much of the post-GLF retrenchment period contributed to Liu's increasing

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<sup>21</sup>Dittmer, pp. 50-65.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

visibility and power, and to Mao's perception of the necessity of a Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). Mao's removal from everyday politics did indeed grant increased visibility and public prestige to Liu Shaoqi, as intended. However, as Mao tried periodically to reassert his authority, his efforts were consistently frustrated. Because Mao was not immediately at hand, his opinion was sought less frequently by other elite members. During this period, a Japanese reporter observed that a "tendency to shelve Mao was steadily permeating the CCP."<sup>23</sup> The word "tendency" is especially descriptive here since it was largely the circumstance of Mao's absence, rather than a concerted conspiracy, which led to a dissolution of the CCP's original succession arrangements.

Mao responded to this tendency with countermeasures. As early as 1959 he began to draw upon his relationship with Lin Biao to build up the PLA. As we shall see later in more detail, he intended to use the army's strength to undermine Liu's growing power. Also, while Mao was in Shanghai, an unofficial "kitchen cabinet" slowly began to coalesce around him. This group of lower level officials known as the Central Cultural Revolution Group (or Shanghai group) included Mao's

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<sup>23</sup>See Ibid., p. 53, note no. 65.

wife, Jiang Qing, and several officials in Shanghai's propaganda machine. They allowed Mao a secondary mode of policy implementation when Liu's bureaucracy was unresponsive. As Liu's prestige in Beijing grew, so did resentment among Mao's followers. "Mao's retinue seems to have noticed [a] premature leakage of their patrons' authority and resented it, perhaps even more than Mao did himself."<sup>24</sup> The existence of an authoritative successor weakened their unofficial, though politically significant, positions. The Shanghai group's cooperation with and encouragement of Mao in the promotion of the GPCR and its predecessor, the 1962-65 Socialist Education Movement (SEM), were significant in channeling events in a direction that facilitated Liu's removal from office.

Liu Shaoqi's post-GLF readjustment policies included the controlled use of free markets and private vegetable plots to stimulate production. Mao and his associates perceived these programs as threats to the collective economy. Corruption among rural cadres and "economic individualism" caused alarm within leading circles (both official and unofficial). As a result, the SEM was put forth with the aim of ideological education and organization of peasants, as well as the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-54.

rectification of errant cadre behavior. However, Mao's original instructions for the movement were modified by Liu and Deng; confusion was the result:

Mao advocated open investigation in the communes by work teams of top cadres from the centre; Liu wanted in-depth investigation by covert infiltration among the peasants, both to gather true information and to ferret out corrupt cadres...Mao intended [the SEM] to be a mass education movement. Liu wanted a party-controlled rectification operation, with emphasis on corrective and remedial measures, in accordance with established norms in the party organization.<sup>25</sup>

The SEM, for the most part, drowned in these contradictory directives. Mao was unable to implement his programs as fully as desired. This impotence influenced his belief that bourgeois thinking still permeated the party and that the party itself had, in large measure, become a threat to the revolution. In January of 1965, Mao first referred to these elements in the party as "those people in positions of authority within the Party who take the capitalist road."<sup>26</sup> This phrase was later used specifically to describe Liu Shaoqi.

The failure of the SEM codified points of disagreement

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<sup>25</sup>James C.F. Wang, Contemporary Chinese Politics: An Introduction (2nd ed.), (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>26</sup>"Appendix F: The Twenty-Three Articles," in Richard Baum and Frederick Teiwes, Ssu-ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-66 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 120 cited in Dittmer, "Liu Shao-chi...", p. 57.

between Liu and Mao, and solidified in Mao's mind the notion that he would have to go outside the party bureaucracy to shake it up. Although it was unclear exactly when (or if) Liu's expulsion from his posts became an intentional supplementary goal of the GPCR (which was launched largely in response to Mao's built-up frustrations with the party bureaucracy), it seems that, despite earlier disagreements, it was only in January of 1965 that Mao decided that Liu had to be removed.<sup>27</sup> Lowell Dittmer observes that "the [GPCR] brought Liu Shao-ch'i's attempts to balance revolution with order, equality with economic efficiency, into direct confrontation with the revived forces of revolution in China."<sup>28</sup> Mao and the Shanghai group, beginning with attacks aimed at low level officials, soon brought down Liu's close associates and finally Liu himself. They thus succeeded in reversing the party's original succession arrangements. Mao now took the succession question into his own hands. In August 1966, at an "enlarged" (i.e. padded) session of the Eleventh Plenum of the CC, Liu Shaoqi was demoted from second to eighth place in the Politburo

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<sup>27</sup>See Schram, p. 292. Other scholars (including Lowell Dittmer) imply that Mao's change of heart about Liu was even more gradual. See Dittmer, "Liu Shao-chi...", chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>28</sup>Dittmer, "Liu Shao-chi...", p. 67.

rankings and Lin Biao was unanimously promoted as Mao's "first assistant and successor."<sup>29</sup> In 1969, after much political struggle, self-criticism, and after having heard accusations (some of them valid) ranging from revisionism to mismanagement of work teams, Liu lost his party membership.<sup>30</sup> The first heir apparent had fallen, but a new one had risen immediately to replace him.

### Lin Biao

In many respects, a study of Lin Biao's career history is "akin to studying Chinese Communist history as a whole."<sup>31</sup> Lin, like others, but perhaps even to a greater extent, established himself primarily in the military sphere. In 1931, at the tender age of twenty-four, Lin was appointed commander of the communist-dominated First Army Corps. In the mid-1930s, Lin participated in the Long March at Mao's side. As Thomas Robinson notes, such participation became "almost sine qua

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<sup>29</sup>Liu, "Self-Examination" (October 23, 1966), cited in Dittmer, "Liu Shao-chi...", p. 95.

<sup>30</sup>The full details of the prolonged and difficult struggle to remove Liu from the party are omitted here, but are well explained in Chapters Four and Five of Dittmer's book and in other sources. My concern here is with provisions for succession and the forces which may cause them to disintegrate. The fate of fallen heirs is of less concern.

<sup>31</sup>Thomas W. Robinson, "Lin Biao as an Elite Type," in Robert A. Scalpino (ed.), Elites in the People's Republic of China (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 150.

non for participation in the top leadership after 1949."<sup>32</sup>

Even though, or perhaps because, they worked closely together, Lin and Mao were known to have had differences of opinion in this early period.<sup>33</sup> For example, during the Yan'an period, Lin was relieved from field command duties because he opposed Mao's insistence on resuming military operations so shortly after the Long March. He then served as president of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University for nearly two years.

Lin was, however, able to establish himself as somewhat of a war hero. In the summer of 1937, his unit was the first communist force to defeat a sizeable group of Japanese invaders. Lin is also credited with having contributed significantly to the Red Army's winning strategies in the 1945-49 civil war. He also lent political support to Mao in the 1942 zhengfeng rectification movement, especially by espousing the idea of Chinese adaptation of Soviet and Marxist principles. Lin briefly served as a regional party official after the 1949 victory, but soon veered back into military service with the outbreak of the Korean War. He is said to

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas W. Robinson, "Lin Biao" in William W. Whitson (ed.), The Military and Political Power in China in the 1970s (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 75 cited in Rush, p. 266.



have commanded active Chinese "volunteers" in that conflict.

Lins' early career in the CCP and Army, though seemingly typical of his peers, was interrupted twice for extended periods. In late 1937 or early 1938, he was injured in battle and was sent to the USSR to recover. While in Russia, he studied and acted as China's Comintern representative before his return home in 1942. The cause of Lin's second prolonged period of inactivity is less certain. He did not participate extensively in public political or military affairs during the period 1953-57. He was said to be suffering from tuberculosis and that illness no doubt contributed to the length of his period of inactivity. However, the reported immediate cause of his inactivity, another war injury, may have been a face-saving measure to cover another strategic disagreement between him and Mao.

Although he was fifteen years younger than Mao, a good age for a successor, Lin's chronic illness could have disqualified him from a successor position. Overt disagreements with Mao would also tend to disqualify one as a succession candidate. However, Lin displayed a unique pattern of behavior in conjunction with those disagreements. Lin continued to back Mao on major loyalty tests, attended important party meetings, and managed to attain a position on the Politburo during his period of apparent illness. Robinson observes that "when Lin

overtly disagreed with Mao, he was immediately disciplined, spent a period in relative disgrace, and then re-emerged all the stronger as Mao's supporter."<sup>34</sup> Mao must have observed this pattern and accepted the veracity of Lin's changes of heart, for when Lin returned to greater political activity in the late 1950s, he was quickly awarded prominent positions. In 1958, Lin was placed on the Standing Committee of the Politburo. And when Peng Dehuai was ousted from his position as defense minister for his opposition to Mao's GLF economic policies, Lin Biao was chosen to succeed him.

Lin's vocal support for Mao increased as he pursued political reform of the PLA in the early 1960s. The slogans "Give Prominence to Politics" and "Living Study and Application of Mao Zedong Thought" were personally initiated and implemented by Lin into the daily life of PLA members. As the Army became more politicized and more fully under Lin's control, the campaign was turned outward. The Army became the model for the whole country. Military heroes such as Lei Feng were held up for emulation; all of China was told to "Learn from the PLA". The Army's "political work system"

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<sup>34</sup>Robinson, "Lin Biao as an Elite Type," p. 185.

organizational structure was introduced to schools, enterprises and factories between 1964 and 1966 under Lin's direction. The Lin-supervised PLA emulation portion of the SEM was the most successful part of that campaign.<sup>35</sup>

As Mao decided that more radical methods were needed to regain control of the party and to preserve the revolution, he must have also realized that alteration of the previous succession arrangements was necessary. Lacking firm control of certain key leaders in the party apparatus, Mao increasingly relied on people with whom he had special personal relationships. Among these, of course, was Lin Biao, his defense minister, who had elevated Mao Zedong thought to a special place in PLA propaganda. Once Mao decided that Liu Shaoqi had to go, Lin Biao immediately became the new heir presumptive. At the same August 1966 Plenum in which Liu was first demoted, Lin was elected vice-chairman of the CC and was designated as Chairman Mao's "close comrade-in-arms."

At this meeting, Lin's rank in the Politburo rose from sixth to second. Because the jump was so sudden and because Lin had not previously held any top state posts, he was lacking the qualifications customarily held by heir presumptives in

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<sup>35</sup>Wang, p. 21.

communist states.<sup>36</sup> This, coupled with the fact that the previous heir had been so suddenly discredited, created a situation in which symbolic reinforcement was required to make Lin's new status credible. This need is the reason that "Lin's build-up took on the proportions of a minor cult, subordinate to, and closely associated with the extravagant cult of Mao, which Lin himself had raised to new levels."<sup>37</sup> Many photographs and paintings appeared showing Lin alongside the Chairman. Lin Biao was often depicted carrying aloft the "little red book".<sup>38</sup> Newspapers frequently reported their joint activities, and they often received foreign dignitaries together.

As the GPCR proceeded, the power and the influence of the PLA, and thus, Lin's prestige as defense minister, continued to grow. When the Red Guards' violent attacks on the party and state bureaucracies reached levels even distasteful to Mao, the army was called upon to intervene. After a measure of law and order was restored, the PLA's role in political affairs was institutionalized as it became one of the three groups involved

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<sup>36</sup>Rush, p. 266 and Chapter Twelve.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 266-67.

<sup>38</sup>The famous book of Mao's quotations had been published on Lin's initiative and included a foreword written by him.

in the provisional revolutionary committees. Lin thus rode the storm of the GPCR to the peak of his career. At the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, Lin's position as Mao's successor was officially proclaimed in the new party constitution. The "General Program" of the document proclaimed:

Comrade Lin Piao has consistently held the great red banner of Mao Zedong thought and has most loyally and resolutely carried out and defended Comrade Mao Tse-tung's proletarian revolutionary line. Comrade Lin Piao is Comrade Mao Tse-tung's close comrade in arms and successor.<sup>39</sup>

This constitutional designation of an heir was without precedent in the communist world and was obviously meant to help legitimize Lin's claim to the succession. Mao himself, however, has never been personally quoted as saying that Lin was to be his successor, and no office is mentioned to which Lin was supposed to have succeeded.<sup>40</sup> These omissions may be due to veteran cadre resistance to Lin's promotion. Some analysts have suggested that Mao had doubts about his choice of

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<sup>39</sup>See the Peking Review, April 30, 1969, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup>The only specific party posts mentioned in the 1969 constitution are those of chairman and vice-chairman. These were held at the time by Mao and Lin, respectively, so one would infer that Lin was to succeed to the chairmanship of the party. See Rush, p. 268.

Lin even from this early date.<sup>41</sup> The pertinent question then becomes why did Mao choose Lin to be his successor, and who was most responsible for the growth of the cult which sheltered Lin's ride to the top?

Mao Zedong's choice of Lin Biao as successor immediately following the demotion of Liu Shaoqi may at first glance seem rather odd. The unprecedented designation of a military man who was without significant party or state bureaucratic experience to the heir's position seems, in retrospect, like a particularly dangerous move. Was this not an invitation for a coup d'etat? However, while succession provisions are presumably aimed at stability, disruption came to be somewhat of virtue at the dawn of the GPCR. Myron Rush offers three possible (and mutually compatible) motives for Mao's decision to elevate Lin that are consistent with the mood of that period.<sup>42</sup>

First, it could have been that Mao thought it necessary to designate Lin as successor to ensure his loyalty during the anticipated disruption of the GPCR. Because Mao's influence in the Liu-controlled bureaucracy had waned, support of the

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<sup>41</sup>See, for example, Franz Michael, "China After the Cultural Revolution: The Unresolved Succession Crisis," Orbis 18 (Spring 1973), p.324.

<sup>42</sup>Rush, p. 265.

military sector would have been imperative for Mao's bold initiatives to succeed. Second, Mao clearly felt that he did not have much time left. He had recognized the need for succession arrangements as much as ten years earlier. If Mao died during the turmoil of the GPCR, the regime could conceivably be safest in the hands of a military man. Again, we see evidence of Mao's own recognition of his important stabilizing influence as a heroic leader. He may have surmised that his departure would cause such a crisis or reversal of his policies that only the firm hand of the PLA could maintain control. Finally, Mao may have thought that Lin's loyalty to "Mao Zedong Thought" would allow the best chance for the Chairman's own idea of continuous revolution to predominate. Of the personal associates that were loyal to Mao on the eve of the GPCR, only Lin had a politically useful power base of his own. He also had a proven record in molding the thoughts of the masses. He was largely responsible for how Mao was perceived among the people at that time and thus could serve as a valuable conduit of Mao's revolutionary initiatives.

Was Lin's association with the cult of Mao a deliberate attempt by Mao to cultivate Lin's prestige or did Lin purposefully ride the cult phenomenon to its peak to solidify his own position in case Mao once more changed his mind about the successorship? Initially, it seemed that the former was at least a partial explanation. As the GPCR began, Lin's humility

and loyalty to Mao, as publicly expressed at least, was unwavering:

We must not oppose but firmly follow the Chairman. He gives overall consideration to problems; he is farsighted. What is more, he has his ideas, many of which we do not understand. We must resolutely carry out Mao's instructions whether we understand them or not. I have no talent; I rely on the wisdom of the masses, and do everything according to the Chairman's directives. The Central Committee has given me a task and I know that I am not equal to it. I have thought of it many times. But since the Chairman and the Central Committee have made their decision, I can only submit myself to it and try my best to do my task. In the meantime, I am prepared to hand it over to a more suitable comrade.<sup>43</sup>

This "humility" can be read as a further attempt by Lin to legitimize his new role. In Chinese culture, a degree of (sometimes false) humility is properly displayed by giving all credit to one's teacher or mentor. This does not preclude an inward sense of accomplishment or an aspiration to gain a higher position. That Lin's lack of personal ambition here expressed was not totally heartfelt was partially revealed in the very same speech cited above. Lin stated that "I do not interfere with him [Mao] on major problems, nor do I trouble

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<sup>43</sup> Lin's speech at the August 1966 Plenum of the CC, JPRS, p. 17, cited in Ibid., p. 270.



him with small matters." Lin's comments are suggestive of the "two lines" approach that was mentioned earlier with respect to Liu Shaoqi. Apparently Lin desired to keep Mao on the second line just as Mao's program to pull himself firmly back into the first line was getting underway.

If Lin Biao's ambitions were somewhat ambivalent as the GPCR got underway, they became more clear as time wore on. By the time of the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, nearly half of the CC members were military personnel and at least eight of nineteen Politburo members were loyal to Lin.<sup>44</sup> This situation, exacerbated by the PLA's early dominance of the newly-formed revolutionary committees, clearly made Chairman Mao uncomfortable. Heated, unmediated conflicts between Mao and Lin became increasingly common. Tellingly, these conflicts were foreshadowed at the Ninth Party Congress when Lin's political report was replaced with one favored by Mao.

By 1970, Mao had begun to take action. The party structure was being rebuilt, in part, as a counterweight to the PLA's disproportionate influence in the revolutionary committees. In September, at a plenum in Lushan, the two leaders' differences first became widely known among the

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<sup>44</sup> Eight members were later purged in conjunction with Lin's alleged plot against Mao.

Chinese elite as they clashed over certain provisions in the state constitution. Lin apparently desired the creation of an office of State Chairman to usurp Zhou Enlai's position as premier of the State Council. Technically, Lin was still subordinate to Zhou at that time and therefore desired to take over the top spot in the state structure. Mao refused this proposal and relied on Zhou as a sort of "counterheir--a powerful leader whose function it is to prevent the heir from reaching out for his inheritance prematurely."<sup>45</sup> The two leaders also disagreed over the question of Mao's "genius". Lin desired to revive the spirit of the GPCR by canonizing the "genius" of Mao in the state constitution. Mao recognized the political implications of this request (Lin had associated himself closely with the cult of Mao) and refused it. These events at Lushan prompted the Chairman to reassess his vice-chairman's loyalties and policy preferences. Mao later described the Lushan Plenum as "a struggle between two headquarters."<sup>46</sup>

Although Mao had become discontent with what he perceived

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<sup>45</sup>Rush, p. 273.

<sup>46</sup>See "Summary of Chairman Mao's Talks to Responsible Local Cadres During His Tour of Inspection" (Document No. 12 of the CC and of the CCP), translation in Michael Y.M. Kau, ed., The Lin Piao Affair: Power, Politics and Military Coup (White Plains, New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975), pp. 55-66.

to be Lin's excessive ambition, Lin, like Liu before him, had become firmly entrenched with his own bases of power. Thus, Mao once again had to take an initially cautious, indirect approach to undermine his heir's position. First, Mao made sweeping personnel changes on the party's Military Affairs Commission which had previously been packed with Lin supporters. Mao then initiated a political campaign to criticize Lin's ally, Chen Boda. Finally, before confronting Lin directly, Mao reorganized the key Beijing Military region and made a tour of other military regions to ensure the loyalty of leading officers.

Recognizing that the Chairman had "become uneasy about us," Lin and his supporters began to develop plans for a military coup in case the struggle reached a critical stage.<sup>47</sup> Lin Liguo, Lin Biao's son and deputy director of Air Force operations, was chosen to direct the coup's organization and planning. The plan was code named "Project 571"; the numbers are a Chinese homonym for "armed uprising". Plans were also made to assassinate Mao while he was on an inspection tour in the Shanghai area. However, reports indicate that Lin's daughter revealed the plot to Zhou Enlai in

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<sup>47</sup>See "The Struggle of Smashing the Counter-revolutionary Coup of the Lin-Ch'en Anti-Party Clique," translation in Issues and Studies, 8 (May 1972), pp.78-83.

time for Mao to avoid the strike. Having learned of the disruption of their plot, Lin, his wife, their son and several others boarded an Air Force jet and headed for the USSR. According to official PRC sources, the plane crashed in the early morning hours of 13 September 1971 in Mongolia, killing all nine persons on board.<sup>48</sup> The surviving collaborators were quickly dismissed from office and arrested.

For the two years following his death (and during the period immediately before), Lin Biao was never criticized publicly by name. He was referred to by such titles as "political swindler like Liu Shaoqi," "traitor" and "ambitious careerist". It was not until the Tenth Party Congress in August 1973 that Lin was explicitly identified with his misdeeds. Subsequently, a nation-wide campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius was launched. Lin was characterized as a modern-day Confucius and a member of the slave-owning landlord bourgeois class. Broadly speaking, Lin's alleged crimes fell into two categories. First, he deviated from the policy set by Mao and the party, and second, he was guilty of personal ambition and conspiracy for personal power.<sup>49</sup> As

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<sup>48</sup>Although details of these events are scarce, most of the official version of this story is generally accepted as accurate. Whether the coup or assassination were actually attempted remains open to some question.

<sup>49</sup>Kau, pp. xxv-xxvi.

Kau observes

The documentation of the case...does not convincingly support the argument that the attempted coup by Lin against Mao was prompted chiefly by a profound divergence in policy orientation between the two. The thrust of the case appears mainly to have been the power struggle among the key individual political actors and competing institutional forces led by Mao and Lin respectively. However, policy divergences seem to have...provided an ideological and policy context for power struggle...<sup>50</sup>

Again provisions for leadership succession were uprooted at considerable cost. The demise of a successor chosen on a rather personal basis was more dramatic than that of a consensus candidate. Again a purge of party personnel was necessary to oust an heir presumptive whose control over a key institution stood in the way of Mao's shifting objectives.<sup>51</sup> A crucial alliance between two powerful leaders dissolved when the protege's ambition overreached his mentor's tolerance. Twice unsuccessful in choosing a personal successor, Mao's strategy then turned to mediating between the two general

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. xxvi. Note that the "571 Project" outline did include mention of some policy grievances which Lin had with Mao (i.e. Soviet policy and Mao's mismanagement of economic policies). For a policy-centered approach, see Jurgen Domes, "The Chinese Leadership Crisis: Doom of an Heir?," Orbis 18 (Fall 1973), pp. 863-79.

<sup>51</sup>For early, yet thorough, evaluation of Lin's fall, see Philip Bridgham, "The Fall of Lin Piao," The China Quarterly (July-September 1973), pp. 427-49. Bridgham emphasizes parallels between Liu's and Lin's falls from grace.

factional groupings left within the ruling elite.<sup>52</sup> He also began to reemphasize a concept that had been introduced much earlier; there was a dire need for a whole generation of revolutionary successors.

#### Wang Hongwen and a Successor Generation

The crucial role of the rising generation of leadership was clearly a concern of the CCP elite from the early days of the People's Republic. After the Gao Gang dispute was settled at the Eighth Party Congress in 1956, the party undertook extensive recruitment of new members. The consequences of this recruitment drive worried the aging leaders. By 1961, eighty percent of the seventeen million members of the CCP had joined the party after 1949 and many of these had assumed leading posts at local levels when rural communes were established in 1958.<sup>53</sup> The leaders of the revolution feared that these rising cadres would lack the necessary revolutionary spirit to sustain the progression to communism. William F. Dorrill observed in 1965 that:

Mao and his lieutenants, sensitive to the lessons of history, are mindful of the eroding effects of time on other revolutionary movements.

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<sup>52</sup> i.e. beneficiaries of the GPCR and the more moderate supporters of Zhou Enlai.

<sup>53</sup> John Wilson Lewis, "Revolutionary Struggle and the Second Generation in Communist China," The China Quarterly (January-March 1965), p. 139.

In particular, they are genuinely disturbed at what they consider the corruption and degeneration of Soviet society, which they believe threatens to restore capitalism in the USSR...For a long time, top Party leaders had feared that the younger generation, untested in war and unstepped by the hardships of the Long March of the Yenan caves, would fail to appreciate fully the accomplishments of the revolution - or even be lured from the correct but arduous path of struggle by the corrupting influences of capitalism and "revisionism".<sup>54</sup>

The perceived need to cultivate a generation of revolutionary successors who had been politicized and purified through struggle was clearly part of Mao Zedong's motivation in launching the SEM and subsequently, the GPCR. Perhaps spurred to action by the December 1963 speech in which U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Roger Hilsman assured his countrymen that a "more sophisticated second echelon of leadership" was rising in China and that evolutionary change could "eventually profoundly erode the present simple view with which the leadership regards the world," the Beijing regime began to intensify its efforts to deal with generation transfers.<sup>55</sup> In 1964, five Politburo members attended the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Youth League (CYL); they called for new measures to win over

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<sup>54</sup>William F. Dorrill, "Leadership and Succession in Communist China," Current History 49 (September 1965), pp. 131, 133.

<sup>55</sup>U.S. Department of State Bulletin, Vol. L., No. 1280, January 6, 1964, pp. 13-14 cited in *ibid.*, p. 133.

youth and warned of the threat of revisionism. In August of the same year, a Renmin Ribao front page editorial declared that successors must be chosen on the basis of political attitudes and class origins, and then tempered through class struggles and rectification campaigns. Five criteria were established to determine the worthiness of successors: they must be genuine Marxist-Leninists; true revolutionaries; humble, prudent and capable of self-criticism; proletarian workers who can rally and work with the majority; and they must be practitioners of the party's system of democratic centralism. In 1965, the party launched a number of attacks against politically deviant intellectuals. The purpose of these attacks was presumably to create an environment of class struggle and to prevent the rising generation from being led astray. The scope of these attacks gradually widened and, by 1966, many of the younger generation were indeed involved in violent struggle. Concern over dwindling revolutionary fervor had contributed to one of the most disruptive social upheavals of modern times.

Although ultimately the effort to instill Mao's revolutionary ideals in the hearts of China's youth was counter-productive, the GPCR did allow for the rise of many zealous young cadres within the party ranks. The most well-known of the cadres who were rapidly promoted during the GPCR are, of course, the four favorites of Mao who later became



known pejoratively as the "gang of four". Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen may never have been seriously considered as personal successors by Mao. However, they did play a key role in factional politics in the period 1966-76 and represented one of the groups which Mao tried to accommodate during his final decade. Of the four, Wang was the youngest and thus became a symbol and key proponent of Mao's drive for revolutionary successors.

Wang Hongwen was born to a poor peasant family in Kirin in 1937 and joined the PLA as a youth. After discharge, he served as a junior cadre in the Shanghai No. 17 Cotton Textile Factory Security Department. It was there that he assisted Zhang Chunqiao in mobilizing worker support for Zhang's seizure of power in Shanghai in early 1967. This loyalty to Zhang, and thus to Mao, served Wang well. His enthusiasm alone seemingly brought him into the presidium of the Ninth National Party Congress and gave him membership on the Ninth CC in 1969. Deng Xiaoping once referred to such young upwardly mobile cadres as "helicopters" because of their sudden upward movement in the party apparatus. Indeed, by the Tenth National Congress in 1973, Wang was on the Politburo ranked third behind only Zhou Enlai and Mao himself.

During the GPCR, the revolutionary committees comprised of PLA, Red Guards and Party representatives were labelled as a three-in-one leadership system. After the fall of Lin Biao,

this three-in-one formula came to represent a new mode of rule; Mao's newly affirmed centralized leadership was to be supported by a combination of the young, the old and the middle-aged. All five of the vice-chairmen chosen at the Tenth National Party Congress (in rank order: Zhou Enlai, Wang Hongwen, Kang Sheng, Ye Jianying and Li Desheng), according to Mao, represented successors or apprentices.<sup>56</sup> Ostensibly, the three age-groups were represented within this small elite. The older cadres would be expected to train the young, while young cadres (only Wang in this small group) "warmly pledged to learn mostly from the strong points of the veteran cadres."<sup>57</sup> At this congress, Wang was the most outspoken advocate of the renewed call for the cultivation of "millions" of revolutionary successors needed to participate in future cultural revolutions. He had, by virtue of his age (thirty-five), enthusiasm, and experience, become the symbolic prototype of the young leaders the party was being told to recruit.

The make-up of the CCP elite bodies of the Tenth National Congress represented a balance between the supporters of Zhou Enlai, whose help Mao needed in rebuilding the central party apparatus, and the supporters of the Shanghai group (gang

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<sup>56</sup>Issues and Studies 10 (January 1974), p. 37.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

of four) who, to Mao, represented a future source of cultural revolutions and a constraint on bureaucratic self-satisfaction.<sup>58</sup> The two groups were bitterly opposed during the GPCR, found compromise impossible, and continued to compete for Mao's ear and influence. At the time, many China-watchers saw this dialectical balancing act as evidence that Mao had, after two disastrous failures, given up on the idea of leaving behind a personal successor. That Mao apparently would, at the eleventh hour, annoint a third personal successor to carry on his balancing act is indicative of his deep concern for the future of the revolution and his desire to mollify the shock that would likely (in his estimation) follow his death.<sup>59</sup> That Hua Guofeng would turn out to be the least powerful of Mao's three choices serves to underscore the depth of the difficulties encountered by a heroic or nation-building charismatic leader in providing for his own succession.

#### Hua Guofeng

The period from the fall of Lin Biao in 1971 to Mao's

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<sup>58</sup>The visual and symbolic dimensions of this balancing act are concisely conveyed in Rush, p. 277.

<sup>59</sup>That Mao indeed desired that Hua succeed him is still a debatable point, although most evidence suggests that this was his intention.

death in 1976 has often been characterized as one of struggle between two groups jostling for a successor position in expectation of Mao's departure. In many ways, the political debate of this period was a continuation of the "pragmatism v. revolutionary purity" themes of the GPCR and a discussion about which of the three age groups mentioned above would predominate after Mao's death.

Since Lin Biao's crimes had tarnished the reputation of the GPCR, his departure facilitated the return to power of many veteran cadres who had been purged earlier. Most prominent among these was Deng Xiaoping. Promoted by Zhou Enlai, and at least acquiesced to by Mao, Deng's rehabilitation in 1973 was required to bolster the anti-Lin forces, provide party administration talent and military support, and to provide assistance for the ailing Premier (Zhou).<sup>60</sup> Indeed, during Zhou's extended hospitalization (1974-76), Deng Xiaoping increasingly took over the day-to-day administration of the party. The "Campaign to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius", directed by the Shanghai group through the press, was aimed at cadres favoring "rightist restoration", namely Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. The rehabilitated veteran cadres continued to gain power, however, and the campaign petered out in the summer

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<sup>60</sup>Parris H. Chang, Mao's Last Stand," Problems of Communism 25 (July-August 1976), pp. 1-17.

of 1974. The decisions regarding reinvigoration of the economy reached at the January 1975 meetings of the CC and the National People's Congress did not please Mao. He boycotted the meetings to demonstrate his displeasure.<sup>61</sup> Presumably, he was waiting to act against the veteran cadres who had upset the balance he was trying to maintain.

The death of Zhou Enlai on 8 January 1976 provided an opportunity to restore that balance. Parris Chang notes that Zhou's death

seems to have precipitated events by removing whatever constraints his presence had imposed on Mao and the radical leaders and enabling them to point the spearhead of struggle directly at [Deng].<sup>62</sup>

If Deng were appointed premier at this juncture, he could have conceivably laid claim to the succession to Mao; the balance Mao was trying to preserve would have been permanently erased.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, Mao acted quickly in opposition to a Politburo majority and appointed Hua Guofeng as acting premier. This can be seen as a defensive move, perhaps only meant as a stop-gap measure. After delivering the eulogy at Zhou's funeral, Deng Xiaoping disappeared from public life. In April, following the

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>63</sup>In the long run, this is, in effect, what happened, although Deng never actually became premier.

Tienanmen incident in which thousands of Zhou's mourners demonstrated in favor of policies espoused by Zhou and Deng, Deng was dismissed from all posts for the second time in his life. Hua was simultaneously named premier of the State Council and ranking vice-chairman of the party.

In terms of age (56 in 1976), Hua Guofeng perhaps aptly represented Mao's desire for youthful revolutionary successors. He had been supportive of the chairman's initiatives at various times in his career. He had sided with Mao on collectivization, the SEM, and during the Lin Biao affair. In fact, the two may have developed a personal relationship through periodic contact during certain special projects.<sup>64</sup> While working on these projects, Hua demonstrated valuable problem solving abilities. At the time of his appointment as premier, it seemed that Hua would likely be able to draw support from two groups within the elite. As a beneficiary of the GPCR, he was committed to continuous revolution and was a potential patron of the party members who rose during that era. On the other hand, as a competent regional official who had also served as minister of public security and had also publicly supported Zhou's modernization drive, Hua likely found

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<sup>64</sup>Michel Oksenberg and Sai-cheung Yeung, "Hua Guo-feng's Pre-Cultural Revolution Hunan Years, 1949-66: The Making of a Political Generalist," The China Quarterly 69 (March 1977), p. 53.

support among veterans like Ye Jianying and Li Xiannian. These leaders preferred a policy direction somewhere between that espoused by the Shanghai group and the modernization strategy of Zhou and Deng. To them, Hua seemed like an acceptable, and perhaps pliable, compromise choice. But even at the time of Hua's appointment, there were indications that he might lack the necessary qualifications to maintain any sort of balance between the young left and veteran cadres. His influence with the Shanghai group would be limited because of his vigilant suppression of Red Guard activities in Hunan and because he supported the rehabilitation of those who had lost position during the GPCR. Hua's ability to influence veteran cadres was likewise limited. He was too young to boast a noteworthy revolutionary career before 1949, he lacked party seniority, and he was relatively unknown nationally at the time of his appointment. And because the chairman was already near death, there was little opportunity for him to cultivate Hua's prestige or for Hua to consolidate his position.

When Mao died five months after Hua's unexpected appointment as premier, leftist attempts to coopt Hua failed. Hua formed a coalition with the veteran cadres to arrest, vilify and imprison the "Gang of Four". Hua took a dangerous course, however, in disassociating himself from the group most closely associated with Mao in his declining years. Hua, like the Shanghai group, had a vested interest in the preservation

of the Maoist heritage because the Chairman and his doctrines were such a predominant source of legitimacy for him. In October 1976, Hua's aides began circulating the story that, in April of that year, Mao had told Hua, "With you in charge, I am at ease!" Not long after this, paintings depicting the scene of this utterance appeared throughout the country. Hua utilized propaganda techniques reminiscent of the "cult of Lin". He even changed his hairstyle to look more like Mao.

These exaggerated attempts to legitimize himself through associaton with Mao underscored the actual weakness of his own position and the skepticism with which some veteren cadres must have viewed the validity of Mao's legitimizing blessing. Although Hua tried to emphasize Mao's agricultural and rural policies (areas in which he personally could claim at least minimal expertise) in an effort to preserve the Maoist legacy, he was fighting a losing battle. Deng Xiaoping engineered an unprecedented second political comeback by initially pledging support for Hua and then turning to criticize the "whatever faction" (those, like Hua, who unswervingly supported whatever Mao said). Deng Xiaoping's comeback was long and difficult, however, as Li and Ye continued to support Hua and the preservation of the Maoist legacy. Hua defended his successor position quite well for over two years, but by December 1978 it became clear that Deng and his GPCR rehabilitated colleagues were gaining the upper hand. The support network of veteran



cadres like Deng proved to be more extensive and reliable than that of the newly-arrived "helicopters". By 1980, Deng had fostered a devaluation of Mao's role in modern Chinese history and had severely constrained Hua's power. At the Twelfth Party Congress in 1982, Hua lost his position on the Politburo. Although still a member of the CC, he soon disappeared from public view.<sup>65</sup>

### Observations on Mao's Strategy and Motivations

Three very broad observations about Mao Zedong's arrangements for his own succession can be made from the outset. First, Mao seems to have been very aware of both his own role and limitations as a charismatic, heroic leader. He was also very cognizant of the trend towards bureaucratic leadership in other communist regimes (a tendency he abhorred). Second, his fear of this latter trend influenced his succession arrangements in such a way that those plans, according to the criteria outlined earlier in this thesis, became increasingly ineffectual as his death approached. Finally, Mao's opinion vacillated with respect to the proper role of the party in

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<sup>65</sup>For a concise treatment of this period, see Jurgen Domes, The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition (Boulder: Westview, 1985), Chapter Nine. In some ways, Hua's demise is coterminous with Deng's efforts to provide for his own succession; these events will be considered in Chapter Three.

successor designation. Lui was the party's choice and Lin was Mao's, while Hua can be seen as a combination of the two; Hua Guofeng was personally selected by Mao after he had risen through a "culturally revolutionized" party system.

With respect to Sandschneider's six criteria for maintaining a strong successor position, the selection of Liu as heir apparent seems reasonably astute. Liu had a long career history in the party organizations and was a long-time member of the inner leadership core. He had undoubtedly built up a considerable network of important power affiliations, especially within the bureaucracy after Mao's retreat to the second line of leadership. His ability to mobilize these constituencies was demonstrated both by Mao's frustration at the unresponsiveness of cadres when the two leaders' directives differed and by the viciousness and pervasiveness of the purges eventually required to root out Liu and his supporters.

In retrospect, Liu's strength as a succession candidate was hampered on two fronts. First, his power base was not sufficiently broad. With support anchored primarily in the party organizations, Liu was vulnerable to the attack of men with broad military support. Second, as Roderick MacFarquhar's analysis of the Eighth Party Congress makes clear, Liu's organizational bent had caused him to have some misgivings about the

role of Mao Zedong thought as an ideological source.<sup>66</sup> These two weaknesses were magnified by the thrust of the GPCR.

Mao's initial acceptance of Liu as his successor must have also been based at least partly on their long-standing cooperative working relationship. Despite differences of opinion, Liu and Mao had no doubt cultivated a deep reserve of mutual obligation and respect over the years. Liu's help was critical in Mao's victory over intra-party challengers. More crucial at the time than Mao's personal acceptance of Liu, however, were Liu's acceptability to the rest of the CCP elite in the context of party traditions and his apparent ranking as number two in the party from an early date.<sup>67</sup>

Whether or not Mao initiated his own retreat to the "second line" of leadership, the "two lines" approach to the succession dilemma properly takes into account the need to allow proteges to build up their own power bases. The demise of both Hua Guofeng and the "Gang of Four" demonstrates that when the legitimacy of one's leadership rests largely on affiliation with a deceased charismatic leader, then the staying power of that leadership is extremely limited. Mao's "retirement" had its desired effect; Liu Shaoqi was able to

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<sup>66</sup>MacFarquhar, pp. 619-23.

<sup>67</sup>Teiwes, p. 68.

develop a powerful constituency of his own in the party apparatus. We can speculate that in an era of bureaucratic leadership when a more "collective" style of leadership is in evidence, Liu's position as a successor may have been more secure. However, because the heroic leader was still present and had become bitterly opposed to the very type of leadership which might have allowed his succession arrangements to succeed, he saw fit to destroy those arrangements, whatever the cost. The cost, as it turned out, was the GPCR.

It was suggested earlier that tensions between normative and prudential rules can cause problems for both heroic leaders and their heirs. With one exception, Lui seems to have adhered to both sets of rules quite well. However, he crossed the leader by believing in collective leadership and supporting a Leninist system of inner-party discipline. While a charismatic leader still presides, the "don't cross the leader" rule appears to take precedence when contradictions among rules arise.

Lin Biao fits Sandschneider's model successor criteria less well than Liu. Lin's power constituency was confined largely to the PLA and his ability to mobilize that sector of society was very limited, as the failed coup attempt demonstrated. More significantly, at the time of his

designation as heir, Lin had almost no experience in the party or government sub-systems.<sup>68</sup> Sandschneider suggests that undisputed reference to Mao Zedong thought is a crucial was described as the "best pupil" of Chairman Mao and an outstanding Mao Zedong thought theorist.

Because he lacked experience outside the military and was not particularly close to Mao before the 1950's, Lin required additional support to enhance his legitimacy.<sup>69</sup> Mao was not prone to continue with a "two line" approach since that set-up had so recently backfired. Instead, Lin Biao's power was enhanced in two other ways, both of which progressed beyond what Mao had intended. First, Lin's power grew as the Army's influence increased during the GPCR; instead of bolstering his support in the most crucial subsystem (traditionally the party), Lin fostered an increase in the strength of the constituency in which he already had some support (the PLA). Second, in ways reminiscent of Weber's descriptions of the transfer of charismatic authority, Lin became intimately associated with the cult of Mao. Weber had claimed that "charisma may be transmitted by ritual means from one bearer to

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<sup>68</sup>Liu, on the other hand, did have some PLA experience.

<sup>69</sup>Rush, p. 266.

another."<sup>70</sup> Many of the "socialist realist" paintings of the two leaders were, through subtle nuance, suggestive of this kind of authority transfer. Also, Mao's only, albeit feeble, attempt to "institutionalize" the succession was his designation of Lin as his successor in the 1969 party constitution.<sup>71</sup>

It may seem ironic that an organized attempt to usurp Mao came when Mao had worked himself back on to the first line of leadership. From one perspective, however, both Lin and Liu dealt with Mao from a position of relative strength; they both were, for lack of a better word, alliance partners with the Chairman. They were both needed and thus in a position to improve their own lot. As Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, Mao increasingly relied on Liu to enhance the regime's status vis-a-vis the Soviets. And perhaps to a greater extent, Lin was required to secure military support and intervention for Mao during the GPCR. In this context, it is not surprising that a military man turned out to be a usurper. By planning a

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<sup>70</sup>Weber, p. 266.

<sup>71</sup>The nearest thing Mao did to institutionalize a succession process was to enshrine a call for the recruitment of revolutionary successors in a 1973 revision of the constitution report.

coup d'etat, Lin was the ultimate violator of the "don't cross the leader" rule. The second attempt to provide a successor had backfired more resoundingly than the first.

Twice dissatisfied with his succession candidates, Mao resigned himself to calling for the cultivation of a revolutionary successor generation. Although this call had been part of the GPCR and had no doubt supplemented Lin Biao's build-up of power, its reemphasis in the period after Lin's fall is also significant. Mao's emphasis on a successor generation during this period was less a strategy to support a personal successor than it was an effort to counter the required, yet loathed, bureaucratic know-how of the surviving veteran cadres. In other words, Mao's actions in successor generation recruitment were not meant to prepare the country for the future as much as they were intended to prepare the country against its likely future. With this in mind, the appointment of Hua Guofeng to succeed Zhou Enlai as premier can be seen as a compromise choice. While elevation of one of the Shanghai group to the post would have been totally unacceptable to the still-powerful group of veteran cadres, the appointment of Deng Xiaoping to that post would have, in effect, meant the abandonment of Mao's vision of the future. For Mao, the choice of Hua as vice-premier was the least of several evils.

With respect to Sandschneider's criteria, Hua Guofeng exhibits both strengths and weaknesses as a succession

candidate. He enthusiastically advocated the use of Mao Zedong thought as an ideological source, had long experience in provincial party organizations, and was supported by some key veteran leaders. However, Hua's very recent entrance into the leadership core may have adversely affected his ability to mobilize the power bases he did have; in the end Deng Xiaoping proved to be much more adept at mobilizing support. When Hua first appeared on the national political stage, he was seen by some as a "caretaker for the bureaucracy."<sup>72</sup> Even if Mao intended that Hua fill this role, it was not to be. Members of the revolutionary generation were not quite ready to leave the scene.

Chairman Mao's succession arrangements were, ironically, more feeble when he died than they had been two decades earlier. The passing of the PRC's most heroic leader so soon after his last attempt to provide for his own succession ushered in a chain of events which, contrary to Mao's wishes, eventually brought a twice-purged veteran cadre, Deng Xiaoping, to the paramount position in the PRC leadership. Already an aged man, and with the charismatic leader now gone, Deng busily set himself at the task of providing for his own succession in a period of transition.

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<sup>72</sup>Maurice Meisner, Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 379.



## CHAPTER THREE

### DENG'S PROVISIONS

The arrest of the "Gang of Four" in October 1976 and the formal confirmation of Hua Guofeng as party chairman in July of next year did not end the struggle for the succession to Mao which was, by then, already two decades old. Not long after Hua officially became party chairman and before he could consolidate his grip on power, veteran cadre Deng Xiaoping, with the help of some allies on the Politburo, set out to undermine Hua's power and to stage an unparalleled third rise to prominence in the CCP leadership. Although Hua continued to associate himself with Mao's theory of continuing revolution and had called for what amounted to a new "great leap", he also sought a more stable political environment and was looking for ways to invigorate an economy devastated by ten years of upheaval. Deng was prepared to go much further:

[He] sought a complete repudiation of the [GPCR], even if that required a corresponding devaluation of Mao's role in contemporary Chinese history and a total renunciation of the theoretical conceptions that lay behind the Cultural Revolution. Deng also wished - and apparently Hua resisted - a throughgoing rehabilitation of all the veteran officials who had lost power during the Cultural Revolution... Deng made it clear that he favored a fundamental reform and restructuring of virtually every political and economic

institution in the country.<sup>1</sup>

With these differences as a backdrop, Deng's efforts to sideline Hua were "both protracted and relentless."<sup>2</sup> This supports the thesis that Hua had considerable support and was not wholly inadequate as a successor to Mao. Initially recognizing Hua's supremacy in the party to secure his own reinstatement, Deng later moved to bring key associates onto the Politburo with him. He also used influence in the government apparatus to "get around" Hua. In 1980, he was able to mobilize support against, and initiate the removal of, several of Hua's most ardent supporters and economic planners. Hua's multiple official posts were lost one by one. In 1980, he lost the premiership to Zhao Ziyang, a former Sichuan party leader. In 1981, Hua lost the party chairmanship to long-time Deng associate, Hu Yaobang. By 1982, he was gone from the Politburo altogether.

Even though the Deng-Hua conflict was bitter and has been portrayed as an example of the quintessential "rule by purge" factional struggle in China, several points distinguish those events from previous succession struggles.<sup>3</sup> For the first time

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Harding, "Political Stability and Succession," in U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, The Chinese Economy in the 1980's (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987) p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Sandschneider, pp. 651-57.

the loser of a conflict over succession in China was not physically eliminated or immediately purged from the party.<sup>4</sup> With Mao gone, the dissolution of succession arrangements did not escalate into systemic crisis. Nor was physical mistreatment an integral part of the ensuing personnel replacements as it had been during the GPCR. From these and subsequent developments we can speculate that China, at this point, had already entered a period of transitional rule as described by Domes.<sup>5</sup> This period may be described as one in which

conflicts between concurring groups still prevail, where terms of incumbency and transition of power from incumbent to successor are not yet completely regularized, but where succession conflicts do not result in a thorough shake-up and ensuing crisis for the whole political system.<sup>6</sup>

As Deng Xiaoping's succession strategy unfolded, it became clear that he was ready to support such a transition. Other dimensions of his plans for reform also soon became evident. First, Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang were the allies who seemed favored to succeed Deng. Second, it became clear that future successors' reliance on Mao Zedong as a legitimizing force would be reduced; Deng undertook a cautious reevaluation of Mao Zedong thought. Finally, Deng's succession strategy, both personal and generational, was intimately tied to his overall

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<sup>4</sup>Hua retained his CC membership at the Twelfth Party Congress.

<sup>5</sup>Domes, pp. 249-50.

<sup>6</sup>Sandschneider, pp. 657-58.

reform program and was to include massive personnel turnover as well as attempts to institutionalize the personnel replacement process. I will now elaborate on these three points by briefly outlining both the political backgrounds of Deng's chosen successors and the CCP's attempts to deal with the Maoist legacy. I will then describe the unfolding of Deng's succession plans through personnel changes at successive party meetings.

Hu Yaobang was born in Mao's native Hunan province in 1915. He participated in guerrilla activities as young as age thirteen and worked as a youth organizer in guerrilla bases from 1929 to 1934.<sup>7</sup> He participated in the Long March, a claim that most younger leaders in the post-Mao era cannot make. He was acquainted with Deng Xiaoping early in his life; the two developed a firm association during their work together in the 1930s and 1940s, in what eventually became the Second Field Army. They also worked together in Southwest China in the immediate post-1949 period. When Deng moved to Beijing to work at the party center in 1952, Hu joined him as the general secretary of the Communist Youth League (CYL). In this position, which he held until his purge in 1966, Hu, like Deng, was able to construct a network of personal associations in all the major organizations in China. This long period of service gave Hu an intimate knowledge of personnel and party affairs,

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<sup>7</sup>Wang, p. 34.

but essentially deprived him of substantive experience in the social, economic or foreign relations sectors.

Hu was rehabilitated with Deng in the early 1970s and served in the Academy of Sciences until both leaders were purged again in 1976. When Deng was able to return to power again in 1977, he saw to it that Hu was appointed director of the party's organization department. In this position, Hu was responsible for cadre assignments and removals, and was thus able to support Deng's consolidation of power through personnel appointments. In 1978, Hu became director of the party propaganda department and helped Deng initiate the "seeking truth from facts" offensive against Hua's "whateverists". In September of 1982, he officially became the party's general secretary, although he had actually taken over from Hua as party head earlier in 1981.<sup>8</sup> Overall, Hu developed a reputation as a loyal Deng protege and pragmatic party boss with a strong, even inappropriately "hyperkinetic" personality.<sup>9</sup>

Zhao Ziyang's career, by comparison, reveals a similar pragmatic streak, but a more limited personal association with Deng Xiaoping. Zhao was born in Henan in 1919. He joined the

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<sup>8</sup> Hua's post, Chairman of the CCP, was abolished in 1982

<sup>9</sup> Harding, p. 57.

CYL in 1932 and the CCP in 1938.<sup>10</sup> In the early 1940s, Zhao served as an administrator in a small district in the Hebei-Shandong border region. From 1949 to 1966, he served as a member of the South China Sub-Bureau of the Communist Party and then as a member of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee. Zhao was purged during the GPCR as a "capitalist roader" but was rehabilitated relatively early, in 1971. At that time he was sent to Mongolia as a party secretary, but he soon returned to Guangdong where he became that province's first secretary in 1974. In 1975, he was moved to Sichuan to head the party committee there. It was in Sichuan that Zhao experimented with reforms in both industry and agriculture. His reforms, including the "household responsibility" contracting system in agriculture, became quite successful later in the decade and were eventually adopted on a nation-wide basis. Interestingly, Zhao was not purged in 1976 and became closely associated with Deng only when his successes in Sichuan became recognized. He first moved to Beijing in 1980 when he became vice-premier and then replaced Hua as premier several months later.

Because of his largely provincial or regional party experiences, Zhao arrived in the capital without a broad

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<sup>10</sup>Wolfgang Bartke, ed., Who's Who in the People's Republic of China (2nd ed.) (New York: K.G. Saur, 1982), p. 682.

network of personal contacts in Beijing. However, Zhao's long service as a powerful regional figure may have provided him with the opportunity to develop ties with other regional leaders. And his absence from the capital allowed him to be cast as a mediator between competing factional interests extant among long-time residents of Beijing. He is thus the kind of leader with whom most of the elite would now feel comfortable. Also, he has considerable experience as an administrator in two large provinces and is very committed to economic reform. Zhao has a reputation as a man who faithfully implements collective decisions. He soon became known in Beijing for his "personal qualities, administrative skills, and collegial style."<sup>11</sup>

This rise to power of two acknowledged reform-minded intended successors was accompanied by party efforts to reevaluate Mao Zedong and his writings. While trying to grapple with both the legacy of the GPCR and the huge positive contributions of Mao in establishing the People's Republic, the "CCP needed to extract those philosophical components of Mao's revolutionary experience that served the policy goals of the successor regime."<sup>12</sup> While this extraction process is

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<sup>11</sup>Harding, p. 57

<sup>12</sup>See Jean C. Robinson, "Mao After Death: Charisma and Political Legitimacy," Asian Survey 28 (March 1988), p. 356. This entire article takes a fresh look at the philosophical search for a place for Mao's thought in Post-Mao China's official ideology.

ongoing, the CCP in 1981 initially concluded that Mao was a great Marxist and revolutionary, but had committed a great mistake in launching the GPCR. More specifically, and more germane to the topic at hand, Mao was found to be at least partially at fault for allowing a personality cult to develop around him and for failing to practice democratic centralism and collective leadership. These criticisms of Mao can, ironically, now be used to legitimize new party leaders. Post-Mao party leaders agree that a return to party norms of earlier days (i.e. collective leadership) are essential to the modernization program.<sup>13</sup>

At its Twelfth National Congress, the CCP officially separated Mao, the great revolutionary who was capable of error, from the body of thought which bears his name. Mao Zedong thought was said to be the "body of theoretical principles concerning the revolution and construction in China and a summary of experience therein, both of which have proved

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<sup>13</sup>Harry Harding, "Political Development in Post-Mao China," in A. Doak Barrett and Ralph N. Clough, eds., Modernizing China (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 26-27. Also, note that this kind of agreement does not prevent unacceptable behavior. Patronage and even nepotism were still observable in many personnel appointments at the Thirteenth Party Congress. Changes in political culture are slow in coming.



correct by practice."<sup>14</sup> Thus, not only was Mao not the sole contributor to this body of thought, but only those parts of his thought that "worked" could be accepted. This suggests that pragmatism and an ability to "deliver the goods" will be important characteristics for Deng's successors. Reference to Mao's thought is still acceptable; indeed it is still one of the four cardinal principles of the CCP.<sup>15</sup> However, the redefinition noted above indicates that future leaders will need only to make diminished and diluted references to Mao in their efforts to legitimize their rule.

Deng Xiaoping's succession strategy, of course, does not consist solely of the promotion of a tandem of relatively young leaders to party and government posts. Nor was the redefinition of Mao Zedong thought intended merely to lend legitimacy to the work style of the new leadership. Deng apparently desires a significant reform of the political system that would institutionalize personnel turnover and allow for graceful retirement of an entire generation of aging party leaders. Top officials have recognized both their own tendency to hold

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<sup>14</sup>Hu Yaobang, "Create a New Situation in All Fields of Socialist Modernization: Report to the 12th National Conference of the CPC," cited in *ibid.*, p. 359, note 11.

<sup>15</sup>The four cardinal principles are: 1) Keep to the Socialist Road; 2) Uphold the People's Democratic Dictatorship; 3) Leadership by the Communist Party; and 4) Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.

on to power too long and the need for promotion of younger, better-educated cadres. As early as 1980, the CCP revealed an ideal of succession that differed markedly from Mao's more personal approach:

What we refer to as "succession" is the healthy and stable evolutionary process of the gradual formation of a new leadership collective. It is not an isolated or sudden process in which some particular individual replaces another individual.<sup>16</sup>

Initially, Deng balanced this ideal with a need to consolidate his own leadership. The results of personnel replacements at the Twelfth Party Congress in 1982, therefore, were mixed. At the highest levels of leadership, Deng rehabilitated many GPCR victims of his own generation. Nevertheless, on average, the age of the CC membership was slightly lower than the Eleventh Congress and cadres were significantly better educated. Military domination of leadership circles was also reduced. These changes can be seen largely as attempts to eradicate the influence of the beneficiaries of the GPCR.

However, groundwork for later extensive generational turnover was also laid at the Twelfth Congress. A Central Advisory Commission (CAC) was established. This new body was designed as a place where aging party leaders could take on an

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<sup>16</sup>Editorial, "An Important Strategic Task," People's Daily, 10 March 1980, p. 1, cited in Chang Chen-pang, "How Teng Hsiao-p'ing Plans to Resolve the Problem of Succession," Issues and Studies 21 (December 1985), p. 14.

advisory role on the "second line" of leadership, while younger cadres begin to take responsibility for the day to day running of the party and the government. The initial results of this new provision were quite disappointing. Only about fifty former CC members were named to the CAC and only four of those were former Politburo members. Evidently, some leaders had changed their minds about retirement. They urged an "enter first, depart later" policy wherein aging leaders retained their posts while training their successors.<sup>17</sup> The 1982 state constitution made provisions to limit the tenure of top state officials to two consecutive terms of five years each. However, it will be some time before the effectiveness of such provisions in securing personnel turnover will be known.

Notwithstanding the limited immediate success of new institutionalization measures in 1982, the leadership continued to call for reinvigoration of party ranks in the following year. Instead of Mao's "three-in-one" conception of multi-generation leadership, Hu and others were now talking about a more dynamic and forward-looking "three echelons" proposal. At the first session of the Sixth National People's Congress (NPC) in June 1983, Hu brought forward this plan:

The veteran cadres in our Party who enjoy high prestige and command universal respect are the first echelon. They will devise strategies which will form the basis of the guiding principles of great political affairs. Because of the advanced age of the old cadres in the first echelon, and to

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<sup>17</sup>Richard D. Nethercut, "Leadership in China: Rivalry, Reform, Renewal," Problems of Communism 32 (March-April 1983), p. 39.

enable them to concentrate their energy on major affairs, our Party has created a second echelon, which consists of the comrades now working in the CCPCC Secretariat and the State Council. Many of the second echelon, however, are also not so young. Therefore, we have decided to establish a third echelon, composed of those comrades who have both ability and political integrity and are in the prime of life, who will be promoted to leadership positions at various levels.<sup>18</sup>

Because of the reluctance of older cadres to give up their posts, Deng and Hu began promoting the "three echelons" idea as a supplement to the CAC approach. If pressure at the top for old cadres to retire had limited effectiveness, perhaps upward pressure through the cultivation of a "reserve" of competent young cadres might speed the process along.<sup>19</sup> The cultivation of a third echelon was also motivated by a desire to create a base of support for reforms which were being resisted by aged leaders like Li Xiannian and Ye Jianying. Additionally, Hu and Zhao were both in their mid-sixties in 1983. Despite his own longevity, Deng apparently deems it necessary to provide for the succession to his own not-so-young successors.

The first wave of personnel changes in both the party and the government progressed down the hierarchy. As part of the drive to eliminate opposition to reform, provincial and prefectural organs were "streamlined" in 1983, while county reforms came in the following year. As a result, the average

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<sup>18</sup> Renmin Ribao, 2 June 1983, p. 1, cited in Ch'i Mao-chi, "Red China's Leadership Succession Problem: An Analysis of the 'Three Echelons' Plan," Issues and Studies 21 (January 1985), p. 40. Specific age categories for the three groups are outlined here.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-42.

age of leading officials in the provinces declined from sixty-two to fifty-five and the percentage of college-educated officials rose to forty-five percent from twenty percent. Between 1982 and 1984, twenty thousand leading cadres received new appointments and a "reserve force" of about 100,000 younger and middle-aged cadres had been designated for future appointments. Still, Qiao Shi, the head of the CC's Organization Department maintained that the education levels were still too low and the age averages too high.<sup>20</sup> Overall age and educational indicators for the general party membership remained rather disappointing.

As the drive to effect personnel turnover continued, the emphasis turned to the recruitment of younger replacements. The ultimate condemnation of "leftist tendencies" in the campaign against "spiritual pollution" of 1983-4 strengthened Deng's hand to continue his efforts to rid the party of beneficiaries of the GPCR. Speaking positively, however, Deng later made clear that the cornerstones of recruitment were to be youth and education. A nationwide search for talented party members was implemented.<sup>21</sup>

In January of 1985, plans to intensify the cultivation of the third echelon were revealed. The first part of the plan called for the grooming of a "strategic reserve" of one

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<sup>20</sup>Thomas P. Bernstein, "China in 1984: The Year of Hong Kong," Asian Survey 25 (January 1985), p. 41.

<sup>21</sup>Beijing Review, 4 March 1985, p. 15, cited by Richard Baum, "China in 1985: The Greening of the Revolution," Asian Survey 26 (January 1986), p. 32.

thousand of the nation's most promising young and middle-aged cadres serving in the national and provincial ministries and departments. Another portion of the plan called for the development of a larger reserve groomed for service in lower levels of government. Although together those cadres would compose only a small percentage of the national force, their leadership, accompanied by the gradual retirement and deaths of aged cadres, could pave the way for recruitment of more young and talented people.

Later in the year, after sidelining one of his most vocal critics (former propaganda chief Deng Liqun), Deng began a series of personnel appointments that were ultimately successful on two fronts; some elderly veterans retired and members of the third echelon actually made their way onto the Politburo. At a special party conference in late September, fifty-four full members and ten alternate members of the CC announced their resignations. These included twenty-eight cadres over the age of seventy. Additionally, ten members of the twenty-four member Politburo resigned, including Standing Committee member Ye Jianying. The names of six former Politburo members were added to the CAC roster. Besides Deng himself, six cadres in their seventies then remained on the Politburo.

At the fifth plenum of the Twelfth CC, six new Politburo members were named. Three of these men were in their fifties, a very young age for men in China's highest ruling body. Of those three, Li Peng and Hu Qili were viewed as potential

successors to Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang respectively. Significantly, recently fired Deng Liqun retained his seat on the Central Secretariat of the CC. The retention of Den Liqun represented a compromise between Deng Xiaoping and the remaining more conservative Politburo members.<sup>22</sup> It is also suggestive of the new tone of compromise emerging in post-Mao China. As suggested earlier, "purges" in the Maoist era were usually more thorough and conclusive.

Deng Xiaoping's efforts in 1985 to streamline and reform the rather reluctant military establishment also bore fruit. The influence of aged military men in the Politburo was reduced. The number of troops, as well as the number of officers, were cut by one-quarter. Rejuvenation of the military ranks would presumably help build support there for Zhao and Hu. It is believed that initially they both relied heavily on Deng's personal credibility with the PLA.

The most significant event of 1986 with regards to leadership succession turned out to be the student demonstrations that began in December and carried on into January of 1987. The massive student protests against China's lack of democracy were viewed by senior party leaders as evidence of "bourgeois liberalization". Central documents released to Western news agencies suggested that Deng himself

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<sup>22</sup> Baum, pp. 33-35.

(though perhaps under pressure from elderly conservatives) had called for a Poland-like crackdown on demonstrators and dissident intellectuals. The documents also contained a speech by CAC member Bo Yibo in which he cited the six major mistakes which then-general secretary, and heir apparent, Hu Yaobang, had committed and which had encouraged the demonstrations. The point was also made that Hu had been repeatedly warned that his behavior went beyond acceptable limits. His mistakes were the reason behind his sudden forced resignation on 16 January 1987. Hu's errors were said to be both ideological (encouraging "bourgeois liberalization") and economic (i.e. promoting high growth-rates and economic imbalance). Stanley Rosen noted that the Politburo meeting that decided on Hu's dismissal was

attended by 17 members of the Central Advisory Commission and other leading officials, all of whom, in apparent violation of the Party constitution, were allowed to vote. The reversion to ad hoc reliance on senior cadres (Bo Yibo and Wang Zhen had played major roles at the meeting) over legal procedures, combined with the sweeping indictment of party policy on ideology and economics, raise serious questions that went well beyond Hu's dismissal.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, the ability of "retired" officials to demote Deng's chosen successor revealed that Deng's desires for institutionalization were not yet being realized. Old leaders

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<sup>23</sup> Stanley Rosen, "China in 1987: The Year of the Thirteenth Party Congress," Asian Survey 28 (January 1988), p. 37.



were still acting by old "rules".

Reasons for Hu's ouster more fundamental than the student demonstrations and Hu's enthusiasm for reform can be seen. Hu did not have the support of the elite. The military opposed Hu's appointment as general secretary in 1981; they would have preferred Deng to have taken that job himself. In retrospect, Hu's rise to the top spot in the party can be seen as a concession to his long-time associate Deng Xiaoping by others in the elite.<sup>24</sup> Initially, conservatives preferred not to "cross the leader" so that stability could be maintained. The attitudes of some leaders towards Hu, however, caused him problems later. Frederick Teiwes commented that

rather than having independent prestige as someone capable of delivering the goods on his own initiative as, for example, valuable service to Deng as a trouble-shooter, Hu has often borne much of the resentment engendered by Deng's policies.<sup>25</sup>

Zhao Ziyang, alternatively, who replaced Hu immediately as acting general secretary, has risen to his position more on his own merits and more as a consensus choice of the whole leadership. That Zhao would stay when Hu was ousted may indicate that a consensus-building style and problem-solving abilities are now weighted more heavily as criteria for

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<sup>24</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review, 29 January 1987, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

promotion within the Chinese elite. Hu's close ties to still-paramount leader Deng Xiaoping have become a liability to him while Deng is yet alive. Clearly, the kind of personal rule exhibited by Mao Zedong is no longer viable and the bowing of the dominant leader to the will of a collective of senior leaders has become more common.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the events of early 1987, personnel turnover at the Thirteenth Party Congress later that year was surprisingly extensive. Reaction to what some veterans viewed as the ill-effects of overzealous reform did force some compromise, but, in general, Deng's generational succession arrangements proceeded as planned. Nearly all of the surviving revolutionary leadership, including Deng himself, retired or were moved to less important posts.<sup>27</sup> The older generation was gone from the "first line" of day to day leadership. This represents the culmination of a process initiated in the early 1980s in which Deng allowed his tandem of succession hopefuls, rather than himself, take over the head of party and government positions which had traditionally been reserved for the paramount leader.

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that Hu's departure was more or less a collective decision while Liu and Lin were ousted largely at Mao's behest.

<sup>27</sup> Rosen, p. 42.

At the Thirteenth Congress, Zhao Ziyang was confirmed as general secretary of the party and was joined on the Standing Committee of the Politburo by a rather "youthful" new group. The Standing Committee of Zhao, Li Peng, Qiao Shi, Yao Yilin, and Hu Qili represents a balance between cautious and bolder reformers. More significant, however, is the arrival of three "third echelon" leaders, Li, Qiao, and Hu, to this exclusive body of Chinese leadership.

The composition of the Politburo as a whole is also quite striking. Hu Yaobang was included as a Politburo member, confirming my earlier assertion that demotions have become less dramatic in the post-Mao era. Nine elderly veteran Politburo members (average age: seventy-eight) resigned.<sup>28</sup> These included notables like Peng Zhen and Hu Qiaomu, as well as veteran economist Chen Yun, who replaced Deng as head of the CAC. Bo Yibo and Song Renqiong also joined the CAC as vice-chairmen. As Hu's demotion demonstrated, a veteran's loss of position does not totally eliminate his influence. Members of the CAC will continue to affect policy and personnel appointments until they die or until the body dissolves, as planned, in ten or fifteen years.

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<sup>28</sup>This pattern of resignation, as opposed to purges or dismissals, has become increasingly common in the post-Mao years.

At a broader level, the new CC reflected a considerable qualitative change in personnel. The new leaders are described as "managers and technocrats" who are younger, better educated, and who have exhibited markedly different career paths than their predecessors.<sup>29</sup> Some rose through the party apparatus by holding various secretarial or committee posts while others came up through the government ministries. Michel Oksenberg observes that the new CC has "bureaucratic reach". In other words, when this body meets, "the gathering brings together officials from the commanding heights of the government and the party, both in Beijing and in the provinces." The present CC broadly represents the various sectors of the Chinese political system in a way unparalleled since the Eighth CC.<sup>30</sup> China's top state organs were also reorganized in the Spring of 1988. Li Peng became premier and Yang Shangkun was named president. Peng Zhen retired from the chairmanship of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (and from

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<sup>29</sup>For an excellent summary of the characteristics and ideological outlook of the Thirteenth CC, see Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Thirteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: From Mobilizers to Managers," Asian Survey 28 (April 1988), pp. 371-399. For an earlier look at similar changes, see William de B. Mills, "Generational Change in China," Problems of Communism 32 (November-December 1983), pp. 16-35.

<sup>30</sup>Michel Oksenberg, "China's 13th Party Congress," Problems of Communism 36 (November-December 1987), p. 6.

all his other party and state posts) as the NPC Standing Committee fell into the hands of staunch Deng-Zhao allies.<sup>31</sup>

#### Observations on Deng's Strategy and Motivations

Deng's efforts to provide for his own succession, modified periodically not by shifts in his own policy preferences or usurpation, but by compromise with top conservative leaders, have been described as a four part strategy. Harry Harding observes that Deng has tried

(1) to identify a collective leadership that he hopes will succeed him, and to place his successors in office before his death, (2) to reshuffle the Party, state, and military organizations, so as to provide his successors with a more solid base of political support, (3) to create a set of political doctrines that will explain and justify his program of reform, and to launch a rectification campaign to educate all Party members in these ideological principles, and (4) to resurrect a set of political norms that, by institutionalizing the Chinese political process, will help protect his successors against serious challenge.<sup>32</sup>

Deng has met with considerable success in meeting the first two of these objectives, but the latter two are, and will likely continue to be, more problematic. The removal of nearly all of the "Long March" generation from the Politburo coupled with the elevation of consensus-minded Zhao to the "first among equals" general secretary position indicates accomplishment of

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<sup>31</sup>See Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 April 1988, pp. 12-13.

<sup>32</sup>Harding, p. 55.

the first portion of Deng's strategy. Although Hu Yaobang's demotion disrupted Deng's succession plans temporarily, the resulting compromise gave way to a top leadership corps that enjoys broader support within the ruling elite. In his reorganization and personnel replacements in the party, state and military organizations, Deng has fostered a reformist outlook among cadres. The ability of "third echelon" leaders to control these sectors (especially the military) in Deng's absence is uncertain. To their credit, though, the new Politburo seems committed to the ideals of collective leadership. This should serve them well as their mentors pass away and modernization remains the central focus of the regime.

The search for ideological justification of current and future reforms, as well as calls for institutionalization of personnel replacement procedures, have met with only very limited success. The solutions to these problems may be incompatible with Marxism-Leninism. The partial "de-Maoification" of CCP ideology, though difficult and potentially threatening to the regime's legitimacy, was possible because of general abhorrence of the turmoil of the GPCR and because justification could be found in Leninist collective leadership ideals. Likewise, the declaration of the Thirteenth Party Congress that China is still in the very early stages of socialism, and that therefore some "capitalist" practices can be tolerated, is couched, albeit quite

creatively, in Marxist doctrine. However, if economic reforms continue to exacerbate regional and urban-rural prosperity imbalances, new ideological modifications will be needed. Technological changes and modernization will require further elaboration (assuming abandonment is out of the question) of Marxism. Although Zhao has proven to be quite adept as a theorist, it is uncertain whether the technically trained generation which will succeed him will be capable of handling these less concrete problems of modernization.

Institutionalization of the succession process has also been difficult for Deng. Tenure restrictions and the creation of the CAC, while innovative, have, as yet, had only mixed results. The essentially cooptive nature of the CC prevents implementation of any formal succession arrangements for the top levels of leadership. Top leaders continue to select the lower officials who are supposed to elect them. A return to the norms of collective leadership and compromise politics, however, will make the succession to Deng more peaceful than past ones. Because of a growing willingness to compromise, a greater number of Deng promotees will remain in place after his death.

Deng's emphasis on these normative rules could be deemed hypocritical in light of the methods he used to gain his own power and promote Hu Yaobang. Deng's personal authority had temporarily convinced others to not "cross the leader". To a

limited extent, Deng was making the same kind of personal choice of successor for which he had so bitterly criticized Mao. Because of this, the demotion of Hu Yaobang before Deng's death is a positive development for the stability of Deng's overall succession strategy. Zhao Ziyang's collegial style and demonstrated ability to "deliver the goods" give him considerable strength from both a normative and prudential standpoint. Additionally, because new factional ties take time to develop, Zhao's relatively recent arrival in Beijing will be an asset to him. Even though he has support throughout the country, he is less likely than Hu to be condemned for factionalism.<sup>33</sup>

Hu Yaobang, nevertheless, possesses many of the attributes claimed by Sandschneider to be crucial for defending a successor position. His longstanding service in the CYL in Beijing allowed him to develop a network of relationships with young party leaders throughout the country. He has also occupied several posts in Southwest China, perhaps giving him some contacts in that region. While Hu's demotion is perhaps evidence that he was unable, without Deng's support, to mobilize these power bases enough to prevent his own demise,

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<sup>33</sup>The author recognizes that conservative's worries about the pace and scope of reform are also a large part of the reason for Hu's removal.



many of his old CYL associates (including Hu Qili) retained their positions after his fall and remain a potential source of a political comeback.

Zhao Ziyang, at first glance, does less well as a succession candidate by Sandschneider's criteria. Zhao has good degree of local support in Guangdong and Sichuan based on his long years of service in those provinces. In fact, the very regional nature of Zhao's career before 1980 means that his ability to mobilize support in Beijing may be limited. His network of connections at the center, though growing, would have been quite meager when he arrived at the capital. His membership in the leadership core is a relatively recent occurrence. However, during his long tenure as a powerful regional figure, Zhao may have developed a strong network of informal power affiliations among other regional leaders. His new position in the center would enhance his ability to mobilize these power bases and draw support from these connections.

Another reason that Zhao has been able to hold onto the successor position thus far is that the criteria for the maintenance of a successor position in China are changing. First of all, the redefinition of Mao Zedong thought described earlier indicated that pragmatism, not dogmatism, has come to shade prevailing ideologies. In other words, the ability to "make things work" or "deliver the goods" for China is becoming

more important than any reference to Mao (though the latter cannot be ignored). In this area, Zhao's record is most commendable. Additionally, the declining of the role of the PLA in Chinese society (by Deng's design) has created a situation in which Long March and Yan'an experience are no longer crucial legitimizing requirements for top leaders. Although neither Zhao nor Hu could claim exceptionally strong support in the military, the reduction of military influence in civilian affairs has mildly reinforced the legitimacy of leaders like Zhao who have essentially non-military backgrounds.

There is one other factor which may have contributed to Zhao's apparent acceptability as a successor candidate. Sandschneider and Rush both suggest that a record of "not having made too many enemies" is important in sustaining a claim to a successor position. It is likely that Hu's perceived overzealousness in promoting reform created resentment among senior conservative cadres. Indeed, the available evidence indicates that this is exactly the reason for Hu's fall. Zhao, by contrast, is more prone to accomodate conservative ideas to maintain support. But because he is a committed reformer, Zhao is also acceptable to more liberal elements within the party. Thus, Zhao's widespread acceptability prompted a group of former revolutionaries to support him as a successor in preference to Deng's personal

choice. This shows that Deng's influence as paramount leader is limited and that promotions to top positions based largely on personal ties are no longer acceptable.

All of this, viewed in light of the fact that the Chinese policy spectrum has narrowed remarkably in the last dozen years, means that the reliability of Deng's succession arrangements has continued to improve with time. Ostensible "setbacks" may have even strengthened these still incomplete provisions. Although thorough institutionalization of these arrangements is lacking, a group of leaders who are, in most respects at least, more prepared for China's bureaucratic and technocratic future have come to the fore. At a minimum, Deng's ambitious succession arrangements will have contributed markedly to China's difficult modernization drive. Only long after Deng's death, however, will a decisive verdict on the effectiveness of those arrangements be possible.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSION

Three very general observations can be made about the similarities of the succession arrangements undertaken by Deng Xiaoping and Mao Zedong. First, both leaders' attempts to provide for their own succession have been among the most blatant of such attempts in the communist world. Rush notes that most leaders try to hide these efforts because "they indicate the temporal limits of [the leaders'] own rule."<sup>1</sup> Mao's designation of Lin Biao as his successor in the party constitution was, at the time, an act of unparalleled overttness in the history of communist parties. Deng Xiaoping, while of necessity somewhat less bold, has nevertheless spoken openly of succession arrangements and his impending death. Given the traditional Chinese idea that wisdom and age are positively correlated and the fact that many CCP veterans have seemingly found it difficult to envision their own passing, the emphasis which both leaders openly placed on youth (although with somewhat different motivations) is quite striking.

Second, both leaders witnessed developments which included

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<sup>1</sup>Rush, pp. 314-15. Kim II Sung of North Korea, who has been extremely brazen in his provisions for succession, is a more recent exception to this rule.

their own "retirement" to a second line of leadership. In a formal sense, Deng has intentionally proceeded with this strategy much further than did Mao and has expanded the concept to a more dynamic "three echelons" plan. Because formal position is often merely a secondary source of political power in China, the "two lines" concept is of limited usefulness in providing for smooth succession. Nevertheless, the voluntary relinquishing of any power by leaders in a communist state is a noteworthy occurrence. The willingness of both Chinese leaders to give up even a small measure of their own power indicates the urgency with which they viewed the succession question. The recent retirement of Janos Kadar in Hungary, moreover, indicates that the opportunity for top communist leaders to step down "with dignity" really does exist.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, both leaders generally drew from among their personal, long-time associates in choosing successors. Guanxi ties apparently play a key role in the promotion of proteges. This has come to be more of a liability than an asset to heir presumptives. Both Mao and Deng seem to have, at various times, flouted the Chinese tradition which suggests that the promotion of the next generation of leaders in a way

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<sup>2</sup>The Christian Science Monitor, (International Edition)  
30 May 1988, p. 5.

that increases one's own power is inappropriate. The promotions of Hu Yaobang and Lin Biao seem to have been very personal choices initially aimed at increasing the dominant leaders' power. Liu Shaoqui and Zhao Ziyang were both more consensus choices than the other candidates discussed, with Zhao displaying the weaker personal ties to his mentor. Hua Guofeng was personally chosen by Mao, but he had risen through the party ranks, and was supported by at least some of the veterans then active on the Politburo.

The succession strategies of Deng Xiaoping and Mao Zedong also exhibit several significant differences. Mao and Deng differed on their perception of the opportunity element inherent in the succession process. Mao Zedong clearly stated that the purpose of his succession arrangements was to avoid the death of the revolution. This desire for a continuation of certain values would logically be part of the motivation of any leader attempting to provide for his own succession (Deng included). Mao saw the GPCR as an opportunity for the regime to revive itself. He wanted young revolutionaries -- men not unlike himself -- to carry on after his death. Deng Xiaoping, on the other hand, has recognized a different opportunity in the succession. He knows that he represents the last of the true revolutionary generation and that China's long-term future will depend largely on the success of its modernization drive. Accordingly, Deng has issued an official call for leaders who

are "younger in average age, better educated, and more professionally competent".<sup>4</sup> Evidently he recognizes that the passing of his own generation will provide China with an opportunity to prepare itself better for the twenty-first century. To facilitate the transition, a host of technocratic leaders with specialized training have been elevated to prominent posts. Deng has seen fit to promote men who have backgrounds very different from his own. Said another way, Mao's succession arrangements were generally aimed at value continuity and the preservation of revolution. He wanted to prepare China to reject evolutionary tendencies that were emerging. Deng, on the other hand, is more acutely aware of China's future needs and is doing his best to make accommodations for them, ideological obstacles notwithstanding.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Pye, Chapter Four.

<sup>4</sup>Constitution of the Communist Party of China, see Beijing Review, No. 38, 1982, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Obviously, the two leaders had very different views of the short and medium term Chinese future. This interesting issue will not be pursued here, but is worth investigation.

While neither leader viewed succession as an inevitable crisis, both obviously considered the matter to be very important. Both were vigorous in their pursuit of succession provisions.

Another major difference between the succession plans of Deng and Mao is the political environment in which the actual succession did, or will, take place. Rush suggests that, despite periods of oligarchy immediately after the passing of a dominant leader, the dominant tendency in communist states is towards "limited personal rule."<sup>6</sup> Again, the promotions of Hu and Lin are examples of this mode of leadership. During Mao's tenure, and especially during the GPCR, the political environment in the PRC was one in which legal norms were meaningless and factional disputes were predominant. Because of this, the "oligarchy" which formed after Mao's death did not last long.<sup>7</sup> If Deng creates an atmosphere wherein rule by law and consensus politics gain greater acceptance, as it appears he has begun to do, then we can expect the oligarchy which carries on after his death to enjoy reasonable longevity.<sup>8</sup> A

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<sup>6</sup>Rush, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup>Deng, Hua, and others cooperated to eliminate the Shanghai group and their followers.

<sup>8</sup>This process, of course, involves altering political culture to some extent; at best, this will be a long and arduous process.



single person may take a leading role, but he will be constrained by his colleagues to a greater degree than were his predecessors. This trend is already in evidence. It is noteworthy that Hu Yaobang lost his position due to the efforts of a group of leaders, whereas Liu and Lin appeared to be ousted (after much struggle) at Mao's personal behest.

Another significant difference between the succession arrangements pursued by the two leaders is the degree to which the "cult of personality" or Weberian "ritual means" were used to try to transfer legitimacy from mentor to heir. Lin Biao and Hua Guofeng relied heavily on symbolic links to Mao and his wisdom. During the era of Deng Xiaoping, the cult phenomenon has been widely condemned and has been less evident in Deng's strategy.

Curiously, Mao's and Deng's strategies seem to have evolved in opposite directions. Initially, Mao allowed the "system" to choose Liu Shaoqi as his most likely successor. Liu was a consensus candidate that Mao accepted. Later, for reasons already noted, Mao personally chose Lin Biao against the wishes of a large number of cadres within the leadership core. Deng, on the other hand, initially chose to elevate Hu Yaobang, a rather controversial candidate and close associate. Only when those plans were frustrated did the consensus choice for successor, Zhao Ziyang, emerge in the preeminent party position. In this regard, Deng's foresight was helpful. He

actually promoted a tandem of succession hopefuls and, perhaps with some reluctance, allowed the party to choose between them. This eventually contributed to the stability of his succession arrangements. Mao, in contrast, consistently chose a single heir. His final choice, Hua Guofeng, can be said to represent a slight reversal in the evolution of the strategy noted above. Hua was both a personal choice and a product of the party (although not a consensus choice). He was also the first succession candidate who was not a true member of the revolutionary generation. Under the special circumstances of Hua's surprising appointment and Mao's subsequent death, the CCP elite was not yet ready to accept such a transition. Deng's longevity, conversely, has granted his provisions a needed period of stabilization. Under these conditions, the generational transfer is more easily made.

Finally, Deng's provisions for succession are simply more extensive than Mao's were. Even Taiwan analysts agree that Deng Xiaoping's approach is "far more sophisticated than [that] of Mao Tse-tung".<sup>9</sup> This has been possibly mainly due to the political environment which Deng has been able to work in as well as his considerable political skills. As mentioned above, Deng's plans for the top leadership embody not only a "two line" strategy, but also the cultivation of a "third echelon"

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<sup>9</sup>Chang Cheng-pang, p. 26.

of cadres as a leadership reserve. Personnel replacements under Deng have been extensive, but have taken on less of a traditional "purge" nature.<sup>10</sup> The percentage of new members in the current CC is the greatest since the Ninth Congress in 1969.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the sixty-six percent "new membership ratio" on the Politburo at the Thirteenth Party Congress is the greatest in PRC history. These new leaders are generally supportive of reform and the new, more youthful Politburo Standing Committee.

Hu Yaobang's demotion notwithstanding, there is mounting evidence that China is approaching a period of institutionalization and bureaucratic leadership. In 1983, Jurgen Domes characterized China's stage of development as a "transitional crisis system" in which "conflicts are mostly signalled by terminological divergencies, removals, expulsions and occasionally an open rift within the Party".<sup>12</sup> He asserts that China entered this stage of transitional rule in about 1958.

Domes put forward five indicators to determine if this transitional stage is nearing the institutionalized stage:

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<sup>10</sup> Persuaded resignation, rather than coercive rectification and re-evaluation, have become the dominant mode of cadre removal.

<sup>11</sup> Li and White, p. 375.

<sup>12</sup> Domes, p. 250.

1. The leaders of the party and state administrative machine serve their statutory terms of office and the leading organs meet at statutory intervals.
2. Party decisions regarding constitutional powers of the state administrative machine are regularly ratified by ensuing decisions of the leading state organs.
3. Promotion within the leading organs of the party is preceded by promotions in the subsystems of the state administrative machine, the armed forces or the mass organizations; e.g. a person becomes first a minister and then, at the next possible date and because of this promotion, a full member of the CC.
4. The subsystems develop their own channels of elite recruitment and career patterns, albeit under control of the party center.
5. A generation that joined the party after the establishment of Communist rule - the post-revolutionary generation - has taken over the majority of positions in the decision combine, as well as within the ruling elite in general.<sup>13</sup>

At present, there is evidence that the first, second, fourth and fifth of these criteria are, though not imperfectly, beginning to be filled in China. Indeed, "the PRC...may have begun its movement toward the stage of institutionalized rule...and the tendencies toward [this] appear to be increasing".<sup>14</sup>

As the transition continues, an ability to "deliver the goods" for China, education, the ability to understand modern technology, and adherence to the norms of collective leadership and compromise politics will all become increasingly important criteria for the legitimization of a strong successor position.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

Bitter and violent factional confrontation will fade and purely personal (faction-based) heir designation will be even more unacceptable in the future than it has been in the past. When the designation of an heir is perceived as being largely the result of personal ties, the position of heir is most vulnerable to the objections of the "non-paramount" elite.

This is not meant to imply, however, that guanxi ties will dissolve in a period of bureaucratic leadership. Personal connections will continue to have significant influence on personnel appointments. Indeed, it is perhaps because of his extensive personal ties that Deng has been able to make such thorough personnel replacements. Furthermore, it is probable that the continuation of factional ties is one of the major impediments to the existence of Domes' Third indicator of bureaucratic regimes. By Domes' criteria, complete institutionalization may not exist in China for quite some time, if ever. Nevertheless, general principles of collective leadership are strong enough at top levels to ensure that consensus will be sought in the selection of paramount leaders.

In a stage of institutionalized rule, a change of leadership can be brought about in only one of two ways: "either by a succession of generations of administering rather

than politically leading bureaucrats or by a new revolution".<sup>15</sup> Because China appears to be heading towards institutionalized rule, and because Chinese opinion about past social upheavals makes a new revolution unlikely, Deng's extensive arrangements for generational succession stand a good chance of staying intact after his death. The type of leaders now rising through party ranks are widely perceived as essential to China's modernization drive.

This, of course, does not mean that Zhao Ziyang will necessarily be able to inherit the "paramount" position in the CCP leadership when Deng dies. In fact, the fledgling norms of rule by law and compromise politics in China, along with Zhao's own leadership style, may prevent that from happening. Also, the limits of institutionalization in communist regimes seem to impinge most heavily on the top levels of leadership. In other words, it is relatively simple to create rules which modify the manner in which lower level cadres are recruited. Although enforcement of those rules may be problematic, they will generally have some effect if top leaders are adamant about adherence to them. On the other hand, true institutionalization of the succession process for top leaders requires more fundamental changes. Presumably, the CC or some

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 251. By this Domes means not continuous revolution in the Maoist sense, but rather the replacement of the regime.

larger body would have to obtain effective power to select the Politburo and perhaps even determine individuals' rankings within it. This would mean reversal of the present de facto flow of power from the Politburo to the CC. The current "democratization" experiments being pursued in China are unlikely to be tested at this high level.

Deng has presided over a period in CCP politics in which the transition towards institutionalized politics and bureaucratic rule has begun to accelerate because of the death of the charismatic, "heroic" leader. As Esherick and Perry note, Deng and his colleagues have actually been encouraging bureaucracy in the Weberian sense.<sup>16</sup> Recent personnel appointments reflect this intention. In the end, one of Deng's most enduring legacies may be his cultivation of the generation which will preside over the final transfer to bureaucratic leadership. And the fact that Deng was unable to act alone in those efforts will have contributed to the long-term success of his succession provisions.

This study confirms Rush's assertions about the difficulties involved in providing for succession. Neither dominant Chinese leader has been able to devise a reliable

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<sup>16</sup>Esherick and Perry, p. 176. Also, although China seems to be approaching a bureaucratic period, its development may vary greatly from that of the USSR. See Constance Squires Meany, "Is the Soviet Present the Chinese Future?", World Politics 39 (January 1987), pp. 203-230.

means for the transfer of his own power. Similarly, a consideration of the effectiveness of Mao's arrangements lends some support to Betts' and Huntington's conclusion that, in general, there is little correlation between succession provisions and political instability after an authoritarian leader's death. Betts and Huntington also observe, however, that succession preparations may have some positive effects in particular cases.<sup>17</sup> If the above speculation about the succession to Deng Xiaoping proves correct, it would certainly qualify as one of those cases. Deng's personnel replacements will smooth the potentially disruptive transition between revolutionary and bureaucratic generations. Nevertheless, despite innovative efforts, the key question of institutional succession remains largely unresolved.

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<sup>17</sup>Betts and Huntington, p. 133.



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