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Deng Xiaoping: The Politician*

David Shambaugh

“Deng Xiaoping is a man who excels in political affairs, and very few people can match him in that respect.”

“Deng is a rare talent. He is known in both military and civilian circles for this. He is like a needle wrapped in cotton. He has ideas. He does not confront problems head-on. He can deal with difficult problems with responsibility. His mind is round and his actions are square.”

Mao Zedong¹

The Contradictions of Deng Xiaoping

Any politician with a career as long and diverse as Deng Xiaoping defies simple designation. Deng Xiaoping the politician has been a complex figure. He has embodied contradictory tendencies and beliefs.

While Deng was a comprehensive reformer, there were limits to each of his reforms. His intolerance of liberalism and direct challenges to Communist Party political hegemony always co-existed with his desire to loosen the Party's control over the economy. It was Deng, an old-style Party organization man reared on the Soviet model of commandist rule, who personally initiated the process of political reform during the 1980s, only to recoil and tighten the Party's grip on the instruments of coercive power in the 1990s. He would not balk at the necessity of using force or coercion in certain instances, yet did much to curtail the arbitrary repression of the Maoist era and enliven the social and professional lives of Chinese from many walks of life. Dramatically improving the standard of living and diversity of life for one-fifth of the world's population, while denying them fundamental political and human rights, will no doubt be Deng's most enduring legacy. In policy-making Deng was pragmatic and made the deals necessary to achieve his domestic goals, yet was often uncompromising in statecraft when he perceived matters of principle and national interest to be at stake. He was consistent in advocating economic reform that adopted market methods, yet he still sought protection of the state sector. Like Gorbachev, Deng believed in

*Aspects of this article were previously presented at Keio University (Tokyo), Institut Francais des Relations Internationales (Paris), the Association of Asian Studies Annual Meeting (Los Angeles), the University of California (Berkeley), and the School of Oriental and African Studies (London). I gratefully acknowledge the many useful comments and suggestions offered by participants at these sessions. I also particularly wish to thank Kenneth Lieberthal, Frederick Teiwes and Gordon White for their trenchant comments on a previous draft. The British Academy/Economic & Social Research Council of the United Kingdom and the School of Oriental & African Studies (University of London) provided funding for research in China on this project, where the Institute of Marxism–Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences served as my host. I also wish to thank Katie Jukes and Hu Hang for their research assistance. Final judgments and errors are, of course, my own.

1. First quotation from “late 1974” as cited in Department for Research on Party Literature of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and Xinhua News Agency (eds.), *Deng Xiaoping* (Beijing: Central Party Literature Publishers, 1988), p. 93; second quotation, undated, cited in Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992), p. 328.

socialism and Communist Party supremacy, although he did much to undermine both.

Like so many other Chinese reformers dating from the late Qing dynasty, Deng sought to borrow a variety of methods and technologies from foreign nations and graft them to indigenous structures. Yet what sets Deng apart from his reformist predecessors is that he was able to break out of the confines of the *ti-yong* strategy of selective borrowing (*yong*) while attempting to protect Chinese cultural essence (*ti*). Deng was far more prepared to import anything that would enrich China's productive base without much concern for its corrosive effect on Chinese culture. His Four Cardinal Principles notwithstanding, Deng adopted eclectic methods in his attempt to lift China out of poverty and its feudal past and deliver it into the modern era, with all the attendant accoutrements of great power status.

Studying Deng Xiaoping's Political Behaviour

This article examines Deng's political behaviour over time in order to explain this complexity. It intentionally does not adopt the approach of analysing Deng's policy pronouncements on various issues as indicative of his political style, as there is frequently a disjuncture between word and deed among politicians world-wide. In some cases Deng's speeches² do reflect the *content* of his political programme and philosophy and they will be drawn upon in such cases, but on the whole the aim is to study Deng's political *behaviour*: his administrative workstyle, policy agenda, strategies and tactics of rule, sources and uses of power, interactions with colleagues, subordinates and would-be successors, and methods of decision-making and policy implementation. This multi-factor analysis requires studying different periods and events in Deng's career, drawing upon multiple sources of information.³ A straightforward chronological

2. Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin Under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984); and *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (1938–1965) (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1989); Deng Xiaoping, *Fundamental Issues in Present-Day China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1987); Deng Xiaoping, *Lun dang de jianshe (Theory of Party Building)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1990).

3. Many of these sources are primary data, but use has also been made of the existing biographies of Deng. In English these include Uli Franz, *Deng Xiaoping: China's Reformer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989); David Bonavia, *Deng* (Hong Kong: Longman, 1989); David Goodman, *Deng Xiaoping* (London: Sphere Books, Ltd., 1990); Salisbury, *The New Emperors*; Chung Hua Lee, *Deng Xiaoping: The Marxist Road to the Forbidden City* (Princeton: Kingston Press, 1985); and Chi Hsin, *Teng Hsiao-ping: A Political Biography* (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1978). Biographies in Chinese include: Department for Research on Party Literature of the Central Committee of the CCP and Xinhua News Agency, *Deng Xiaoping*; Department for Research on Party Literature of the Central Committee of the CCP, *Deng Xiaoping zhanlue (The Strategy of Deng Xiaoping)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1988); Han Shanbi, *Deng Xiaoping pingzhuan (A Critical Biography of Deng Xiaoping)*, Vols. 1–3 (Hong Kong: East and West Culture Company, 1984, 1987, 1988); Balike Daineishi, *Deng Xiaoping* (translated from Hungarian) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1988); Zhou Xun, *Deng Xiaoping* (Hong Kong: Guangjiaojing chubanshe, 1983); Lin Qingshan, *Fengyun shinian yu Deng Xiaoping (A Stormy Ten Years*

approach will not suffice analytically, although it might reveal a learning curve in the conclusions that Deng drew from previous experiences for his subsequent workstyle.⁴

The focus is therefore on Deng as an individual politician. While his political behaviour must be viewed in the context of his time in power, this is not necessarily an essay on the Deng era in Chinese politics (1978 onward), his reform programme, or even his political legacy from this period.⁵ Deng's career in Chinese Communist politics has spanned more than six decades, and his entire professional record is the subject of this analysis. However, because Benjamin Yang's contribution to this volume concentrates on Deng's pre-1949 years, and others assess Deng along a variety of other professional dimensions, this analysis is largely limited to Deng's post-1949 political career.

As the other assessments attest, Deng's career was professionally diverse – working on Communist Party political and organizational matters, the economy, social policy, foreign relations, military affairs, science, technology and educational issues. This professional diversity gave him substantive experience in a variety of issue areas, accumulating the skills of a political generalist necessary for advancement to the pinnacle of Chinese Communist politics.⁶ Once at the top Deng displayed

footnote continued

with Deng Xiaoping) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989); Yang Guoya et al., *Ershibanian qian: cong shi zhengwei dao zongshuji (Twenty-Eight Years: From City Government Committee to General Secretary)* (Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe, 1989); Yang Pengyu, *Weidade gaigejia Deng Xiaoping (The Great Revolutionary Deng Xiaoping)* (Beijing: Zhongguo xinwen chubanshe, 1989); Yao Chuanwang et al., *Deng Xiaoping zhuzuo zhuanli yanjiu (Specialized Research Topics on Deng Xiaoping's Writings)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1988); Yang Chunchang, *Deng Xiaoping xin shiqi jianjun sixiang yanjiu (Research on Deng Xiaoping's Army-Building Thought During the New Period)* (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989); Gao Zhiyu and Li Yanqi (eds.), *Deng Xiaoping yu dangdai Zhongguo gaige (Deng Xiaoping and Contemporary Chinese Reforms)* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1990); Yao Ping (ed.), *Xin shiqi Deng Xiaoping zhanlue sixiang yanjiu (Research on Deng Xiaoping's Strategic Thinking During the New Period)* (Shaanxi: Renmin chubanshe, 1989); Jin Yu and Chen Xiankui, *Dangdai Zhongguo dasilu (The Great Theoretical Road of Contemporary China)* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1989); Qing Ye and Fang Lei, *Deng Xiaoping zai 1976 (Deng Xiaoping in 1976)* (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1993).

4. For two extremely useful chronologies of Deng's life and career see: Li Xinzhi and Wang Yuezong, *Weidade shixian, guanghui de sixiang: Deng Xiaoping geming huodong dashiji (Great Achievements, Brilliant Thought: Chronology of Deng Xiaoping's Revolutionary Activities)* (Beijing: Hualing chubanshe, 1990); and Zhong Hao (ed.), *Deng Xiaoping de lilun yu shixian zonglan, 1938–1965 (Broad Views on Deng Xiaoping's Theories and Practice)* (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1991).

5. To some extent this is done in the other contributions to this volume, but also see Michel Oksenberg, "The Deng era's uncertain political legacy," in Kenneth Lieberthal et al. (eds.), *Perspectives on Modern China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), pp. 309–340.

6. This is a characteristic noted as generally necessary for upward mobility in Chinese elite politics. See, for example, David M. Lampton, *Paths to Power: Elite Mobility in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Monographs on Chinese Studies, Vol. 55, 1986); Michel Oksenberg and Yeung Sai-cheung, "Hua Guofeng's pre-Cultural Revolution Hunan years, 1949–1966: the making of a political generalist," *The China Quarterly*, No. 69 (March 1977), pp. 3–53; David Shambaugh, *The Making of a Premier: Zhao Ziyang's Provincial Career* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), ch. 7.

some similar tendencies to China's previous pre-eminent leader, Mao Zedong,⁷ which, as well as the differences, will be contrasted.

Three Paradigms of Analysis

This analysis of Deng's political behaviour draws upon three paradigms, each of which emphasizes different dimensions of leadership style. These models provide a useful framework to study Deng as an individual politician, and in addition it is hoped the case study will be able to refine them in a Chinese and comparative context. It is important to note at the outset that these approaches to studying elite political behaviour are not mutually exclusive; just as leaders employ different methods of rule simultaneously so too must analysts employ different paradigms in tandem.

The first paradigm is the traditional "power base" approach. This method is useful for analysing how a politician moves up through the organizational hierarchies (Party, Army, State) and develops a leadership domain. In China, it is argued that power bases are of four principal varieties: credentialist, personal, institutional and territorial. A *credentialist* power base derives from a politician's rise through the ranks. How was he recruited; how did he rise to the top of the system; what skills and credentials did he amass along the way; what were his defining socializing experiences, and what effect did they have on his subsequent elite mobility and political style? *Personal* power bases in the Chinese political system are of two principal types: patron-client and issue-based factional networks. *Institutional* power bases in China are rooted in the Party, state and military bureaucracies. Lastly, with a *territorial* power base, power derives from particular regions of the country.

The second paradigm is the "paramount leader" approach. This is a term often used to describe Deng, particularly insofar as he never held the official portfolio of President, Chairman or General Secretary of the Communist Party, or Premier of the State Council, although he did serve as General Secretary of the Central Committee, Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and Vice-Premier of the State Council. This approach seeks to understand Deng's style as supreme leader of the nation, even though he did not hold the paramount official positions. It is perhaps more appropriate to describe Deng's role as a patriarch, not unlike a Mafia godfather ruling from behind the scenes through a network of loyal lieutenants.⁸ But the question here is not so much whether Deng was a paramount leader or patriarch, but how he exercised supreme authority.

7. For studies of Mao's political style see Richard Solomon, *Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Lucian W. Pye, *Mao Tse-tung: The Man in the Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Michel Oksenberg, "Mao's policy commitments, 1921-1976," *Problems of Communism* (November-December 1976), pp. 1-26; Michel Oksenberg, "The political leader," in Dick Wilson (ed.), *Mao Tse-tung in the Scales of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 70-116.

8. See Lucian Pye's contribution for an extended discussion of this aspect of Deng's style of rule.

Did he have a dictatorial style – issuing commands, ruling by fiat, intervening in a variety of policy arenas when he saw fit, and brooking no opposition? Or did he act more as an arbiter – standing above the fray, reconciling competing interests, seeking conflicting opinions, and entering into the policy process in order to resolve stalemate? Did he adopt a consensual and collective decision-making style that played down conflict among subordinates, instead seeking consensus and the most rational choice of policy alternatives? Or did he utilize a combination of these methods at different times? These questions are examined in contra-distinction to China's other paramount leader, Mao Zedong.

The third paradigm focuses on agenda-setting. It is an approach that examines the national political agenda, and looks both at its content and at the degree to which a given leader sets that agenda. How did Deng seek to set the national agenda, what were his methods for doing so and how successful was he? If rival elites “captured” the agenda or moved in a direction not to Deng's liking, how did he respond? How did he seek to regain the initiative? Did he work through bureaucratic channels? Did he call a Politburo meeting to make his case? Did he, as Mao often did, appeal directly to the masses when he encountered resistance at the top? In general, did Deng favour an institutionalist, populist, or machiavellian approach, or some combination thereof? This paradigm also explores ways in which a leader manipulates the agenda to pursue specific political goals. For example, can issues and policies be used to bolster political allies or undermine enemies?

An integral part of the agenda-setting paradigm is how a leader bargains and builds a coalition to adopt and implement a given policy or package of policies. Only in the most totalitarian of political systems is policy decided by the complete dominance of the supreme leader and implemented by a subservient bureaucracy. In most political systems – including authoritarian socialist ones – leaders must lobby their colleagues and subordinates to support their policy initiatives. They must build, in William Riker's phrase, “winning coalitions.”⁹ Bargaining is necessary to build elite coalitions to adopt policy, but also to implement it at national, regional and local levels. A recent emphasis in studying Chinese politics adopts this approach and argues that in a system characterized by “fragmented authoritarianism” bargaining is *the* defining characteristic of political life and takes place at every level of the system.¹⁰

To what degree does Deng Xiaoping fit this bargaining paradigm? What trade-offs did he make at key junctures to have his policies adopted and implemented? Who did he bargain with and what was the quid pro quo? Of importance in this context are the channels of policy implementation that Deng preferred. Did Deng prefer to work through traditional

9. William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

10. See, for example, Kenneth G. Lieberthal and David M. Lampton (eds.), *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

bureaucratic hierarchies (*xitong*); did he adopt the campaign (*yundong*) style of his predecessor Mao; did he use a “test point” (*shi dian*) approach; did he discharge responsibility to a cluster of key advisers; or did he even concern himself with issues of implementation?

These three paradigms and their constituent parts offer a framework to dissect and analyse Deng Xiaoping’s career in the Chinese political system. By examining them sequentially it will be possible to ascertain which have the greatest explanatory value, and in what combination Deng employed different stratagems and tactics, drew upon different sets of political resources and established patterns of interaction with other elites.

Deng Xiaoping’s Power Bases

The Right Revolutionary Credentials

Deng Xiaoping belonged to the first generation of Chinese Communist revolutionary elites (*lao yidai de gemingjia*). This fact alone may be the most important of all power bases as it confers a legitimacy that other more objective measures cannot match. Mere participation in the epic events of the Chinese revolutionary struggle and the personal ties Deng forged with other leading CCP figures in the process guaranteed him a place among the elite once political power had been attained.

Deng Xiaoping¹¹ joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1924¹² at the age of 20 while working in a Renault factory in Billancourt, France. While in France Deng established one working partnership that would help shape his entire career – with Zhou Enlai. Zhou helped recruit Deng into the CCP and became a life-long patron, although Mao proved more central to Deng’s political ascent. Zhou was quick to recognize Deng’s organizational abilities. When Zhou returned to Guangzhou from Paris in 1924, he entrusted the publication of the French cell of the General European Branch of the CCP, *Red Light*, to Deng. Deng had no experience as an editor or writer, but was well-versed in the mechanics of early “desk top” publishing. *Red Light* was printed in mimeograph form, and Deng acquired the *nom de plume* “Docteur du Duplication.” Another colleague of Deng’s Parisian days was Li Weihai, a notable CCP figure who later worked closely with Deng on united front matters, and upon

11. Deng’s given name at birth was Deng Bin. In France he went by Deng Xixian. There is some discrepancy as to when he changed it to Xiaoping. In many of his Western biographies (e.g. Goodman) it is dated from 1925, but one chronological biography dates it specifically as June 1927 in Wuhan so that he could maintain a false identity and hide from local Kuomintang police; see Li Xinzhi and Wang Yuezhong, *Weidade shixian*, p. 6. For a discussion of Deng’s Hakka origins and early life in Sichuan see Benjamin Yang’s contribution to this volume and Mary Erbaugh, “The secret history of the Hakkas: the Chinese revolution as a Hakka enterprise,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 132 (December 1992), pp. 937–968.

12. Deng had previously been a member of the Chinese Communist Youth Party in Europe as well as the French Communist Party; Li Xinzhi and Wang Yuezhong, *Weidade shixian*, pp. 3–4. Also see Nora Wong, “Deng Xiaoping: the years in France,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 92 (December 1982), pp. 698–705. Wong’s is the most complete account of this period in Deng’s life, and is based on French archival sources.

whom Deng called to direct this sphere when he reorganized the Central Committee Secretariat in 1956.¹³

Deng left Paris for Moscow in January 1926, travelling via Berlin. He stayed nearly a year studying Marxism–Leninism at the University of the Toilers of the East and Sun Yat-sen University.¹⁴ However he was never really fond of the classroom or Marxist theory, and after eight years abroad was anxious to return to make a more practical contribution to the revolution in his native land. In his absence the Republic had been further fractured by rival warlords and a sense of crisis gripped the nation.

Deng returned to China in early 1927, apparently accompanying the warlord Feng Yuxiang (the “Christian General”).¹⁵ Feng was at that time co-operating with the KMT–CCP united front, and he headed the Sun Yat-sen Military Academy in Xi’an. He was in Moscow in search of Comintern funding for the Academy. Deng returned to Feng’s Academy and was put in charge of political training. He organized political training for officers, thus beginning a long involvement with commissar work in the armed forces, and was also appointed resident Communist Party secretary at the Academy. Following the April 1927 Shanghai massacre and abrogation of the first CCP–KMT united front, Feng Yuxiang purged his forces of known and suspected Communists in an effort to show his support for Chiang Kai-shek. Deng was one of over 50 CCP members expelled from the Academy, but whose lives were spared (one can speculate that it was Feng’s Christianity that prevented him from following Chiang Kai-shek’s 1927 reign of white terror).

Deng then made his way south to Hankou. Thus began his inclusion in the inner circle of CCP leaders. At first, he was appointed as a lowly secretary of the Central Committee, but his rank and stature grew rapidly. By the end of the summer of 1927, following the secret relocation of the Party headquarters to Shanghai, Deng was appointed chief secretary (*zong mishu*) for the Central Committee. This was a plum assignment for Deng as he was responsible for handling all inner-party “documents, orders, communications and assignments.”¹⁶ It also gave him the opportunity to renew acquaintance with Zhou Enlai and other comrades from his Parisian days as well as to meet other key CCP leaders for the first time.

13. Deng and Li also had their differences, including the fact that Li apparently persuaded Deng’s first wife to leave him. Having divorced, Jin Weiyang (A Jin) and Li Weihao (Lo Man) had Li Tieying – whom Deng has promoted in high Party councils in recent years.

14. Both “universities” were established by the Comintern for the purpose of training would-be revolutionaries. The former was intended for those from the Middle East and Asia, while the latter was headed by Comintern agent Pavel Mif and established with Comintern funds in 1925 specifically to train young Chinese radicals (both Communists and Nationalists) in the theoretical and practical tools of revolution. Many of the so-called “28 Bolsheviks” who returned to China to constitute the “internationalist” wing of the Party studied there, but it is unclear what – if any – relations Deng had with them. One key “returned Bolshevik” was Yang Shangkun, with whom Deng would subsequently forge close ties, who arrived at the university a year after Deng’s departure.

15. Not coincidentally, Deng had befriended Feng’s daughter when classmates in Moscow. Li Xinzhi and Wang Yuezong date Deng’s return as March 1927.

16. Li Xinzhi and Wang Yuezong, *Weidade shixian*, p. 6.

Deng's sensitive work quickly brought him to the attention of Mao Zedong.

Following the "white terror" of 1927 and split in the CCP leadership in 1928 the Party went underground, but Mao's faction fled Shanghai to establish the Jingganshan base area (*genjudi*) in the central mountains of Jiangxi province. Deng arrived in Jingganshan in October 1930 after spending much of 1929 in Guangxi trying to organize peasant uprisings. On the way he joined the guerrilla forces of Peng Dehuai and participated in the August 1930 Changsha Uprising. Perhaps as a reward for his role in the Changsha seizure, Deng was appointed Party secretary of Ruijin district in 1931, and subsequently secretary of the Jiangxi provincial committee. This brought him into close contact with Mao. Deng chose to support Mao at the stormy Ruijin meeting of 1932 when the latter came under sharp attack by Comintern agents and the urban-oriented, internationalist wing of the Party. Deng's support at this juncture was of key importance to his subsequent career. Deng was censured along with Mao following the meeting and again in 1933 after the Luo Ming affair. As a result of both, in January 1934 at the Fifth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee, Deng endured the first of three purges in his career as he was denounced together with Lu Dingyi for engaging in "anti-Party factionalism" and was relieved of his post as Ruijin Party secretary. There are conflicting accounts of Deng's actual fate in the wake of Ruijin, but he apparently spent some time incarcerated.¹⁷ Mao was not to forget Deng's allegiance at these crucial junctures, and his subsequent patronage of Deng can clearly be traced to Ruijin.

When the Communist forces embarked on the Long March in 1934 Deng was designated secretary-general of the General Political Department (GPD) of the First Front Army. In this capacity he served as editor of the Party journal *Red Star* and oversaw propaganda work among the troops. Little is known about Deng's activities on the Long March beyond the fact that he served in the GPD of the First Army Corps (under Lin Biao and Nie Rongzhen) and then the reorganized Eighth Route Army (under Ren Bishi). Deng was one of the 4,000 weary soldiers to reach Yan'an in early 1937. En route he participated in the important Zunyi meeting in his new capacity as secretary of the Central Committee (*Zhonggong zhongyang mishuzhang*). He dutifully sat in the corner as designated note-taker at this pivotal meeting.¹⁸ After Zunyi, the remainder of the march was unremarkable for Deng (who rode rather than walked), except that he fell ill with typhoid fever in Shaanxi.¹⁹

The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 occasioned an important period in Deng's career, *the* pivotal phase according to David Goodman.²⁰

17. For interesting, if not necessarily accurate, accounts of the Ruijin affair and Deng's fate, based on participants' reminiscences (including Yang Shangkun), see Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March: The Untold Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 139–142; and *The New Emperors*, pp. 40–43.

18. *Ibid.*; and interview with Mao's former secretary Li Rui, 1 June 1993.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

20. Goodman, *Deng Xiaoping*, pp. 47–53.

Deng's experience in the Taihang base area in the Shanxi-Hebei region was important, Goodman argues, because it brought him into close association with other key elites (notably Liu Bocheng), and also because of his economic programme of putting "production first."²¹ Deng's ties to Liu Bocheng would last a lifetime, and the "Liu-Deng forces" would become an important part of CCP and PLA lore. Liu and Deng subsequently commanded the famous 129th division which defeated Nationalist troops in the decisive Huai-Hai campaign of the civil war. Thereafter, known as the Second Field Army, they pushed southward to rout Chiang Kai-shek's forces along the middle and upper reaches of the Yangzi River, and then together with forces commanded by He Long "liberated" all of south-western China – Sichuan, Guizhou, Sikang and Yunnan.

Thus by the time the CCP came to power in 1949 Deng Xiaoping had already experienced a varied career in Party and military affairs, and had built up an important network of colleagues and patrons among the CCP senior elite.²² His revolutionary credentials were impeccable: working in the CCP underground at home and abroad, especially in organizational and propaganda affairs, and commanding Red Army forces.

Deng's Personal Power Base: Patrons, Clients and Colleagues

Many of the personal ties Deng forged during the revolutionary struggle endured after 1949 and generally served him well in subsequent years. Both Mao and Zhou Enlai promoted Deng at different times, but his ties to other first-generation revolutionary elites also proved important.

Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Mao was Deng's principal patron throughout his career. He was primarily responsible for Deng's ascent from Ruijin until the early 1970s. Mao saw to it that Deng was given important military commands during the civil war, and put him in charge of the sensitive South-west Administrative Region (*Xi-Nan Xingzheng Qu*) in 1950. Mao also sanctioned Deng's transfer to the Centre in July 1952, after which he was appointed successively as Vice-Premier, Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Economic Commission, and member of the State Planning Commission (all in 1952), Minister of Finance (1953), Secretary-General of the Central Committee Secretariat and Director of the CCP Organization Department (1954).

Following the debacle of the Great Leap, Zhou and Deng began to work more closely together in fashioning the economic recovery programme. Deng's working relations with Chen Yun, Liu Shaoqi and Peng Zhen also became closer during this period, although they had worked

21. See the excellent analysis in David S. G. Goodman, "The construction of the party-state in Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu, 1937–1945," paper presented at the conference on "Construction of the Party-State and State Socialism in China, 1936–1965," Colorado College, June 1993.

22. Also see Benjamin Yang's and June Teufel Dreyer's contributions for more detail of Deng's military exploits during the Sino-Japanese and civil wars.

together on the Secretariat during the mid-1950s. Liu and Zhou both supported Deng's appointment as acting Premier of the State Council (1963–64). Liu and Deng were purged together in 1967 as the Number 1 and 2 "capitalist roaders," but were treated very differently and suffered different fates. Zhou intervened on Deng's behalf as he did many other cadres, although Mao also sought to protect Deng.

When Lin Biao issued Order No. 1 in October 1969, both Liu and Deng were transferred out of Beijing, Liu to Kaifeng (where he subsequently died an ignominious death) and Deng to a May Seventh Cadre School in Jiangxi province. During this period Mao kept track of Deng. In 1971 he reportedly asked Wang Zhen to pass a message to Deng that Mao would consider his rehabilitation if Deng appealed by letter and confessed his "revisionist" errors.²³ Deng sent Mao two letters from internal exile, the first in November 1971 and the second in August 1972.²⁴ Mao then personally approved Deng's rehabilitation and recall to Beijing on 2 March 1973.

Deng's rehabilitation no doubt came with Zhou Enlai's blessing, as Zhou was at this time overseeing the rehabilitation of cadres and reconstitution of the party-state apparatus. Deng's return must therefore be seen as part of a broader pattern of rehabilitations engineered by Zhou at this time, even though Deng was the most senior victim of the Cultural Revolution to be returned to power and the Chairman's imprimatur was necessary.²⁵

Knowing that he had cancer, Zhou groomed Deng to succeed him as Premier, turning over the daily management of the State Council to him in 1974. While undergoing cobalt radiation treatment for his cancer, Zhou relied on Deng to manage affairs of state. Zhou dispatched Deng to the United Nations in October to deliver a major policy address on world affairs (in which Deng outlined Mao's "theory of the three worlds") and Deng stood in for Zhou on a number of occasions. One of Zhou's last public acts was to announce the "Four Modernizations" programme at the

23. Interview, Central Committee Party History Research Office, 25 May 1991, Beijing. Little is known about this period in Deng's life. The best source is Lin Qingshan, *Fengyun shinian yu Deng Xiaoping, neibu*. Also see the reminiscences of Deng's daughter Mao Mao (Deng Rong), "My father's days in Jiangxi," *Beijing Review*, No. 36 (3 September 1984), pp. 17–18. Like Liu Shaoqi, Deng and his wife Zhuo Lin were evacuated from Beijing (where they had been under house arrest for the previous two years) under Lin Biao's Order No. 1. They spent the next three years in a former infantry academy turned May Seventh Cadre School in Xinjian county near Nanchang. Deng worked in a tractor factory under armed guard. Deng and his wife were permitted to maintain a garden and raise chickens, in which they invested much time. According to his daughter's account, Deng read books on Marxist theory and Chinese history late into the night. This account informs many of the other secondary biographies. See, for example, Han Shanbi, *Deng Xiaoping pingzhuan*, ch. 16.

24. Lin Qingshan, *ibid.* p. 267. The first letter commented on the relationship between the Party and the masses; in the second Deng admitted that he had made mistakes but remained loyal to "Mao Zedong Thought." This brought him reinstatement. Similarly, in March 1977 Deng wrote to Hua Guofeng pledging his allegiance and admitting past mistakes.

25. For further on the rehabilitation process at this time see Earl Anthony Wayne, "The politics of restaffing China's provinces," *Contemporary China* (Spring 1978), pp. 116–165; and Jürgen Domes, *China After the Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975; Deng drafted the speech and crafted the programme. Fittingly, it was Deng who read the eulogy at Zhou's memorial service on 15 January 1976. In a macabre turn of Politburo politics Deng's oration was to spell his own political death and would be his last public appearance until 1977. Within six weeks Zhou's arrangements for the succession were overturned by the Gang of Four (with Mao's acquiescence) and Deng was purged for the third time in his career.

Mao's support was thus crucial to Deng's career during the 1950s and early 1960s, although it seems that the Chairman had misgivings about Deng during the commune movement of 1958 and again during the Socialist Education Movement in 1964.²⁶ However, it was Deng's power base in the Secretariat, and the policy programme to emerge from that body during the early 1960s, that gave the Chairman primary cause for concern. As early as November 1956 Mao began to take note of Deng's dominance of the Secretariat, referring to it as his "nest."²⁷ As the alarming reports of famine in the countryside began to reach the leadership in early 1960 Deng audaciously began to distance himself from Mao and the Great Leap (which he had earlier supported) by giving several speeches around the country to criticize "problems in Mao's thinking" (*Mao Zedong sixiang de wenti*).²⁸ When Mao withdrew to the "second line" after 1960 the Secretariat under Deng became a key locus of decision-making and target of the Chairman's ire. Mao reportedly chastised Deng in 1964 for not keeping him informed of state policy and building an "independent kingdom" (*duli wangguo*) in the Party Secretariat.²⁹ Mao was particularly upset with the "60 Articles on Promoting Higher Education," which Deng had taken charge of drafting but apparently had not shown to him. "Who was the emperor making such a decision?" queried the Chairman.³⁰ It is not surprising that those who worked closely with Deng on the Secretariat became early targets of Mao's Cultural Revolution purges and the institution itself was disbanded.

Mao clearly had serious ideological differences with Deng and other Politburo members during this time as he perceived them to be instituting revisionist capitalist restoration in several policy spheres (particularly in rural policy and education) under the guise of economic recovery from the Great Leap.³¹ Deng was singled out by Mao during the Cultural

26. Deng's opposition to the pace of communization at this time is noted in Zhong Hao, *Deng Xiaoping de lilun yu shixian, 1938–1965*, pp. 42–44.

27. Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee," in John K. Leung and Michael Y. M. Kau (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976: Volume II* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), p. 169.

28. Zhong Hao, *Deng Xiaoping de lilun yu shixian*, p. 83.

29. "The major accusations against Deng Xiaoping," *Ba-er-wu zhanbao* (August 25 Battle Report), 14 February 1967, *Selections from China Mainland Magazines*, No. 574 (1 May 1967), p. 15.

30. *Ibid.*

31. It was during a series of Politburo meetings in December 1964–January 1965 on management of the Socialist Education Movement that Mao's distrust of Deng and Liu

Revolution as the “number 2 person in authority taking the capitalist road,” and encountered the Chairman’s wrath again in 1976, when he was purged following the Tiananmen Incident.³²

But in the pre-1949 period and throughout the 1950s Mao was primarily responsible for Deng’s rapid rise through the higher Party ranks. In 1954 when Nikita Khrushchev visited Beijing Mao pointed to Deng and said: “See that little man there? He is highly intelligent and has a great future ahead of him.”³³ Coincidentally it was Deng whom Mao dispatched to the Soviet 20th Party Congress in 1956, only to hear Khrushchev’s tirade against Stalin. Mao subsequently called upon Deng to help manage Sino-Soviet relations during the disagreements of 1960–63.³⁴ Mao also entrusted Deng with administering the Anti-Rightist campaign in 1957 (for which Deng never showed contrition).

Liu Shaoqi. Deng’s ties to Liu Shaoqi were never as close as it has been assumed from their common fate in 1967. They were more contemporaries than in a hierarchical patron–client relationship, although they worked in a mutually supportive fashion. Deng’s opposition to Gao Gang’s power play to usurp Liu’s position as Party Vice-Chairman in 1953 was important in foiling the plot, and it was Deng who issued the full indictment on the “Gao Gang–Rao Shushi anti-Party clique” at the March 1955 National Party Conference. Liu and Deng together drafted and delivered two of the key speeches at the 1956 Eighth Party Congress.³⁵ They also collaborated in 1961–62 to “reverse the verdicts” on improperly-labelled rightists in the Party and to accelerate their rehabilitation,³⁶ and worked closely during the 1962–65 period on Party rectification, rural policy, educational reform, and generally formulating the post-Great Leap recovery programme. It was largely for this collabo-

footnote continued

Shaoqi crystallized. For analysis of this period see the discussion in Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1979), ch. 11; and Richard Baum, *Prelude to Revolution: Mao, the Party, and the Peasant Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

32. Despite the fact that Mao was largely incapacitated at this time, having reportedly suffered two strokes and the effects of Parkinson’s disease, knowledgeable sources claim that he approved the Gang of Four’s initiative to remove Deng from power.

33. Strobe Talbott (trans. and ed.), *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), pp. 252–53.

34. See Michael Yahuda’s contribution in this volume; and Steven M. Goldstein, “Nationalism and internationalism: Sino-Soviet relations,” in Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (eds.), *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 224–265.

35. Deng delivered the “Report on Revision of the Party Constitution” and Liu the “Political Report of the Central Committee,” and together they took charge of the drafting of these key documents. See Editing Group, *Mianhuai Liu Shaoqi (Cherish the Memory of Liu Shaoqi)* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenzhai chubanshe, 1988), p. 12.

36. At the time Deng believed that the purge of non-Party intellectuals and soldiers was warranted, but in the 1980s confessed that the scope of the movement had been too broad although he refused to repudiate the campaign itself. See “Talk with some leading comrades of the Central Committee, 19 March 1980,” *Selected Works*, p. 279.

ration that they drew Mao's wrath during the Cultural Revolution, although their joint "mismanagement" of the work teams in the early phase of the Cultural Revolution also contributed to their downfall.

None the less, Liu Shaoqi's and Deng's collaboration was more by virtue of position and proximity than patronage. They had complementary expertise, as Liu was more the theorist and Deng the organization man, but their relationship was never as conspiratorial as the Red Guard materials suggest.

Peng Zhen. In contrast, Deng and Peng Zhen had a longer and closer relationship. They worked closely together on the Secretariat during the mid-1950s. Peng was appointed Deng's second in command at the First Plenum of the Eighth Party Congress, and they were the only two Politburo members serving on the Secretariat at the time. Deng frequently discharged important responsibilities to Peng, particularly in the legal and public security spheres.³⁷ They made inspection tours together,³⁸ were bridge partners and their families were close friends.³⁹ Together with Kang Sheng, Deng and Peng were centrally involved in managing the deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁴⁰

Deng's relationship with Peng apparently came under strain in 1964 during the Four Clean-ups campaign when work teams dispatched to Beijing University by Liu Shaoqi attacked the university Party secretary Lu Ping, a close ally of Peng Zhen. This situation briefly pitted Liu against Peng, with Deng siding with Liu, but earned Peng the support of Mao who was increasingly dissatisfied with Liu and Deng. Liu, Deng and Peng soon found themselves allied again in 1965–66 over the Luo Ruiqing affair. Together they tried (unsuccessfully) to defend Luo against the Chairman and Lin Biao during a series of Central Committee "working group" sessions in March 1966. When Peng Zhen came under attack and became the first major casualty of the Cultural Revolution in April–May 1966, Deng abandoned his old ally. He joined in criticizing the "February Outline Report" (a document largely drafted by Peng but disseminated with Deng's explicit approval) and presided over the crucial 9–12 April 1966 Secretariat meeting that accused Peng and opened the way to his subsequent purge. Liu Shaoqi did not attend this decisive meeting (as he was in Burma on a state visit), but Deng voted with others

37. Peng Zhen was put in charge of overseeing the *su-fan* campaign and public security policy more generally. See *Peng Zhen wenxuan (Peng Zhen's Selected Works)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991), pp. 240–317. Also see Frederick C. Teiwes, "Mao and his lieutenants," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 19/20 (1988), pp. 68–69.

38. For example Deng and Peng made five inspections together in Hebei province during April and May 1960, in order to ascertain the seriousness of the situation in the countryside in the aftermath of the Great Leap. See Chen Xuewei, *Lishi de qishi – shinian jiansheshi yanjiu (Historical Revelations – Research on Ten Years (1957–1966) of Historical Construction)* (Beijing: Qiushi chubanshe, 1989), p. 132.

39. "Drag out Deng Xiaoping from the black den as a warning to others," *Xin Beida (New Beida)*, 25 February 1967, *Survey of Mainland China Magazines*, No. 177 (19 April 1967), p. 4.

40. See Goldstein, "Nationalism and internationalism."

in favour of criticizing Peng for “opposing Chairman Mao” and dissolving Peng’s initial five-man “Cultural Revolution Group.” Thus Deng abandoned Peng at the time of his greatest need, although given the tenor of the times it would have been most difficult to do otherwise. Deng atoned by helping to rehabilitate Peng in 1979.

Once back in power Deng drew important support from Peng Zhen. Peng backed Deng’s bid to oust Hua Guofeng and promote Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang and proved a crucial supporter of Deng’s reform programme via his position as Chairman of the National People’s Congress (an appointment that Deng also arranged). During the decade Deng also entrusted oversight of the legal and public security systems to Peng, at least until Peng’s protégé Qiao Shi took control of these spheres in the late 1980s. Peng Zhen was also one of the key Party elders to support Deng’s proposal for martial law and the crackdown in June 1989.

Peng Dehuai. Deng’s relationship with Peng Dehuai was a largely professional one confined to military affairs. Their contact during the revolutionary war was limited to the 1930 Changsha Uprising and “Hundred Regiments campaign” in 1940.⁴¹ During Deng’s time as Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission from 1954 to 1966, Deng and Peng Dehuai worked together until Peng’s purge in 1959. In fact, Deng absented himself from the Lushan Conference in 1959 where Peng Dehuai confronted Mao,⁴² apparently because he had broken his leg playing billiards.⁴³ Deng maintained a low profile throughout the year, but his public appearances began to pick up again with the National Literature and Art Work Conference in December 1959. No doubt Deng shared many of Peng Dehuai’s views on the catastrophe of the Great Leap, although he was not present to witness the Mao–Peng clash.⁴⁴ Commenting in 1980 on the Lushan Plenum Deng asserted that “Comrade Peng’s views were correct” and “the way his case was handled was totally wrong.”⁴⁵

Chen Yun. Deng and Chen Yun have had a long and ambiguous relationship. Both abhorred the Maoist approach to economic development with its voluntarist emphasis on moral incentives and the “big-push”

41. See Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp. 434–447.

42. See Jiang Huaxuan *et al.*, *Zhongguo gongchangdang huiyi zhaiyao* (Shenyang chubanshe, 1991); and Kenneth Lieberthal and Bruce Dickson, *A Research Guide to Central Party and Government Meetings in China, 1949–1986* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1989). Harrison Salisbury claims that Mao ordered Deng to remain in Beijing to run the government during Lushan, but then changed his mind and required Deng to attend. Salisbury, *The Last Emperors*, p. 176. This is not corroborated by other sources, including Li Rui’s account. See Li Rui, *Lushan huiyi shilu* (Henan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988), p. 26.

43. Interview with Li Rui, 2 June 1993.

44. A Hong Kong biography of Deng asserts that Deng knew in advance of Peng’s plans, as Peng had informed Huang Kecheng of his intention during June 1959 and Huang had told Deng. See Han Shanbi, *Deng Xiaoping pingzhuan*, Vol. 2, pp. 114–15.

45. Deng Xiaoping, “Talk with some leading comrades of the Central Committee, 1 April 1980,” *Selected Works*, p. 280.

strategy, instead generally favouring material incentives and incremental development. Yet they have held different views on the pace and modality of economic reform. Their differences were apparent during the post-Leap recovery,⁴⁶ but became particularly manifest in the mid to late 1980s when Chen Yun's moderate economic reform programme did not embrace the bolder proposals of Deng, Zhao Ziyang and the economic think tanks and advisers to Zhao.⁴⁷ While it is important to recall that Chen supported Deng's reform push during the early 1980s, he headed a faction within the leadership that increasingly sought to blunt the more radical reforms of 1986–88 and 1992–93. After the death of Ye Jianying and the illness of Li Xiannian in the late 1980s, Chen Yun was the only leader of enough stature to challenge Deng and the two increasingly became rivals in their later years.

Yang Shangkun. Another senior leader with whom Deng was particularly close was Yang Shangkun – at least until 1992–93 when Deng forced Yang to relinquish the state presidency and all military posts. Deng and Yang first met in 1932 in Ruijin, the capital of the Jiangxi soviet, and thereafter their careers closely paralleled one another. Both are Sichuan natives; both studied in Moscow (although Deng preceded Yang by a year); both served as political commissars in the Red Army during the Long March; both worked together on the Central Committee Secretariat during the 1950s (Yang was one of Deng's key deputies); both were purged in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution; and the two men have been bridge partners for many years. One of Yang's sons reportedly married one of Deng's daughters.

In 1979, with Ye Jianying's backing, Deng was responsible for Yang's rehabilitation and reinstatement to leading positions. Yang became a key ally of Deng's throughout the 1980s. They served as the two senior ranking members on the Central Military Commission (CMC) and together oversaw the restructuring of the PLA during the decade. With Deng's support, Yang succeeded Li Xiannian as President of the republic. The Deng–Yang combination was particularly vital in mobilizing the military to suppress the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989. Yang played a central part in overcoming opposition from other retired generals and senior commanders⁴⁸ and managing the logistical aspects of the crack-down.

Yang and his younger half-brother Yang Baibing subsequently capitalized on the Beijing massacre to build their own personal network of support in the armed forces. Yang Baibing oversaw the “cleansing of the

46. See David Bachman, *Chen Yun and the Chinese Political System* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, China Research Monograph No. 29, 1985); Nicholas Lardy and Kenneth Lieberthal (eds.), *Chen Yun's Strategy for China's Development: A Non-Maoist Alternative* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1983).

47. For a comparison and analysis of these differences see Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution: Reform After Mao* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings, 1987), particularly chs. 4–5.

48. See the 21 May 1989 letter addressed to Deng and the CMC and signed by Nie Rongzhen, Xu Xiangqian, Zhang Aiping, Ye Fei, Chen Zaidao, Yang Dezhi and others.

ranks,” court martials and intense indoctrination campaign following 4 June.⁴⁹ In the process, he moved many commanders and commissars into key central and regional military positions. Yang Baibing was reported to have convened several secret meetings of loyal commanders during the summer of 1992 to plan for the aftermath of Deng’s death, including (according to Hong Kong sources) a plot to “reverse the verdict” on the Tiananmen massacre by blaming it on Deng (which, of course, would be a correct interpretation). Sensing a power play, at the 14th Party Congress in October 1992 Deng stripped both Yangs of all their positions on the CMC and at the Eighth National People’s Congress in March 1993 Yang Shangkun was relieved of his post as state President. Thus, Deng turned on his old comrade when he sensed that Yang Shangkun was attempting to build a rival base of power in order to position himself to emerge as paramount leader in the post-Deng era. By stripping the Yangs of their commands and power, Deng played to a powerful constituency among military modernizers in the PLA, centred around Generals Zhang Aiping, Zhang Zhen and Yang Dezhi, and Admiral Liu Huaqing. Yet it remains to be seen whether the purge of the Yangs will be effective, as Yang Shangkun controls a powerful patronage network in the armed forces – and the Army will prove central in the succession struggle after Deng.⁵⁰

Tao Zhu. Another elite with whom Deng maintained close ties was Tao Zhu. They maintained good working relations during the 1950s and 1960s when Deng ran the Secretariat and Tao Zhu was Guangdong Party chief. During this time Deng also became well acquainted with Tao’s deputy Zhao Ziyang, and he put him in charge of the province when Tao Zhu was promoted to the Centre in 1965.⁵¹

Zhao Ziyang. Deng turned to Zhao Ziyang as Party leader following his ouster of Hu Yaobang in 1987, but their relationship goes back much earlier; in fact some circumstantial evidence dates it from the 1940s.⁵² Deng supported Zhao during the 1960s and has cultivated him as a potential successor at least since 1974 when he arranged Zhao’s transfer from Guangdong to Sichuan as provincial Party chief. Zhao used Sichuan as a laboratory to experiment with heretical agricultural and industrial reform policies. Some – such as the “three freedoms, one contract” (*sanzhi yibao*) agricultural responsibility system – had been favoured by both

49. For an analysis of Yang Baibing’s post-Tiananmen manoeuvrings see David Shambaugh, “The soldier and the state in China,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 127 (September 1991), pp. 527–568.

50. For an analysis of the post-14th Party Congress political equation and the impact of the Yangs’ purge, see David Shambaugh, “Losing control: the erosion of state authority in China,” *Current History* (September 1993), pp. 252–58.

51. For discussion of Deng’s and Zhao’s relationship see Shambaugh, *The Making of a Premier*, pp. 105–106, 118, 122. Some sources indicate that Deng was responsible for Tao’s elevation to the Centre in order to facilitate Zhao’s promotion. See Han Shanbi, *Deng Xiaoping zhuan*, Vol. II, pp. 256–57; and “Drag out Deng Xiaoping from the black den,” pp. 5–7.

52. Zhao Wei, *Zhao Ziyang zhuan (Biography of Zhao Ziyang)* (Hong Kong: Wenhua jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988), ch. 4.

Deng and Zhao during the early 1960s, but others – particularly industrial incentive systems – were new. Deng gave Zhao permission and political protection to experiment boldly at a time when neo-Maoist policies were still in vogue in Beijing. During Zhao's tenure in Sichuan Deng frequently visited to monitor the reforms and consult him.⁵³ Zhao's "production first" policies paralleled Deng's *laissez-faire* economic philosophy. The reforms were so successful they were dubbed "the Sichuan miracle"⁵⁴ and helped propel Zhao Ziyang to national prominence and appointment as Vice-Premier in 1979. This promotion could not have occurred without Deng's backing, although the success of Zhao's Sichuan policies helped overcome any resistance. A year later Zhao replaced Hua Guofeng as Premier of the State Council.

With this appointment it became clear that Zhao was one of Deng's two hand-picked successors. Deng's patronage of Zhao lasted until 1989 when the two clashed over the implementation of martial law. Zhao also made the tactical mistake of criticizing Deng in a public session with Mikhail Gorbachev, claiming that a secret Politburo ruling referred all major decisions to Deng – thus in effect passing the blame for economic overheating to his mentor. Zhao also opposed the harsh 26 April editorial that condemned the student demonstrations as "unpatriotic," which was specifically ordered and approved by Deng.⁵⁵ Zhao's real mistake, though, was to have been in power when open demands for democracy were made.

This is where Deng consistently drew the line throughout his career. With the exception of the 1978 Democracy Wall Movement when it temporarily served his political objectives, Deng never tolerated open advocacy of political liberalism, democracy or criticism of CCP political hegemony. Thus, for the second time in as many years Deng aborted his well-laid succession plans and sacked Zhao. Having done so, however, it is clear that Deng went to great lengths to protect Zhao from hardliners in the leadership who wished to punish him more severely.

Hu Yaobang. Deng's other hand-picked successor, Hu Yaobang, fell from power in early 1987 following the pro-democracy student demonstrations in December 1986. Deng had groomed Hu Yaobang considerably longer than Zhao Ziyang. Their relationship dated from 1937 when both were affiliated with the Resistance University (*Kang Da*) in Yan'an – Hu as a student and Deng as a young lecturer.⁵⁶ This teacher–student/patron–client relationship endured until 1987, and even then Deng ensured that Hu Yaobang's political career was not terminated by permitting him to retain his Politburo status. It was unusual in Chinese

53. Shambaugh, *The Making of a Premier*, ch. 6.

54. See "Zhao Ziyang's 'Sichuan Experience': blueprint for a nation," *Chinese Law & Government* (Spring 1982).

55. See "The making of the big lie: content and process in the Chinese propaganda system during 1989," *Chinese Law & Government* (Spring 1992), pp. 31–37.

56. See Yang Zhongmei, *Hu Yaobang: A Chinese Biography* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1988), p. 113.

Communist history for a purge not to consign an individual to political oblivion.⁵⁷

Deng's and Hu's careers intersected at several points after Yan'an. Hu served with Deng as political commissar in the Second Field Army that "liberated" south-western China. In fact, Hu Yaobang was personally responsible for northern Sichuan and oversaw the conquest of Deng's native village of Guang'an. Hu subsequently served in Sichuan under Deng's and Liu Bocheng's command until 1952 when he and Deng were transferred to Beijing at the same time.⁵⁸ Hu went on to a lengthy career as head of the Communist Youth League before being purged in 1967. Perhaps coincidentally, perhaps not, Deng and Hu were both rehabilitated in March 1973. As Deng set about structuring the "Four Modernizations" programme in 1975, he called upon Hu Yaobang to reconstitute the Academy of Sciences. Hu's September 1975 "Summary Report" on the Academy was the basis for the subsequent rehabilitation of thousands of researchers purged during previous campaigns and the assertion of "expertise" over "redness." A close working alliance for reform was forged. They shared a common purpose of rolling back the Cultural Revolution. Unfortunately, their work was abruptly interrupted by Zhou Enlai's death and Deng's subsequent dismissal. With Deng's return in 1977 Hu stood ready to assist him, and a decade-long partnership ensued.

Patrons, clients, colleagues and enemies. Thus, throughout his career Deng had two principal patrons – Mao and Zhou, with Mao by far the more longstanding and important one. Liu Bocheng also served as a patron of sorts during the civil war, which was important to Deng's cultivation of a career and power base in the armed forces.

Liu Shaoqi, Peng Zhen, Yang Shangkun, Peng Dehuai and Chen Yun must all be considered close colleagues of Deng's, though without the attributes of patronage. Later in their careers Chen Yun turned from colleague to competitor, but in retrospect their disagreements were more a matter of degree than substance. Similarly Deng's long-time ally Yang Shangkun also turned into a competitor of sorts, although much of the overt scheming against Deng must be credited to his half-brother Yang Baibing.

Throughout Deng's long career he also worked closely with numerous other central, provincial and military leaders. His position as Secretary-General of the Central Secretariat (and later General Secretary) during the 1950s and 1960s, and his position in the State Council and on the PLA General Staff and Central Military Commission during the 1970s and 1980s brought him into contact with virtually all senior state and Party leaders, provincial and military officials.

It is interesting to note that Deng had few real enemies during his

57. There are a few precedents for purged leaders retaining their Central Committee seats (e.g. Wang Ming, Peng Dehuai and Hua Guofeng), but only in pro forma fashion.

58. It is possible that Deng brought Hu to Zhou Enlai's attention at the time and arranged for his transfer to the capital.

career. This is not to say that he was not ruthless, as he did purge many and was responsible for numerous ruined careers from the 1942 Yan'an rectification to the 14th Party Congress and Eighth National People's Congress in 1992–93. But rivals, adversaries and enemies must be distinguished. Certainly Deng had many adversarial relationships, including at times with Mao, Lin Biao and Hua Guofeng, and he even had rather formidable disagreements with Chen Yun, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng and Jiang Zemin, but none can really be considered a political enemy. Certainly none approached the contempt he felt for Jiang Qing and her erstwhile ally Zhang Chunqiao.

Deng's true clients in the Party were Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. In the military Deng had a broad network of ties stemming from his Second Field Army connections. Xu Shiyou and Wei Guoqing were two of the most prominent, apart from Yang Shangkun, as they protected Deng in internal exile in the south during 1975–77. Jiang Zemin, Li Tieying, Zhu Rongji and Wang Zhaoguo must all be considered latter-day clients. Deng personally promoted them all. Indeed, individuals such as Qiao Shi and Li Ruihuan could not have risen to the top (nor could Li Peng have stayed there) without Deng's approval. But none of these was a client of Deng's in a true sense of the term. He did not cultivate them over time and each owed as much, if not more, personal loyalty to other senior elites. In a sense they all benefited from Deng's reform programme more than from Deng himself. Yet, as was the case under Mao, it is difficult to rise to the pinnacle of power without the blessing of the patriarch.

Deng's Institutional Power Bases

Deng did not rule through intimidation or coercion, terrorizing the populace with draconian security services (the 1989 Beijing massacre being the obvious exception). Nor did he lead the nation by great personal charisma, although he certainly possessed prestige and commanded respect. Nor did ideology serve as a tool of his leadership – his disdain for it was barely concealed. Deng's preferred *modus operandi* was to manoeuvre behind the scenes but, having taken a decision, to implement policy through established bureaucratic channels. In other words, he was a backroom politician who depended on Party institutions and Leninist norms to implement decisions. This was true throughout most of his career.

Unlike Mao, Deng was an organization man. For most of his career he worked in, and believed in working through, bureaucratic structures. Later in life, however, like Mao, he became frustrated with an organizational approach to rule and began to rely on the voluntarist impulses of the citizenry.

In 1991–92 Deng experienced the frustrations of being a retired patriarch. He encountered entrenched bureaucratic interests and designated successors who pursued their own agendas. Unable to kick-start economic reform through normal bureaucratic channels and seemingly surrounded by disloyal lieutenants, Deng adopted the Maoist approach of

taking his case straight to the people during his famous February 1992 Southern Sojourn (*nan xun*). By bringing pressure from below and reinjecting himself into the limelight, Deng trapped his opponents and seized back the political initiative. This leap-frogging technique was employed repeatedly by Mao in similar circumstances.

Despite his preference for institutional rule, like any leader Deng exhibited intolerance of bureaucratic inertia and incompetence. As Martin King Whyte's contribution to this volume makes clear, Deng championed meritocracy and streamlining of bloated bureaucracy. Deng's concept of "political reform" (*zhengzhi gaige*) was really one of *administrative* reform (*xingzheng gaige*). The devolution of decision-making power and removal of the state and Party bureaucracy from guiding economic activity was a centre-piece of his reform package. Deng was very supportive of Zhao Ziyang's 1984 and 1988 overhaul of the State Council apparatus, as well as Zhu Rongji's 1993 reforms. But it is important to keep in mind that these streamlining efforts were actually aimed at *strengthening* the bureaucracy, thereby enhancing the party-state's capacities, rather than dismantling the Leninist *apparat*.

Since Deng believed in leadership via organization, it must also be asked whether he used certain organizations to build a personal power base. Deng never worked in a functional ministerial system or in a mass organization like the Communist Youth League, but he did build power bases in the Party Secretariat and PLA for lengthy periods.

To head the Secretariat was an extraordinarily sensitive and powerful position. Information is an important source of power in a bureaucratic environment – and Deng had a near-monopoly on it. He had ultimate control over the ten functional departments of the Central Committee: propaganda, organization, united front work, finance and economics, industry and communications, rural work, foreign trade, investigation (i.e. intelligence), military affairs and international liaison (external Communist Party relations). This was a very powerful cluster of institutions. Deng had overall responsibility, assisted by the other members of the Secretariat⁵⁹ and the head of the staff office (Yang Shangkun). These were powerful individuals in their own right as each was responsible for a department and its constituent ministerial system (*xitong*), and each department functioned quite independently.⁶⁰ Each member thereby served as the "opening" (*kou*) in his assigned issue area to the Central Committee, Politburo and its Standing Committee. Still, from the Eighth Party Congress to the aftermath of the Great Leap the Secretariat was primarily a body for policy implementation (not formulation) and staffing. During these years (1956–62) its principal purpose was to process documents and disseminate policy decisions taken by Mao, the

59. After the Secretariat was reorganized at the First Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee and Deng was appointed General Secretary, the other secretaries were as follows: Peng Zhen, Wang Jiaxiang, Tan Zhenlin, Tan Zheng, Huang Kecheng, Li Xuefeng, Li Fuchun, Li Xiannian, Lu Dingyi, Kang Sheng and Luo Ruiqing. Alternate secretaries were Liu Lantao, Yang Shangkun and Hu Qiaomu.

60. Interview with Li Rui of the CCP Organization Department, 2 June 1993.

Politburo, its Standing Committee or the entire Central Committee via these departments, and to monitor implementation. The Secretariat liaised in particular with Party authorities and counterpart functional organs at the provincial level. In fact, Deng probably dealt as much with provincial Party secretaries as he did with other members of the Central elite. However, before the Eighth Party Congress and after the Great Leap, the Secretariat enjoyed a status equal to the Politburo Standing Committee; it was very much a policy-making organ.⁶¹

In the wake of the Great Leap debacle and Mao's "retirement to the second line" Deng began to assert himself as CCP General Secretary and the power of the Secretariat grew significantly. Deng supervised, via the Secretariat, the drafting of a comprehensive national development programme.⁶² These included the 60 Articles on People's Communes; 70 Articles on Industry; 14 Articles on Science; 35 Articles on Handicraft Trades; Six Articles on Finance; Eight Articles on Literature and Art; 60 Articles on Higher Education; and 40 Articles on Commercial Work.

It is true that various leaders were involved in this process, but Deng held the power of co-ordination. He took charge of the 60 Articles on Higher Education himself and had a significant input to the documents on commerce, finance, science, industry and communes. Taken together, these programmatic documents served as the basis not only for the recovery from the Great Leap but, more importantly, the relative exclusion of Mao from the policy process.

Deng, Liu, Zhou, Chen Yun, Bo Yibo, Peng Zhen, Li Fuchun, Li Xiannian, Zhou Yang and Lu Dingyi collectively took control of the Party and government. Deng's power and prestige definitely grew, but not disproportionate to others'. With Mao in the "second line" the leadership was remarkably collectivist. Deng worked well with his colleagues.

This is certainly not the picture of Deng's Secretariat portrayed by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. One diatribe claimed: "During the period Deng Xiaoping was in charge of work at the Secretariat of the Central Committee, he consistently monopolized power, made arbitrary decisions, and met Chairman Mao on equal terms without ceremony."⁶³ As noted above, Mao was particularly distressed about Deng's education programme. The 60 Articles on Higher Education proposed the restoration of academic degrees, titles, and salaries; the abolition of "absolute leadership of the Party" (*dang de juehui lingdao*) over institutions of higher learning; an end to class struggle in universities; and curtailment of Mao's work-study programme (*shixi*) for university faculty and students. The Chairman was also angry with the draft 60 Articles on People's Communes which sought to introduce the *sanzi yibao* ("three

61. I am indebted to Fred Teiwes on this point.

62. This discussion draws upon Kenneth Lieberthal, "The Great Leap Forward and the split in the Yan'an leadership," in Roderick MacFarquhar and John King Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 323–24.

63. "Ten major accusations against Deng Xiaoping," *Ba-er-wu zhanbao*, p. 15. This document is drawn from a speech given by Jiang Qing.

freedoms, one contract”) policy, change the basic accounting unit to the production brigade, and alter the size of communal mess halls. Mao countered with the “First Ten Points,” to which Deng and Liu Shaoqi responded with the “Second Ten Points.”

Indeed, the entire series of policy documents drafted under Deng’s aegis eventually drew Mao’s ire during the Cultural Revolution. Mao was troubled not only by the content of the documents, but by the fact that Deng, allegedly, did not consult him throughout the drafting process.⁶⁴ Deng evidently took the Chairman’s “retirement to the second line” too seriously.

When Deng was returned to power in the early 1970s he tended to work through the State Council and its constituent ministries and commissions. As ranking “first Vice-Premier” he set about reorganizing the State Council and promulgating a series of programmatic documents to guide national construction. In so doing he encountered stiff resistance from Jiang Qing and her minions.⁶⁵

Deng also used his positions as chief of PLA General Staff and Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission to use these bodies to overturn Lin Biao’s influence in the military. Indeed, as June Teufel Dreyer’s contribution illustrates, he had a strong constituency in the PLA. This was based on a network of personal ties growing out of the Second Field Army, as well as institutionally in the military–industrial complex.⁶⁶

After Deng outmanoeuvred Hua Guofeng and became paramount leader during the 1980s he came to rely more on individuals than institutions. During this time Deng tended to rule in traditional imperial fashion by making broad policy pronouncements, monitoring the overall progress of policy, but restricting his interventions to moments when his policies or political allies were flagging.

Territorial Power Bases

While Deng had bases of power among individuals and institutions, he did not possess a territorial power base during his career. Of course, he took great interest in his native Sichuan,⁶⁷ often making inspection tours of the province, and together with Liu Bocheng ruled the south-west from

64. Deng refutes this and states that prior to the Beidaihe meeting of July–August 1962 Mao expressed approval of these documents. Deng Xiaoping, “Talk with some leading comrades of the Central Committee, 1 April 1980,” *Selected Works*, pp. 280–81.

65. A detailed description of the Gang of Four’s manoeuvring and sabotage at this time (albeit a historically revisionist and, in places, inaccurate, account) can be found in Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, “*Wenhua da geming*” *shinian shi, 1966–76* (*A Ten-Year History of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–76*) (Tianjin: Renmin chubanshe, 1986), ch. 8.

66. Also see the excellent study by Michael Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession in China: Leadership, Institutions, Beliefs* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation Report R-4254-AF, 1992).

67. Deng did have close ties with Li Jingquan (who ruled Sichuan prior to the Cultural Revolution and held Politburo status) and to some extent served as Li’s patron during these years, but Li owed his position more to Marshal He Long, under whom he served in the First Field Army.

1949 to 1952,⁶⁸ but it cannot really be said that Deng derived power from this region. Similarly, when he was sent into internal exile in Guangdong and Guangxi from 1975 to 1977 he enjoyed the protection of regional military barons Xu Shiyou and Wei Guoqing, as well as Ye Jianying, but never developed a territorial base of power. Deng's power always derived from institutions and personalities at the Centre.

Deng as Paramount Leader

Deng's position as paramount leader never rivalled Mao's. Deng never sought the absolute authority that Mao possessed and wielded, as he was convinced that Mao's dictatorial style and cult of personality (*geren chongbai*) were the principal reasons China endured economic and political crisis for much of the period after 1957. "Generally speaking, Comrade Mao Zedong's leadership was correct before 1957, but he made more and more mistakes after the anti-rightist struggle of that year," Deng opined in 1980.⁶⁹ Much of Mao's workstyle troubled Deng deeply, and upon ousting Hua Guofeng and becoming China's paramount leader himself in 1982 he was committed to ruling differently.

The major difference between Mao and Deng as paramount leader was the manner in which they dealt with other leaders and subordinates. Deng's style was far more consensus-oriented and decisions were taken more collectively. This is partly because Deng tended to approach problems methodically and delved more deeply into the specifics of a case (induction), whereas Mao often sought to form policy from ideological doctrine in an arbitrary and dialectical fashion (deduction). "Seek truth from facts," was Deng's watchword. Another reason is that Deng was not afraid to delegate authority; that is what he had done throughout his career. Deng himself reflected on how he ran the Secretariat from 1956 to 1966, in a speech to the Fifth Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in 1980 (which resurrected the Secretariat): "I think it is fair to say that the former Secretariat of the Central Committee was quite efficient, partly because once the relevant decisions were made, specific tasks were assigned to particular persons, who were given broad powers and allowed to handle matters independently."⁷⁰ Mao, on the other hand, avoided delegating authority and always sought to retain key decisions in his own hands.⁷¹ To some extent Deng sought to make the key decisions –

68. For an excellent study of the south-west during this period see Dorothy J. Solinger, *Regional Government and Political Integration in Southwest China, 1949–1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

69. Deng Xiaoping, "Talk with some leading comrades of the Central Committee, 1 April 1980," *Selected Works*, p. 280.

70. Deng Xiaoping, "Adhere to the Party line and improve methods of work," *Selected Works*, p. 267.

71. See the description of this trait in Michel Oksenberg, "The political leader," in Wilson, *Mao Tse-tung in the Scales of History*, pp. 95–98.

particularly on foreign policy – but, on the whole, he broadly delegated authority.⁷²

Nor did Deng foster tensions among subordinates to test their loyalties as did Mao, and while Deng had to remove two groomed successors he did not have to fear that Hu Yaobang or Zhao Ziyang were trying to usurp his own power.⁷³ Deng knew who his enemies were and who opposed his policies, and he manoeuvred effectively to isolate and then overcome them. Deng's manoeuvring against Hua Guofeng, the "whateverists" and "Small Gang of Four" between 1977 and 1983 illustrated his methodical manner of overwhelming opposition. Sometimes more concerted action was called for, as in the cases of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. No doubt Deng fully concurred with Ye Jianying's forthright handling of the arrest of the Gang of Four, as he despised the Gang.⁷⁴

Thus, Deng learned much from Mao by negative example. Until his "retirement" in 1990 Deng remained engaged, whereas Mao was more detached and withdrawn from active participation in decision-making. Deng regularly read and commented on documents and met Party leaders (Mao did as well, but to a lesser extent). Deng insisted on being informed, sought and listened to conflicting opinions, and pressed briefers on details. In contrast, Mao's subordinates often remained silent in the Chairman's presence for fear of the consequences of speaking out. Deng insisted on precision and substance from his advisers, and Deng himself was not one to waste words.⁷⁵ Mao stopped attending regular Politburo meetings after 1959,⁷⁶ while Deng attended on occasion even into retirement. The Politburo and its Standing Committee were important institutions of rule to Deng, whereas Mao held disdain for them, considering them to be packed with enemies. Deng tried to ensure that they contained his allies. The Central Military Commission was also of great importance to Deng. He retained the chairmanship of the CMC until 1989, having served as a member since 1954.

There was, therefore, a certain collegiality, decisiveness and activeness

72. Zhao Ziyang's statement to Gorbachev that all major decisions were *referred* to Deng may have been correct, but that does not mean that Deng actually *made* the decisions.

73. Again, see Oksenberg's discussion of this propensity of Mao's, n. 71. In 1992 Deng reflected on the reasons for having to sack Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, "Two men failed, and they failed not because of problems in the economy but because they stumbled on the issue of opposing bourgeois liberalization." *CCP Central Committee Circular on Transmitting and Studying Comrade Deng Xiaoping's Important Remarks* (Central Document No. 2, 1992), Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report – China: Supplement* (hereafter *FBIS-CHI*), 1 April 1992, p. 6.

74. For an intriguing insider's account of Ye's arrest of the Gang of Four see Fan Shuo, *Ye Jianying zai 1976* (*Ye Jianying in 1976*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1990).

75. Here Deng and Mao are not dissimilar. Reflecting in 1992, Deng said: "When you turn on the television, the programmes are full of meetings. There are too many meetings, too many long articles, and too many long speeches.... We should speak less and do more. Chairman Mao did not like to hold long meetings, his articles were concise, and his speeches were to the point. Chairman Mao [once] instructed me to draft Premier Zhou's report to the Fourth National People's Congress. He set a word limit at under 5,000. I did it, 5,000 words. Was that not useful?" *FBIS-CHI*, 1 April 1992, p. 6.

76. Interview with CCP historian Liao Gailong, 25 June 1991, Beijing.

in Deng's workstyle that was absent in Mao's. Deng sought consensus when possible and was certainly more tolerant of dissenting opinions. In general Deng purged but protected his men; Mao attacked them. This was one of Deng's most enduring lessons from the Cultural Revolution. No colleague of Deng's met the fate that befell Gao Gang, Peng Dehuai, Luo Ruiqing, Tao Zhu or Liu Shaoqi. There was an intolerance of opposition in Mao that Deng did not share.⁷⁷ When Deng toppled Hua Guofeng, Hua was not pilloried in the press and there was no national campaign of criticism. When Hu Yaobang fell from power Deng insisted that he be permitted to retain his Politburo seat and voting rights. After Zhao Ziyang's fall Deng intervened to protect him from the hardliners who sought stiff punishment, and ensured that Zhao was not expelled from the Party. Indeed, Deng stood behind Zhao at several critical junctures during 1987–89 when Zhao and the radical reform programme came under attack from conservatives.

There were further differences between Mao and Deng. Mao never travelled abroad (except the two trips to the Soviet Union); Deng did so more frequently. Deng enjoyed talking to the foreign press; Mao did not. Mao made no effort to learn a foreign language; Deng knew French and apparently spent many years trying to learn English. Deng also received many more foreign visitors in Beijing. Deng had a far better grasp of the intricacies of world affairs and was much more tolerant of a foreign presence in China. Mao was suspicious of the West; Deng held a certain envy of it. Deng was no less nationalistic than Mao, as both were socialized with similar views of the need for a strong and dignified China, but Deng sought the West as an ally in this quest while Mao was more distrustful.

In their personal lives, Mao sought the symbolic trappings of power; Deng lived more frugally. Mao lived in the Zhongnanhai; Deng moved out. Abuse of official privilege was of concern to both Mao and Deng,⁷⁸ but it must be said that Deng tolerated degrees of corruption unimaginable during the Maoist era. Deng abhorred the Maoist personality cult (*geren chongbai*) and was determined not to start one of his own (although he assented to the publication of his own *Selected Works* and those of Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Chen Yun and Peng Zhen as well).⁷⁹ Mao kept concubines and ceased living with Jiang Qing in the 1950s, while Deng truly enjoyed family life with his numerous grandchildren. Deng played bridge and fraternized with his colleagues; Mao was a loner. Both enjoyed reading, and apparently both were devotees of the *Shi Ji* (*Records of the Historian*) and other classical Chinese writings.

77. Deng's philosophy of dealing with opposition and criticism is evident in "Strengthen Party leadership and rectify the Party's style of work," *Selected Works*, pp. 23–26.

78. See Deng's lecture on abuse of privilege in section 1 of "Senior cadres should take the lead in maintaining and enriching the Party's fine traditions," *Selected Works*, pp. 208–213.

79. With or without Deng's blessing, an outpouring of sycophantic works praising his achievements appeared after his 1992 Southern Sojourn, and his "thought" was officially proclaimed a "magic weapon" at the 14th Party Congress and enshrined in the CCP Constitution.

Thus there were numerous differences in leadership style between Mao and Deng. In comparing the two, differing modes of leadership have been examined out of the context of the national policy agenda. But no leaders – even paramount ones – operate in a vacuum. Leaders are, after all, chief executives and as such they shape the agenda of the nation.

Deng the Agenda Setter

There are different keys to power for politicians.⁸⁰ The importance of various power bases has been noted above. Controlling the substantive agenda of the nation is another source. To do this politicians must first have an agenda of their own. Deng certainly had one. It was centred on enhancing economic productivity and social vitality, and maximizing China's national security. However, Deng was no liberal. He sought to make China strong, but not democratic. He defined strength in demonstrable terms – economic productivity, technological prowess and military muscle. He believed that creative, entrepreneurial and productive forces could be unleashed (the Promethean impulse) without the concomitant loosening of political hegemony. On the contrary, Deng believed tight political control to be vital to achieve his economic goals. In this sense, he shares a view of modernization drawn from the experience of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and other newly industrialized countries (NICs).

The operative research question is not so much the *content* of Deng's agenda, which numerous studies have examined,⁸¹ but the manner in which he went about pursuing it. In substantive terms, the origins of Deng's reformist agenda in the 1980s and 1990s can be traced to the Liu–Deng–Chen Yun programme of the early 1960s. It was the series of

80. Power is one of the most extensively analysed yet elusive concepts in social science. In the Chinese context, we have examined several sources of power bases above; also see Lowell Dittmer, "Bases of power in Chinese politics: a theory and analysis of the fall of the Gang of Four," *World Politics* (October 1978), pp. 26–60. In international politics the Realist paradigm holds that power is the ability to *influence*. See, in particular, Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (many editions). In comparative politics, elite power has been defined in a number of ways. In a classic study Arthur Bentley also adopted an influence-based definition. See his *The Process of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908). Another classic view is that of Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, who define power as "participation in decision-making": *Power and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). This view gave rise to the bureaucratic politics paradigm of the 1960s which continues to hold some currency and is particularly pertinent to the study of Chinese politics. See, for example, Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Robert Dahl introduced a more pluralistic definition in which considerable competition exists over the control of the political agenda. See his *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Many scholars, particularly in the field of American legislative politics, have adopted and refined Dahl's approach, and it seems that an agenda-setting approach has unexplored utility for studying Chinese leaders' distribution of power.

81. Among the numerous studies on the Deng reforms see Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution: Reform After Mao* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings, 1987); Carol Lee Hamrin, *China and the Challenge of the Future* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); Gordon White, *Riding the Tiger: The Politics of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

documents promulgated under Deng's aegis – the 60 Articles, 70 Articles, 14 Articles, and so on – that served as the point of departure. Similarly, the three major policy documents produced under Deng's instruction in 1975 – which Jiang Qing labelled the “three poisonous weeds” – also helped to constitute the overall programme.⁸²

Of importance to this analysis is the fact that when he returned to power in 1977 Deng had a preliminary agenda for change. Much more needed to be fleshed out in due course, but the essentials were in place. So was Deng's mandate for change. Like a newly-elected President or Prime Minister, Deng enjoyed a popular mandate for sweeping reform. Many in China recognized that Hua Guofeng was not up to the task, and only Deng had the requisite combination of skills, vision and experience to move the nation.⁸³ There was an acute leadership vacuum in the wake of the death of Mao and arrest of the Gang of Four, and the Communist Party faced a severe crisis of legitimacy. The society was numbed by years of campaign politics, and permeated by a deep sense of alienation. The economy remained stagnant, frozen at 1957 levels of production, and was falling further behind the rapid growth of China's East Asian neighbours. In foreign affairs, China had opened a relationship with the United States but it was not consummated, lacking full diplomatic relations and the benefits that normalization would bring.⁸⁴ China continued to face a pressing military threat of conventional and nuclear proportions from the Soviet Union, and remained locked in hostilities with India and Vietnam.

Benefiting from this kind of implicit mandate, it was not difficult for Deng to seize, set and control the national agenda – particularly once he had disposed of Hua Guofeng, the “whateverists” and “Small Gang of Four.” Deng's aim of demolishing the Maoist edifice was essentially accomplished in three years, between 1979 and 1982. During this time Deng moved on many fronts to discredit the Cultural Revolution era and the beneficiaries of it.

Deng first set his sights on Hua Guofeng, Mao's chosen successor. At the Tenth Party Congress in August 1977 and National People's Congress of March 1978, Deng was more than pleased for Hua to reveal his unabashed loyalty to Maoism and naivety about economic growth (ironically Hua's target growth rates were very similar to Deng's own in 1992). Having exposed Hua, Deng then manoeuvred to outflank him on personnel and policy issues at the key Third Plenum of December 1978 and the preceding work conference. Several Deng allies were added to the

82. “Some Problems in Accelerating Industrial Development,” prepared by the State Planning Commission; “Outline Report on the Work of the Academy of Sciences,” prepared under the direction of Hu Yaobang and Hu Qiaomu; and “On the General Programme of Work for the Whole Party and Nation,” prepared by Deng Liqun and others.

83. On this point see the discussion in Roderick MacFarquhar, “The Succession to Mao and the End to Maoism,” in MacFarquhar and John King Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 388–393.

84. Deng closely monitored and personally engaged in the final round of negotiations in 1978 that led to Sino-American normalization. Interviews with knowledgeable officials in the U.S. and Chinese governments.

Politburo and Dengist ideas dominated the policy agenda to emerge from the Plenum. The agricultural responsibility system – already being successfully tested by Deng protégés Wan Li and Zhao Ziyang in Anhui and Sichuan provinces respectively⁸⁵ – was adopted as national policy and the decollectivization of agriculture was endorsed. “Class struggle” was replaced by “economic modernization” as the principal national goal. Deng also moved to take command of the armed forces (although Hua technically remained Chairman of the Central Military Commission) and began the process of comprehensive reorganization at a CMC meeting in December 1977. He also took the initiative to reassure intellectuals with an assertive speech to the National Science Conference in March 1978. It was in this speech that Deng served notice there would be no more Maoist-style political campaigns, that theoretical research should be unfettered by politics, and scientific exchanges with foreign countries would be a high priority – all at direct variance with Hua’s preferences.

Secondly, during 1979 Deng set about revamping the ideological legacy of Maoism and extracting retribution for Cultural Revolution excesses. The “two whatevers”⁸⁶ were denounced and replaced by Deng’s campaigns for “practice is the sole criterion of truth” and “Four Cardinal Principles.”⁸⁷ Deng’s attack on the “two whatevers” brought further pressure on Hua and his associates the “Small Gang of Four” (Wang Dongxing, Ji Denggui, Chen Xilian, Wu De). The Small Gang were removed from the Politburo at the Fifth Plenum. Hua now lacked any support among the leadership. Under Deng’s new principle of “the separation of Party and government” (*dang-zheng fenkai*), Deng forced Hua to give up his post of Premier of the State Council to Deng’s protégé Zhao Ziyang, and then the Party chairmanship to Deng’s other protégé Hu Yaobang (whom Deng had already moved on to the reconstituted Secretariat). Deng himself took Hua’s third post as Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission.

Thirdly, and simultaneous with the campaign to unseat Hua, Deng called to account the Gang of Four and vestiges of Lin Biao’s military clique by arranging a well-publicized show trial from November 1980 to January 1981. Although no doubt of some consolation to victims of the Gang, the trial more importantly represented a symbolic cleansing for the national body politic. Deng continued this process by rehabilitating – often posthumously – leading victims of the Cultural Revolution, and compensating those in society who had suffered so severely. Similarly, Deng and Hu Yaobang arranged for victims of the 1957 anti-rightist campaign to be “uncapped” more than 20 years after the event and permitted them to resume work. Deng also permitted Democracy Wall to

85. The use of experimental “test points” (*shi dian*) was a favoured method of Deng’s dating to the 1950s.

86. This was a slogan put forward by Hua that whatever Mao did or said should be adhered to.

87. Adherence to the socialist road, dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism–Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought. By relegating the latter to only one (and the last) of four elements, Deng dealt Maoist ideology a severe blow.

flourish in 1978–79, as it served his purposes in his struggle against Hua because the content of wall posters, publications and speeches all sharply criticized the Maoist era (from which Hua sought to draw legitimacy).

The last step in this cleansing process was the issuing of the *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China* at the Sixth Plenum of the Tenth Party Congress in July 1981. Deng personally oversaw the drafting of this document and several times expressed his dissatisfaction with the content of early drafts.⁸⁸ His goal was to strike a balance between preserving a positive legacy for “Comrade Mao Zedong” prior to 1957 and a negative one thereafter, without jettisoning the Great Helmsman altogether as Khrushchev had done to Stalin. As Deng told Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci in a 1980 interview: “We will not do to Chairman Mao what Khrushchev did to Stalin.”⁸⁹ The attempt to strike a balance was evident in the way the *Resolution* dealt with the Anti-Rightist campaign – in which Deng played no small part and specifically ordered its essential correctness affirmed.⁹⁰ The *Resolution* stated that “It was ... entirely correct and necessary to launch a resolute counter-attack. But the scope of this struggle was made far too broad and a number of intellectuals, patriotic people and Party cadres were unjustifiably labelled ‘rightists,’ with unfortunate consequences.”⁹¹

From late 1982 Deng then proceeded to roll back the core norms and policies of the Maoist era, together with fashioning new programmes in virtually all policy spheres. There were many hiccups along the way, and the reform programme demonstrated a distinct start-stop quality that paralleled a boom-bust cycle in the economy.⁹² There was resistance from entrenched bureaucratic interests as well as Politburo adversaries who disagreed about the pace and modalities of reform, but on the whole Deng and his principal allies dominated the national agenda throughout the remainder of the decade. At no time did Deng really lose control, and on occasions, such as in January 1987 and October 1988 to May 1989, he withdrew support from individuals (Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang respectively⁹³) in order to retain it.

88. See “Remarks on successive drafts of the ‘Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China’,” *Selected Works*, pp. 276–296.

89. *Selected Works*, p. 329.

90. *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (1975–82)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 258. I am indebted to Keith Forster for bringing this to my attention.

91. *Resolution on CPC History, (1949–81)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), p. 27.

92. The economic cycle was more one of expansion–retrenchment, with the latter phase being intentionally induced to cool off overheating, rather than a real business cycle.

93. In point of fact, Deng began to withdraw his support for both these successors nearly a year before their fall from power. In Hu’s case, by the middle of 1986 it became clear that he had offended Deng over his desire to accelerate the retirement *en masse* of the remaining elders on the Central Committee. Hu was also distrusted by the military high command. Deng apparently confronted Hu at an August 1986 Beidaihe work conference and at the subsequent Sixth Plenum in September. By the time student demonstrations erupted in December Hu’s fate was sealed. Similarly, in the case of Zhao Ziyang, Deng began to withdraw active support at the August 1988 Beidaihe work conference that led to the

When Deng sensed that the agenda had been captured or was being unduly influenced by others he adopted various tactics – some straightforward, some surreptitious – to regain control. Like Mao in similar circumstances, Deng knew that his best weapon was his personal prestige. He would venture into the public arena, make remarks that would become the new *tifa* of the time, have them published in the newspaper, aired on television and disseminated as Central Documents for study by all cadres.

Perhaps the best example of this tactic was in early 1992. Deng was discontented with the slow pace of economic reform and political dominance of what he termed “leftists,” and decided to try and recapture the agenda by visiting the Shenzhen and Zhuhai Special Economic Zones in January and February.⁹⁴ This was his first public appearance in over a year and, after initial blockage by his opponents (who controlled the propaganda apparatus) his trip was widely publicized in China and his comments made mandatory study for all. Deng’s foray into the south launched a fierce intra-leadership struggle leading up to the 14th Party Congress, but he succeeded in reorienting the national agenda and leadership more to his liking. It put pressure on Li Peng and other leaders who favoured a much more controlled approach to economic reform. It also put pressure on the PLA, a conservative institution not particularly in favour of accelerated reform. Deng knew that the PLA was the key player in his succession, and for good measure he took several leading active and retired military officials to the south with him.

Sometimes Deng would try to influence the agenda more indirectly via the media. In February 1990, in an effort to reignite reform in the midst of the post-Tiananmen crackdown, he arranged to have several reformist articles published in the Shanghai newspaper *Liberation Daily*. His intervention was short-lived however, as the conservative-controlled CCP Propaganda Department refused to replay them nationally. Deng had lost control of both the national agenda and his designated successors. Under such circumstances he was left with no alternative but to invest his personal prestige in his heralded Southern Sojourn.

At other times Deng would support individuals to regain control of the political agenda. In the spring of 1987 he intervened personally to shore up Zhao Ziyang and his programme for accelerated economic and political reform in the run-up to the 13th Party Congress. He knew Zhao lacked the personal clout to push a radical agenda through the Congress,

footnote continued

economic retrenchment programme. Despite his lack of open support for Zhao I do not think Deng was convinced that Zhao had to go until the spring of 1989. Zhao’s contradiction of the 26 April *People’s Daily* editorial, which Deng had explicitly authorized, in his speech to the Asian Development Bank and his wait-and-see attitude toward the student demonstrations was bad enough, but his statements to Gorbachev was the *coup de grâce* as far as Deng was concerned.

94. See Zhonggong Shenzhen shiwei xuanchuanbu (ed.), *Yijiernian chun: Deng Xiaoping yu Shenzhen (The Spring of 1992: Deng Xiaoping and Shenzhen)* (Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 1992); and David Shambaugh, “Regaining political momentum: Deng strikes back,” *Current History* (September 1992), pp. 257–261.

particularly at a time when the conservatives were in the ascent, and so lent his authority to Zhao.

Deng was, to some extent, vulnerable to his ideological critics – Wang Zhen, Deng Liqun, Hu Qiaomu – who repeatedly railed against the “erroneous tendencies” that had cropped up as a result of reforms, such as crime, corruption and dissent. Deng never failed to endorse their campaigns. This shows some tactical manoeuvre on his part, but is more indicative of his own intolerance of political liberalism.

Early on Deng established his limits for political and ideological expression in his 1979 speech “Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles.”⁹⁵ Yet he personally put political reform on the national agenda in 1980 with his speech “On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership” (which he essentially defined as *administrative* reform).⁹⁶ Less than a year later Deng ordered the closing of Democracy Wall after posters began to call for Western-style democracy, and he ensured that Wei Jingsheng received a stiff 15-year sentence for advocating a “fifth modernization.” In 1983 Deng launched the inner-Party rectification campaign against Cultural Revolution beneficiaries (the “three kinds of people” or *san zhong ren*⁹⁷) Simultaneously (at the Sixth Plenum), Deng endorsed the campaign against “spiritual pollution.” Within two months he had quietly withdrawn his endorsement of the campaign, but still endorsed Hu Qiaomu’s attack on the proponents of “humanism” and “alienation” in 1984.

In 1986 Deng thought it a propitious time to push for further political reform.⁹⁸ He again began calling for “political structural reform” – the separation of Party and government (*dang-zheng fenkai*).⁹⁹ But with the outbreak of student demonstrations in December Deng once more shifted his position, sacking Hu Yaobang as CCP General Secretary and expelling dissident intellectuals Fang Lizhi, Wang Ruowang, Liu Binyan, Wu Zuguang and others from the Communist Party. By late spring 1987 Deng was again speaking of political reform, and he supported Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili in reviving the *dang-zheng fenkai* discussions. The separation of Party and government was subsequently placed as a top

95. *Selected Works*, pp. 166–191.

96. *Selected Works*, pp. 302–325.

97. “Beaters, smashers, and looters” during the Cultural Revolution.

98. At a meeting of provincial governors in April Deng called for renewed attention to “reform of the political structure.” In June he instructed the Central Committee Secretariat to formulate concrete political reform proposals. See Deng Xiaoping, “Reform the political structure and strengthen the people’s sense of legality,” *Fundamental Issues in Present Day China*, pp. 145–48. This endorsement of Deng’s led to a summer-long series of political reform seminars and formation of a leadership small group under the direction of Hu Qili, until the conservatives counter-attacked at the August Beidaihe work conference. For details of the debate see Cheng Hsiang, “News From Beidaihe,” *Wen Wei Po*, 8 August 1986, in *Summary of World Broadcasts: Far East*, 12 August 1986, pp. B2–4. In the wake of the Beidaihe meeting it is unclear whether Deng backed Zhao Ziyang’s formation of the Political Structure Reform Office under the Central Committee in October 1986 or whether he began to withdraw his support.

99. On Deng’s support for a new round of political structural reform, see Hou Dongtai, “Deng Xiaoping he zhengzhi tizhi gaige,” *Da Gong Bao* (Hong Kong), 16 July 1986, pp. 5–7.

priority in Zhao Ziyang's report to the 13th Party Congress in October 1987.¹⁰⁰

Deng's views of the Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989 are clear enough. From his meeting with Yang Shangkun and Li Peng on 25 April to his 6 June speech, he took decisive and drastic action.¹⁰¹ For Deng, the demonstrations represented a direct threat to the survival of the CCP and PRC. No doubt memories of Cultural Revolution anarchy were also present in his mind. To save the party-state required firm and intimidating action. At first Deng watched as his designated successors factionalized and proved indecisive. Then he took matters into his own hands. He rallied the remnants of the Old Guard, mobilized the main force units of the PLA (with the assistance of Yang Shangkun), and called in the tanks.

Following Tiananmen Deng initially acquiesced to the ideologies and hardliners, yet by 1991 showed signs of frustration with the conservative leadership.¹⁰² This was expressed in various ways, but ultimately in his Southern Tour. Deng's decision to emerge from retirement to re-energize the reform process had much to do with the lessons he drew from the collapse of Soviet and East European Communism. Deng apparently concluded that Communist rule crumbled in these countries because it had failed to deliver the goods, because political reform advanced ahead of economic reform, and because the regimes concerned did not have adequate control over their militaries and security services. Deng decided that for the CCP to survive, the material well-being of the populace must be rapidly improved; political reform must be postponed and the formation of any groups that could challenge the hegemony of the Communist Party must be suppressed; and the absolute loyalty of the military to the Party must be ensured.

Thus, in terms of agenda-setting, Deng Xiaoping demonstrated different strategies and tactics throughout his career. At times – during the 1950s and 1960s – he tended to work within and through central Party and state institutions, although he became quite assertive in 1963–64. In the mid-1970s, with the blessing of Premier Zhou and Chairman Mao, he gained an authority and independence he did not possess before the Cultural Revolution. During the 1980s and 1990s Deng employed a combination of these and other tactics. Generally speaking, though, Deng controlled the national agenda through classic balancing tactics.¹⁰³ Deng bargained through balancing, and vice versa. His proclivity was to

100. Zhao Ziyang, "Advance along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics," *Documents of the Thirteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1987), pp. 42–60. I am indebted to Fan Cheuk Wan's analysis of this period; Fan Cheuk Wan, "Reform to separate Party and government: an abortive attempt to undermine Party domination over the state between 1986 and 1989," M. A. seminar paper, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992.

101. *Cf.* n. 55.

102. For an analysis of this period see Shambaugh, "Regaining political momentum: Deng strikes back"; and David Shambaugh, "China in 1991: living cautiously," *Asian Survey* (January 1992), pp. 19–31.

103. For a useful discussion of this propensity see Harding, *China's Second Revolution*, pp. 90–93.

support radical reform, and he would push it when he could, but Deng's pragmatism more often made him occupy the middle ground.

By adopting varying leadership styles Deng has acted not unlike other politicians. Compromise and coalition building are necessary parts of the political process. So is bureaucracy; bureaucracies implement policies, but they also sabotage them. A leader needs to work through institutions, but also needs to circumvent them at times. Institutions create paperwork, and much of the governmental process is consumed with drafting and promulgating documents. Making speeches, using the power of the press and making forays into public to take one's message to the masses are standard devices for political agenda-setting in most countries. Deng has proved Chinese politics not very different in these respects.

Conclusion

In summarizing the political style of Deng Xiaoping, it may be instructive to recall the typology of leadership offered in 1978 by American political scientist James MacGregor Burns.¹⁰⁴ Burns elaborated nine distinct leadership styles, but argued that they clustered into two principal types: transformational and transactional. Transformational leaders, Burns argued, seek to transform society through ideas. They are generally intellectuals who pursue an ideological agenda of comprehensive social reform. Revolutionaries are one sub-type of transformational leader, and Burns – writing before Deng's ascendance – was quick to note the inclusion of Maoist China in this category. He observed that leaders of developing countries were often of the transformational type.

Burns found transactional leadership, on the other hand, to be more rooted in developed polities. Transactional leaders fit within a structural–functionalist interest aggregation model where public opinion is mobilized, interest groups act as a two-way channel for communicating political interest, and political parties aggregate diverse public interests and convey them to government for conversion into public policy.

Just as with Mao Zedong, the transformational leadership model helps to describe and understand Deng Xiaoping's leadership style and political behaviour. This probably says more, however, about the nature of the Chinese political system than it does about Deng. While opinion clusters, interest groups, and intra-governmental bargaining certainly exist in China, and Deng Xiaoping's reforms have done much to stimulate the rise of rudimentary civil society (and hence the public sphere approach to studying Chinese politics), China remains a developing country. China is an unparalleled political mass, excepting perhaps India. To “move a nation” (to quote John F. Kennedy) transformational leadership is required. As the East Asian experience has shown, the state can be a powerful force for socio-economic change if its leadership has a strong mandate, clear agenda and motivated working class. Deng had all three.

By initiating economic reform, however, Deng Xiaoping unleashed

104. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

powerful centrifugal forces that threaten to overwhelm the Communist party-state he sought to preserve. Deng studied the East Asian developmental model carefully, but learned incomplete lessons. He did not, or refused to, recognize the inevitable political pressures that well up from below as a result of economic growth and wealth accumulation. These inexorably breed popular demands for meaningful political participation and an improved quality of life (in, for example, environment, education, health care). To accommodate these demands devolution of political power is necessary, leading in time to an erosion of the hegemony of the party-state and the beginnings of democracy. Deng failed to recognize this linkage, and failed to create the institutional mechanisms for improved political participation. It is the most vexing problem he will bequeath to his successors. In the end, Deng failed to grasp the most fundamental of all Marxist precepts – the influence of the economic base on the political superstructure – and his successors may have to pay dearly for this obstinacy.