No. 69 (25/97) CPPS

RESTRUCTURING THE PARTY/
STATE RELATIONS: CHINA’S POLITICAL
STRUCTURAL REFORM IN THE 1980s

by

Dr. Yiu-chung Wong

Faculty of Social Sciences
Lingnan College
Hong Kong
September 1997
RESTRUCTURING THE PARTY/
STATE RELATIONS: CHINA’S POLITICAL
STRUCTURAL REFORM IN THE 1980s

CAPS and CPPS Working Papers are circulated to invite discussion and critical comment. Opinions expressed in them are the author's and should not be taken as representing the opinions of the Centres or Lingnan College. These papers may be freely circulated but they are not to be quoted without the written permission of the author. Please address comments and suggestions to the author or the series editors.
Dr. Yiu-chung Wong is University Lecturer of Department of Politics and Sociology, Lingnan College, Hong Kong.

Faculty of Social Sciences
Lingnan College
Tuen Mun
Hong Kong
Tel : 2616 7429-32
Fax : 2591 0690
Restructuring the Party/state Relations: China's Political Structural Reform in the 1980s

by

Dr. Yiu-chung Wong

Department of Politics and Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
Lingnan College, Hong Kong

August 1997
Introduction

This paper deals with the political structural reform policies introduced or initiated by the reformists within the CCP starting in the late 1970s until the 4 June brutal crackdown in 1989. I shall discuss, first, the evolution of the notion of political structural reform in the first half of the 1980s. Second, I shall delineate the substance of the political reform policies and the implications of these policies. Third, the limitations of these reform measures will be analysed. The reform measures will be categorized into five areas that will become the focus of my study: a) democratizing the Party/state apparatus and political process; b) arranging for smooth succession; c) streamlining the Party/state bureaucracy; d) strengthening the NPC; e) liberalizing intellectual life.

The Notion of the Political Structural Reform

The Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee (CC) was a turning point in the history of the PRC. It marked the prevalence of Deng Xiaoping's politics of modernization. With the death of Mao and the collapse of the radical clique in the Party in 1976, China was geared

---

1 It is difficult to distinguish different meanings conveyed by the term "political structural reform". The malleability and subtlety of the Chinese language also allow different interpretations in different contexts even using the same term (Baum 1994:12-4). It is important to take into consideration the overall political context in which the Chinese official announcements are made or the documents are issued. Very often one has to read "beyond the lines" in order to understand the actual references. The term "political structural reform" is a case in point. For Western sinologists, political structural reform always leads to a system of multi-party politics. Anything short of this would be discounted (Overholt 1993; Shirk 1993). But the Chinese reformists consider that any measures changing the Maoist system and facilitating modernization could be called political structural reform. It does not have to lead to pluralistic politics. In fact, nearly all the CCP top leaders, regardless of reformist or conservative, emphasize the inappropriateness of the transplant of the Western Political system to Chinese soil (Deng Xiaoping 1993; Hu Yaobang 1982; Jiang Zemin 1992; Zhao Ziyang 1987b).
towards a new era. Deng himself was rehabilitated for the third time in 1977. From his rehabilitation to the opening of the Third Plenum at the end of 1978, Deng was able to manoeuvre to corrode the power base of Hua Guofeng. By the time the Third Plenum was held, though Hua still occupied the three key posts in the Party/state, namely chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission (CMC), and state premier, his capacity to shape the political agenda of the Party had drastically diminished.

The communique of the Third Plenum endorsed the decision of shifting the focus of the CCP work to socialist modernization. The Plenum called on

the whole Party, the army and the people of all nationalities to work with one heart and one mind, enhance political stability and unity, mobilize themselves...pool their wisdom and efforts and carry out the new Long March to make China a modern, powerful socialist country before the end of this century (ZZWY 1987:5).

The Plenum discussed the need to free one's mind from benben zhuyi (dogmatism or fundamentalism), to seek truth from facts and to correct the erroneous Party decisions made in the Cultural Revolution (CR). It urged the whole Party to implement the genuine system of "democratic centralism", so that open discussions on important issues between Party senior cadres and the rank-and-file would become possible. In the areas of economic and industrial management, the Plenum criticised the phenomena of bureaucratism and the overlapping roles of the Party cadres and government officials. These suggestions were incorporated, two years later, into the political structural reform package enunciated by Deng to be implemented in the 1980s.
However, the term political structural reform was not mentioned in the Third Plenum and the communique used the term *shangceng jianzhu de gaige* (reform in the superstructure) (*ZZWY* 1987:4). The CCP at that time was still in the shackles of Maoist ideocracy. Marxist and Maoist terminology still dominated political discussions. Soon afterwards, the CCP shifted to a more precise term that denoted the wide-ranging issues that popped up in the reform process. The term *gaige he wanshan shehui zhuyi zhengzhi zhidu* (reform and perfecting socialist political system) was used on different occasions by Ye Jianying (1979), Hu Yaobang (1981), and Deng Xiaoping (1983:180). In his seminal speech on the political structural reform in August 1980 (*Deng Xiaoping* 1984:302-25), which was widely regarded as the most comprehensive political reform blueprint in the 1980s, Deng used the term *gaige dang he guojia lingtao zhidu* (reform of the Party and state leadership system).

In a speech addressing the issues of reform on a forum of the CCP Central Military Commission (CMC) in 1982, Deng used another term to denote the sweeping reform process that was undergoing at that time. The term he used was *tizhi gaige* (structural reform) (*Deng Xiaoping* 1984:386). In an important speech on Labour Day 1985, Hu Qili, a member of the Standing Committee (SC) of the CCP Politburo, used a more comprehensive term *zhengzhi gaige* (political reform) (Li Yongchun, Si Yuanqin, and Guo Xiuzhi 1987:6).² It was not until the second half of 1986 that the CCP gradually converged on the usage of the term *zhengzhi tizhi gaige* (political

---

²In this paper, I shall use the terms "political reform" and "political structural reform" interchangeably.
structural reform). In a series of meetings with foreign dignitaries in 1986, Deng (1993:176-80) was the first senior leader who raised the notion of political structural reform. From then on, the whole CCP leadership adopted the same term in all the official announcements and Party documents. Zhao Ziyang's Government Work Report (1987a) in 1987 adopted the term and his political report delivered, in the capacity of the acting general secretary of the CCP, in the Thirteenth CCP Congress devoted a whole section on the "reform in the political structure" (1987b). Li Peng replaced Zhao Ziyang as premier in the First Session of the Seventh NPC in 1988. In his first Government Work Report (1989), Li Peng used the same term. In his Government Work Report in 1990, Li Peng did not discard the term even after the suppression of the prodemocracy movement in 1989, but the political structural reform policies, in the aftermath of colossal shakeup at the CCP leading organs, had been drastically altered.  

Unlike the economic reform, particularly that in the urban sectors, which lacks a comprehensive plan, the reformists seemed to have a general idea of what the political structural reform covers but they lacked a common term to denote what they had in mind in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The political references have been quite consistent since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CC. Basically, the political structure reform includes these aspects: a) to improve the Party and state leadership style; b) to improve the state structure; c) to reform the administrative and management system; d) to reform the cadre personnel management system; e) to democratize political and legal institutions; f) to strengthen the Party/state monitoring mechanisms; g) to  

---

3Due to space, this paper will not discuss the extent to which the political structural reform policies changes after the 4 June massacre.
democratize the Party’s decision-making process (Li Yongchun, Si Yuanqin, Guo Xizhi 1987:7).

In sum, the aim of the political structural reform in the 1980s was to restructure or reorganize the Party/state polity.

The Rationale of the Political Structural Reform

The Dengists encountered a multiple crisis situation after the death of Mao and the downfall of the “Gang of Four”. The consequence of the crises was the serious erosion of legitimacy for the CCP Party/state. More than once did Deng (1983:352) say that without reform, the CCP and PRC would have perished. The economic and political reforms were aimed at rescuing the Party, to enhance the prestige and the governing capacities of the Party, thereby restoring the authority or legitimacy of the Party/state. The CCP put forward the "self-rejuvenating" thesis which basically argues that the introduction of the political reform is to strengthen and improve the socialist political system. Another thesis that argues for the necessity or inevitability of the political reform. The "economic-reform-induced" thesis argues that as economic reform deepens, the complementary political reform must proceed in tandem. This view is shared widely by both Western and Chinese academics on Chinese politics (Chen Zimin 1992; Gordon White 1993a; Harding 1987; Li Shengping 1989; Su Shaozhi 1982; Yan Jiaqi 1992a). The argument is certainly valid to some extent. However, the validity of the argument depends on the meaning or substance

---

4The relationship between economic marketization and political democratization is a complicated problem. The general consensus among political scientists is that marketization will bring about liberalization which will in turn will furnish a fertile ground for political democratization. However, there is no necessary relationship between marketization or liberalization and democratization.
of the political structural reform one adopts. If it means the reform of the Party/state structure within the CCP one-Party rule to make it more efficient, it certainly is valid. If it means to create a multi-party polity, as in Western democracy, it is questionable.

After the initial success in the countryside, the economic reform was extended to the urban sectors or industrial sectors in 1984 (CCCP 1984). It was then that the reform process became more complex and necessitated the corresponding restructuring of the Party and government apparatus which had, until then, controlled all the educational institutes, factories, enterprises, production plants and other social organizations. The most authoritative argument of this view was put forward by Zhao Ziyang who was considered to be the chief engineer of China's reform decade before his downfall (Deng Xiaoping was to be the chief architect). He argued (1994):

In practice, I increasingly feel that the economic reform and political reform should be launched more or less at tandem. If the political reform lags too behind, the economic reform can hardly go on and that would give rise to many socio-political problems. Initially, I thought that if the standard of living for the people is raised, people would be satisfied. Society then would be stable. In reality, on the contrary, as the standard of living and cultural level are upgraded, their political participatory consciousness would be heightened as well. If the political institutions fail to catch up, society would not be stable.\(^5\)

\(^5\)The true identity of this speech has not yet been established. The speech is said to have been delivered by Zhao Ziyang in the Fourth Plenum of the Thirteenth CC held on 23/24 June 1989 in defense of his handling of the June 4 prodemocracy movement. The same Plenum stripped Zhao of all his Party posts including the posts of general secretary of the CCP and the first vice-chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission. The Shanghai Party chief Jiang Zemin was elevated to the post of general secretary. Judging from the contents of the speech, I personally believe that it may well have been written by Zhao but it is extremely unlikely that the CCP leadership would let Zhao deliver the speech in a CC meeting, after Zhao was declared to have committed "serious mistakes". A controversy broke out as regarding the author of the speech in Hong Kong after its publication in Economic Journal on 4 June 1994 (Open July 1994:15-6).
However, I would argue that these two theses were applicable to different periods of the political structural reform in the 1980s. There were two tides of political structural reform measures from the late 1970s to the end of the 1980s. The "self-rejuvenating" thesis was the dominant theme in the first tide of the political reform in 1981/82, while the "economic-reform-induced" thesis was applicable in the second tide of the reform in 1986/87. I would argue that for the first tide, Deng’s emphasis was on the institutionalization of the CCP political and legal institutions, a reform move that was necessary to prevent the cult of Mao from happening; while the second tide was more economics-related, which means the political structural reform measures were envisaged in order to deepen economic reform.6

The Political Structural Reform Policies

Deng’s widely-known speech on the reform of the Party and state leadership in an expanded CCP Politburo meeting in 1980 laid out the causes, problems, and measures of the political reform for the CCP Party/state structure. From 1980 to the Thirteenth CCP Congress in 1987, the reformists attempted to implement the measures outlined in Deng’s speech. In his speech, Deng outlined the goals of the political reform and attacked the grave defects of the CCP Party/state polity, probing as well into the causes of these defects. According to Deng (1984:304), the long term goal of the political reform is to realize the superiority of the socialist system and speed up China’s modernization. Three objectives must be achieved in order to realize this goal. First, in the

6Though Harding (1987) argued, correctly, that two waves of political structural reform occurred in the 1980s, he failed to distinguish the essential difference between these two waves.
economic arena, productive force must be rapidly developed so as to improve the standard of living of the common people. Second, in the political arena, socialist democracy must be practised and the rights of political participation of the people must be protected, thus their rights to manage state affairs are ensured. A political system marked by stability and unity must be created, without which, Deng stressed, four modernizations cannot be materialized. Third, in the organizational arena, a large number of young and energetic cadres must be trained and brought to the key positions in the modernization process.

Deng singled out the problem of bureaucratism for his most scathing remarks. The phenomena of over-concentration of power, patrimonialism, nepotism, life tenure system and special privileges of the cadres were also heavily criticised by him. In a widely-quoted paragraph, Deng (1984:310) listed the problem of bureaucratism as manifested in the following aspects:

Standing above the masses, abusing power; divorcing oneself from reality and the masses;...indulging in empty talks; sticking to a rigid way of thinking; being hidebound by convention; overstaffing administrative organs; being dilatory, inefficiency and irresponsible; failing to keep one's word; circulating documents endlessly without solving problems; shifting responsibility to others;...suppressing democracy, deceiving superiors and subordinates, being arbitrary and despotic, practising favouritism, offering bribes, participating in corrupt practice in violation of the law, and so on.

The political structural reform was meant to cure these defects. However, Deng (1984:317) admitted that the problem of bureaucratism was intimately connected with the Party's highly centralized management system, which the CCP regarded as essential in a socialist political and economic system, and the remnant influences of China's traditional highly bureaucratized political
structure. The reformists accepted the fact that China’s three-thousand-year old feudalist elements still exercised a powerful impact over contemporary China.⁷

Deng (1984:311) also attacked the indiscriminate concentration of political power over the Party committees in the name of strengthening the Party leadership in the past three decades, especially in the era of the CR. Very often the overconcentration of power in the Party committees was turned into personal dictatorship that completely ruined intra-Party democracy and distorted the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibilities. The life tenure system was attributed to the Soviet model of socialist development, and the warring political environment in which the CCP seized power. The first generation of revolutionary veterans were in their 40s and 50s when they established the People’s Republic of China (PRC).⁸ They were busy consolidating their power base, and to think of retirement was certainly unrealistic. By the 1960s, the succession crisis began to unfold, and in fact, one of the goals of the CR for Mao was to breed loyal and competent successors to the revolutionary regime he created. He brought into the core of the CCP

---

⁷It is interesting to observe the CCP’s stance on feudalism and capitalism. In the course of the ten-year reform in the 1980s, the reformists very often took feudalism as an object of attack when they introduced political reform, as Deng’s speech in 1980 and Zhao Ziyang’s political report in 1987. In both speeches, feudalistic remnants were attacked and listed as two of the main causes that contributed to the formation of bureaucratism in the CCP Party/structure (the other factor being the war time influence during the 1930s and 1940s). The conservatives’ counter-offensives often took the form of attacking “bourgeois liberalization”, as in 1983, 1987, and 1989. In Western countries, “left” symbolises the progressive and anti-establishment attitude, while "right" supports the status quo. On the contrary, being a Marxist-Leninist regime, leftists in China struggle to preserve the existing political structure, while rightists try to shake up the system, both economically and politically. Thus, paradoxically, leftist becomes rightist and vice versa. Indeed, the concepts of right and left in politics are as relative as they are in spatial position. About the meaning of "left" and right, see also Tsou Tang (1986:XI-XLI).

⁸The age of the leaders in 1949 was as follows: Mao, 56; Liu Shaoqi, 51; Deng Xiaoping, 45; Zhou Enlai, 51; Zhu De, 63; Chen Yun, 53; Peng Zhen, 47; Ye Jianying, 52; Yang Shangkun, 42; Peng Dehuai, 51; He Long 53; Chen Yi, 48; Lin Biao, 43; Liu Bocheng 57; Li Xiannian, 40. They were septuagenarians or octogenarians, if still alive, by the end of the 1970s.
leadership some of the younger members, such as Wang Hongwen and Yao Wenyuan, who became the vice-chairman and CCP Politburo member respectively. The post-Mao reform dethroned Mao's line and imprisoned his radical supporters. Deng understood entirely that the succession crisis had loomed larger than ever when he returned to power the third time in 1977. One of the key components of his reform initiatives was to resolve the succession crisis and to arrange a smooth transition.

Haunted by the personal experiences of victimization and arbitrary political persecution during the CR, the main thrust of Deng's speech was on the institutionalization of the post-Mao reform. This was shown clearly in Deng's answer to a question posed by the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci as how to prevent the repetition of the CR. Deng's definitive answer (1984:330) fell unequivocably onto the restructuring of the Party/state institutions and establishment of "sound system". Deng (1984:316) argued:

It is true that the errors we made in the past were partly attributable to the way of thinking and style of work of some leaders. But they were even more attributable to the problems in our organizational and working systems. If the systems are sound, they can place restraints on the actions of bad people; if they are unsound, they may hamper the efforts of good people or indeed, in certain cases, may push them in the wrong direction. Even so great a man as comrade Mao Zedong was influenced to a serious degree by certain unsound systems and institutions, which resulted in grave misfortune for the Party....Stalin gravely damaged socialist legality, doing things...would have been impossible in the Western countries like Britain, France and the United States.

In pointing out that the Western institutionalized polity would not have produced the CR-style disaster, Deng attached a particular importance to the institutionalized factors. As pointed out
earlier, the primary focus of the first wave of the political reform in the early 1980s was to establish strong or sound zhidu (institution or system) or zhiduhua (institutionalization). A wide range of measures were taken in the 1980s, in particular in the early governance of Hu Yaobang, i.e. before 1983. I shall investigate the reform measures in politics in the following five aspects:

a) Democratizing the Party/state Apparatus and Political Process

One of the most important political reform measures in reducing the power of the CCP and democratizing the political machinery, thereby lossening its grip over the government apparatus is to separate the functions and responsibilities of the Party cadres and government officials. China has been a one-party dictatorship country since 1949. Despite occasional relaxation of the totalistic control over society in the past four decades, in particular in the post-Mao reform era, the domination of the CCP over domestic politics is not questioned, and indeed can not be challenged. Whether the CCP exercises control in the name of "proletarian dictatorship" as in the CR or "people's dictatorship" as in the 1950s and 1980s is relatively unimportant. The CCP controls the country through the government ideological and coercive apparatus. Therefore, there exist in fact "two governments" in the PRC (Li Shengping 1989:32-5). The dual structures exist side by side, with the government institutions totally subordinated to the Party machinery. In the tumultuous period of the CR, the two sets of apparatuses were virtually paralysed, with most of the senior

---

9 According to modernization theory, institutionalization is defined as "a process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability." The level of any political system can be measured by the adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence of the organizations and procedures (Hunntinton 1968:12).
party leaders being purged. Mao ruled the whole country and gave his instructions through the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and extra-constitutional institutions such as the Central Cultural Revolution Group, headed by Kang Sheng, with his wife Jiang Qing as the deputy. Lin Biao, the defense minister, became the second in command in the Party/state.

Moreover, a PRC government unit or department is subjected to two kinds of leadership in the PRC political system: a higher hierarchical government unit or department and the Party committee of the equivalent rank. Alternatively, the government apparatus is always subordinated to the Party structure (Xie Qingkui 1991:107-8). Subsequently, the dual structures have bred bureaucratic confusion, wasteful spending and red tape. In launching the modernization drive, the CCP cannot afford to preserve the things as they are. On the one hand, as Deng criticised, the substitution for or replacement of the government functions by the Party has made the government apparatus redundant; on the other hand, the Party leaders have been immersed in running day-to-day affairs, neglecting the general policy direction of the Party/state. Bureaucratism and inefficiency have blotted the authority of the CCP and have caused the inevitable expansion of bureaucracy (Deng Xiaoping 1984:303-4).

A series of measures were introduced to implement Deng's grand design of the political structural reform. The foremost priority is to separate the functions of the Party/state. The separation of the functions of the Party and government involves the following aspects: first, to place the activities of the CCP members within the laws of the state. The privileges of the Party members cannot not be tolerated, and they should be treated as ordinary people. Alternatively, the
CCP members do not have extra-legal power and they must comply with the state Constitution. The Certain Regulations about the Political Life Within the Party passed on the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh CC in February 1982 specifically stipulated that "Before the Party rules and state law, everyone is equal, the Party will not allow any Party members to go beyond the law and Party rules" (ZZWY 1987:180). Second, in Deng's view (1984:346) it is essential to delimit and clarify the responsibilities and obligations of the Party officials, so that the Party cadres would not be involved in mundane affairs of daily administration. Instead, they should concentrate on the planning of the strategic developmental goals of the Party. Deng (1984:323) issued the following directive to the Party:

From now on, all matters within the competence of the government will be discussed and decided upon and the relevant documents issues, by the State Council and the local governments concerned. The Central Committee and local committees of the Party will no longer issue directives or the decisions in such matters.

Third, the leadership style of the Party cadres must be changed. The separation of the Party and the government means that the Party cannot exercise direct control over the government apparatus. Only by indirect ways can it assert the leadership of the CCP over the country. Controlling or monopolizing the nominations of the important government posts is one of the mechanisms. Moreover, the reformist leaders called on the Party members to set an example for the people and exercise leadership through exemplary influence (Hu Yaobang 1981).\textsuperscript{10} The diminishing role of the Party in the government apparatus entails a drastic reduction of Party personnel in the government.

\textsuperscript{10}I would argue that separating the Party and government functions is the most important single piece of reform measure in the political reform. Abandoning the measure is tantamount to discarding of the political structural reform itself. The CCP did exactly that in the early 1990s.
units, which necessitates the reshuffling of the Party/state cadres. The separation of the Party and government is manifested in the cancellation of the Party Committees in various organizations, such as factories, scientific research institutes, education institutes, and enterprises, etc.\(^\text{11}\)

Furthermore, the CCP started to decentralize the grip of its total power. The leading cadres of the Party/state were advised not to hold too many concurrent posts, and the number of deputy posts was sharply cut. In the Third Session of the Fifth NPC in 1980, Zhao Ziyang replaced Hua Guofeng, who was occupying three key Party/state posts at the same time, as the premier of the State Council. In the same session, the number of vice-premiers was slashed from 17 to 12. The number of vice-premiers was further reduced to 4 in the First Session of the Sixth NPC in 1983.\(^\text{12}\) After 1980, the Party secretary or the first secretary would not hold any government post, thereby changing the tradition of holding the secretary post and administrative head simultaneously. From 1980 to 1983, the reform of separating the Party and the government functionaries reached the level of cities and counties (ZGZXP 1987:281-3). In the political report by Zhao Ziyang (1987b) in the Thirteenth CCP Congress in 1987, the separation of the government and Party functions was still listed as the top priority in the political reform agenda.

\(^{11}\)The "totalitarian" nature of the CCP regime would be much more concrete if expressed in terms of organizational structure: there is a Party committee in every organization, making major decisions about that organization. Non-Party members are excluded. In Maoist China, the family was perhaps the only institution in which the Party committee did not exist, therefore beyond the direct control of the CCP.

\(^{12}\)At the time of his struggles with Hua Guofeng, Deng's reform programme of separating the Party and the government had the objective effect of forcing Hua to give up his crucial posts he inherited from Mao after 1976 and thereby weakening his political basis considerably (MacFarquhar 1993b:326). Hua was replaced by Hu Yaobang and Deng Xiaoping as the chairman of the CCP and the CCP Central Military Commission in the Sixth Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Congress in June 1981.
To avoid the disaster of the concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals or even in one person as in the Maoist era, the reformist leadership decided to reinstitute the Central Secretariat (CS) under the leadership of the CCP Politburo in the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh CC in February 1980. Hu Yaobang was elected as the general secretary of the CS.\(^{13}\) Formally, the Central Secretariat was a working organization responsible for the implementation of the major policies led by the Politburo, the SC of the Politburo in particular. The real objective was to devolve the power of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. It was a rejection of Mao's personal dictatorship in the prereform times and one of the ways to build up collective leadership.

To supervise or monitor the activities of the Party members, to regularize the intraparty political life, and to introduce the element of check and balance, a Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC) was established headed by the veteran leader Chen Yun in the Third Plenum of Eleventh CC in 1978. The Commission was seen as a mechanism that could counter the power of the powerful individual Party members including the top leaders. The Commission was led by Chen Yun whose status in the reformist era was only second to Deng Xiaoping, and it turned out to have considerable political clout, for it directly reported to the CCP Central Committee. In its first nationwide conference in 1983, the Commission disclosed the total number of cases investigated for discipline violation committed by the Party members was 380,000 (Ming Pao 14 August 1983). In the province of Guangdong alone, over 500 Party officials were expelled from the Party for various economic crimes such as smuggling and embezzlement of public funds (Ming Pao 8 August

\(^{13}\) According to Ruan Ming (1994), after the post of the chairman of the CCP was abolished, Hu became the nominal head of the Party. But his power was circumscribed as he has power to convene a Politburo meeting but cannot host it. This move was to prevent Hu from concentrating too much power.
1983). However, as later events show, the CDIC became a powerful conservative weapon against reformist officials.

Mao had been the chairman of the CCP for thirty-one years (1945-1976) and the post was tainted with charismatic authority. To further sweep away the authoritarian residues left over by the post and secondarily, to drive out Hua Guofeng from the political scene, the reformist leadership abolished the post of the CCP chairmanship altogether in 1982. Instead the post of general secretary of the CS was restored. Before the CR, general secretary was the administrative head of the CS which was in charge of implementing policy decisions made in the Politburo. Deng was elected as the general secretary of the CS in 1956 and held the post until the outbreak of the CR. Now the post of the Party chairman was abolished and the general secretary became the top leader in the CCP, at least in formal terms, but in reality it was regarded as only the first among the equals. Hu Yaobang was elected again the general secretary in the First Plenum of the Twelfth CC in 1982, while Hua Guofeng was downgraded to be a member of the CC. Hu (1982) declared that a system of collective leadership would be built. Policies would be widely consulted before they were implemented. Hu warned that the past mistakes in the CR must not be repeated, for the destruction of intraparty democracy is too costly.

---

14The much publicized Zunyi Conference in 1935 during the Long March in fact only established Mao’s leadership in military affairs but not in the Party organization. The expanded Politburo meeting at Zunyi elected Zhang Wentian to be the general secretary, the top post in the Party. Mao was elected as the chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, while the former chairman Zhou Enlai was demoted to the post of deputy chairman. It was only in 1945 that Mao was elected as the Chairman of the CCP. However, it must be pointed out that by taking over the chairmanship of the Military Affairs Commission, Mao became the most powerful man in the CCP.
The new state Constitution passed in the Fifth Session of the Fifth NPC in 1982 was the fourth Constitution in the history of the PRC. It was widely claimed to be the most comprehensive and thoughtful one among the four PRC Constitutions (Weng, 1984, 1987). A new Party Constitution was also passed at the Twelfth CCP Congress in the same year. Both Constitutions contained important new provisions about the Party/state.\textsuperscript{15} The 1982 Party Constitution (CCCP 1982 General Programme) stipulated that the CCP

leads the people in promoting socialist democracy, perfecting the social legal system...the Party must conduct its activities within the limits permitted by the constitution and the laws of the state.

The new state Constitution was equally emphatic on the predictability of the national political life. It (PRC 1982:Preamble) stipulated:

\begin{quote}
The people of all nationalities, all state organs, the armed forces, all political parties and public organizations and all enterprises and undertakings in the country must take the constitution as the basic norm of conduct, and they have the duty to uphold the dignity of the constitution and ensure its implementation.
\end{quote}

It further emphasized (Article 5):

\begin{quote}
All state organs, the armed forces, all political parties and public organizations and all enterprises and undertakings must abide by the constitution and the law. All acts in violation of the constitution and the law must be looked into. No organization or individual may enjoy the privilege of being above the constitution and the law.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15}The English translation of both Constitutions is based on \textit{Beijing Review} N.52, 27 December 1982, pp10-52 (state Constitution) and N.38, 20 September 1982, pp8-21 (Party Constitution).
An editorial in the People's Daily (5 December 1982) on the new state Constitution noted explicitly that the term "all" means "there can be no exception whatsoever" and that "our Party, like all other parties, groups, and organizations must conduct its activities within the limits permitted by the constitution and the law".

In one of the most significant moves to restore Party/state legitimacy, the reformist leadership introduced direct elections and multi-candidacy elections to the county level of the People's Congress. The NPC passed the Election Law, the Organic Law of the local People's Congress and the local People's Government in the Second Session of the Fifth NPC in June 1979. The Laws changed the election procedures of the local People's Congress and the structure of the local government. The NPC abolished the administrative structure of the "revolutionary committee" established during the period of the CR. The NPC reinstituted a government structure that was similar to that in the 1950s but new elements were added in the Election Law.

The 1953 Election Law and the 1954 state Constitution (Article 56) set up a four-level hierarchical system of the People's Congress, first, township or commune; second, county (this level does not only include county, but also smaller cities without administrative districts or administrative districts that are divisions of a large city, or some autonomous regions where the majority are ethnic minorities); third, provinces, autonomous regions or cities directly administered by the central government, and finally the NPC. In the 1950s and 1960s (before the CR), only the deputies of the lowest level of the People's Congress were directly elected. The deputies of other levels of the People's Congress were elected by the lower levels of the deputies. The new Election
Law and the state Constitution extended direct elections by universal franchise to the county level. The 1980/81 county elections were not only universal popular elections since the outbreak of the CR in 1966, but they, in fact, became the first nation-wide elections above the lowest level of the government units since China became a republic in 1912 (Nathan 1985:196). The directly-elected deputies serve a term of three years, while the indirectly-elected deputies of the NPC and the provinces, autonomous provinces and centrally administered cities serve a term of five years (Xie Qingkui 1991:256).

The introduction of the multi-candidacy elections, i.e. more candidates than the vacancies to be filled, is also significant in that this gives the electorate at least a degree of freedom of choice. In spite of the pre-election consultations among the members, the fact that nominations were equal to the number of post to be elected gave the voters no choice at all. There were other important changes besides the introduction of the county-level direct elections and competitive elections. First, the new Election and Organic Laws guarantee the use of secret ballot throughout the country, while previously secret ballot was used only in the elections of the urban areas. In rural areas, the voters cast their votes simply by a show of hands. Second, the new Laws reaffirm the right of the deputies to query the executive branch and submit motions to the Congress. Third, the new Laws reaffirm the rights of citizens to nominate candidates for the deputy positions at the county level,

16 The 1975 state Constitution provided no provisions on the elections of the local People’s Congress. The 1978 state Constitution (Article 35) stated that the election of the deputies would be conducted by secret ballots on the principle of universal franchise, but it must be preceded by a process of “democratic consultation” among the voters.

17 Under the 1979 Election Law the number of candidates for the county-level deputies was to exceed the number of positions by 50% to 100%. In the revisions to the Election Law in 1986, the ratio was reduced to 33% to 100% (Xie Qingkui 1991:248).
while in the previous decade, the Party totally controlled the nomination list. The new Laws were implemented in the 1980/81, 1984, and 1987 elections.18

Even more significant was the introduction of competitive elections into the Party structure by secret ballot. According to the new Party Constitution (Article 11), the Party committees at all levels and the delegates to the higher Party levels should be decided by the Party members. Two methods could be used. The first method was to produce a candidate list by a preliminary election and put it into the second round voting. The second method was to suggest a list of candidates that exceed the vacancies and after deliberation, put to voting. Aside from the competitive elections in the Party/state political apparatus, competitive elections were also held in the workplaces, such as production plants, research institutes, and enterprises. The significance of the impact of direct elections could not be minimized and one of the consequences of the direct elections at various work units was the shrinking of political power of the Party/state (Womack 1984).

The reformist CCP leadership also began to lift the veil of secrecy on the decision-making processes and mechanisms (Feng Jian and Zeng Jianhuai 1983). Under the slogans "making decision-making process transparent and scientific", the leadership regularized the National

---

18 Cheng Zihua, minister of civil affairs at the time of the first county level elections, stated that in the future, direct elections would be extended to higher levels (Womack 1982). But direct elections have been extended only to a few municipalities by the early 1990s. The most dramatic democratization experiment in the 1980s in China took place in Shekou-8.2 sq.km zone inside the Shenzhen SEZ. The entire Shekou administrative committee was popularly elected by the zone's 1200 cadres in 1985. It was the first time that a Chinese executive branch of government was elected by its staff (Mirror November 1986:26-30). It was not a direct election by universal franchise, but its impact spread far beyond its border. By the end of the 1980s, before the 1989 crackdown, Shenzhen was the most advanced city in China, both economically and politically.
People's Congress (NPC) and CCP Congresses. The NPC meets every year and beginning in the second half of the 1980s, the meeting usually took place in March. The Party Constitution stipulates that the CCP Congress should be convened every five years. Notwithstanding the irregularities of the CC meetings, the dates and the agenda of the meeting were usually announced some weeks before. Communiques were published after the meetings. This was in stark contrast to the practices during the CR. In the name of national security and because of the highly abrupt change of leadership, the official press announced the opening and closing of meetings after meetings were well over.\(^\text{19}\)

In a speech addressing the participants of a forum on "soft science", Wan Li (1986), the influential vice-premier, emphasized that to introduce scientific methods into decision-making process and the democratization of it were a key part of the political structural reform. He criticised that the traditional CCP decision-making process was dictated by personal likes and dislikes of leading cadres. He argued that modern society had become so complex that the decision mechanisms must be rationalized. It was impossible to make decisions based on limited sources of information. Instead, quantitative methods must be utilized. In addition, democratic consultations with those affected by the policy decisions must be carried out. In a stroke reminiscent of the critical spirit of the May-Fourth movement, he argued forcefully.

\(^{19}\)The highly irregular pattern of meetings can be seen from the following facts: the Seventh CCP Congress was held in 1945, but the Eighth CCP Congress was held in 1958, and it was held twice in the same year. The Ninth CCP Congress was held in 1969, after an interruption of eleven years. The Tenth CCP Congress was held in 1975 and the Eleventh CCP Congress in 1977. The NPC was suspended throughout the CR and the deputies were largely purged.
In a modern society, science and democracy cannot be separated. Without democracy, science cannot develop and vice versa. To facilitate scientific decision-making, we have to democratize the process. Without democratic consultation, people cannot participate in the discussion and without their participation, science cannot develop. Conversely, to democratize the decision-making you must utilize scientific methods.

Moreover, to solve problems arising from economic and political reforms, the reformist leadership, the State Council under Zhao Ziyang in particular, introduced the think-tank system into the central decision-making process. The State Council set up several research institutes in the early 1980s, namely the Centre of Economic Research, the Centre of Technology and Economics, the Centre of Economic Law Research, the Centre of Price Reform, and the Centre of Political Reform that carried out studies on the emergent issues pertaining to the reform. Later the research institutes were reorganized. Zhao Ziyang came to depend on his so-called "three institutes and one association", namely Research Institute on the Reform of Economic Structure, Research Institute on Agricultural Development, Research Institute on International Problems of China International Trade and Investment Corporation, and Association of the Young Economists in Beijing. Hundreds of academics were co-opted into the process (Feng Jian and Zeng Jianhuai 1983; Li Yongchun and Luo Jian 1987:146-7; Yan Jiaqi 1992a; Zhu Jiamin 1995). To gain expertise on various fields of specialization, famous scientists and economists were invited to give lectures to the CCP top leaders in Zhongnanhai to make them acquainted with the issues in the course of modernization.
b) Arranging for smooth succession

China's *ganbu zhidu* (cadre system) is a nomenklatura system.\(^\text{20}\) Strict hierarchical ranking is preserved and privileges are allocated based on ranking and status. Because of the Party/state structure of the PRC, nearly all the *guojia ganbu* (state cadre) are Party members, and in fact only Party members can become senior government officials. The CCP is the largest political organization in the world, in terms of membership. As of 1989, it had a membership of 48 million, a tenfold increase over the membership of the early 1950s. It constituted 4.3% of the whole population in China. The basic organizational cell had increased from 200,000 to 3,000,000 (People's Daily 20 September 1989).\(^\text{21}\) The system was basically copied from the former Soviet Union. By the early 1960s, the CCP totally filled up the cadre system. While in the early 1950s, the PRC looked like a coalition government. One of the vice-presidents of the PRC was Soong Qinglin, the widow of the late Dr Sun Yat-sen. Among the cabinet ministers, 42 out of 93 were non CCP members (Xie Qingkui 1991:101). During the CR, the CCP Party/state structure was completely paralysed and the Organization Department of the Central Committee, which was responsible for appointments, promotions, transfers, and removals of the senior cadres, was not

---

\(^\text{20}\) This can be defined as "a list of positions, arranged in order of seniority, including a description of the duties of each office. Its political importance comes from the fact that the Party's nomenklatura—and it alone—contains the most important leading positions in all organized activities of social life" (Burns 1987:36).

\(^\text{21}\) By 1997, the total CCP membership has increased to more 58 million. By contrast, the membership of the eight so-call democratic parties, was only about 360,000 (Ming Pao 8 July 1997). By 1991, the CCP membership had reached 50 million (Womack and Townsend 1992:416). The eight democratic parties are as follows: the Revolutionary Committee of the Nationalist Party, the Chinese Association for Promoting Democracy, the China Democratic National Construction Association, the Democratic League of China, the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party, the China Zhi Gong Party, the September 3 Society, and Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League.
even mentioned in the press between 1967 to 1972. Its head was not identified until 1975 (Burns 1987:37).

After the return of Deng in 1977, efforts were made to rehabilitate a large number of veteran leaders purged during the CR. As head of the CCP Organization Department from 1978 to 1980, Hu Yaobang, withstanding the pressure of the "whicheverist" faction, eradicated the radical personnel policies, and made the return of the veterans possible. However, the return of the senior leaders made the succession crisis more serious, as younger radicals fell to disgrace after the CR. As I mentioned before, the first generation veteran revolutionaries were in their 40s or 50s when they seized political power from the Chiang Kai-shek regime in 1949. As Marxist idealists, they were more eager to impose their socialist utopia upon a "semi-feudal" and "semi-colonial" China rather than thinking of institutionalizing or routinizing the Party/state succession procedures.

The CCP leadership became aware of the recruitment problem in the highest echelon of leadership by the late 1950s. When Liu Shaoqi was elected as the president of the PRC in 1959, it was generally assumed that he was groomed to succeed Mao as the top leader of the CCP, notwithstanding their age gap was a mere five years. The outbreak of the CR not only ruined the succession arrangement, but almost destroyed the Party/state apparatus. Liu was condemned as a "GMD spy, traitor, revisionist", and was tortured to death. Instead, Lin Biao, the "mentally unsound" defence minister (Li Zhisui 1994:454), was picked by Mao, and his status of successor was even enshrined in the Party Constitution in the Ninth CCP Congress in 1969. Lin Biao's defection and subsequent death and the ill-health of Zhou Enlai pressured Mao to rehabilitate Deng
Xiaoping to run the State Council. After the Tiananmen Incident in 1976, Deng was discredited and Hua Guofeng ascended to the peak of his political power.

During Mao's reign, choosing the successor was always based on doctrinal purity and ideological commitment. A debate on "redness versus expertness" ran through the PRC history. Mao always won and his hostilities towards intellectuals were well known. The intellectuals were always the objects of purge in the numerous political campaigns culminating in the CR. Writing in 1972, Leys (1978:118-9) pinpointed the seriousness of the problem:

The regime is a gerontocracy: of the twenty men who ruled China in 1972, half were very old men-two nearly ninety, two past eighty, six past or nearly seventy; and in that small group of patriarchs, three or four were senile or chronic invalids. Since the regime knows no retirements or age limit for its higher personnel, there is no honourable and decent choice between absolute power and total disgrace, which explains the keenness and energy with which decrepit disabled gouty old men cling to their seats in the Politburo.

When the CCP reformist leadership launched the modernization programme in 1978, they were confronted with three kinds of problems in the management of the cadre system. The first was the overage of the Party cadres at all levels of the hierarchy, in particular the top leadership. The collapse of the radical policies and the rehabilitation of the purged senior leaders made the return of thousands of the middle-ranking cadres possible. The second problem was the lack of expertise and ability in economic development. During Mao's era, "politics takes command". People learning skills and reading books were very often accused of being "revisionist" or even "counter-revolutionary". The Party cadres were totally unprepared for the advent of a new era which emphasized knowledge, expertise, and administrative abilities. According to one source (Li
Yongchun and Luo Jian 1987:101), among the 20 million Party cadres in 1983, the college-educated only accounted for 19%. 40% of the cadres were below the level of junior middle school. As of 1982, among the 4,000 county Party secretaries, college-educated cadres accounted for only 4% and 69% were below the level of junior middle school. As Deng (1984:213-4) emphasized again and again, "The line and principles adopted for the modernization programme are correct, but the problem-and it is a serious one-is a lack of trained personnel necessary to carry them out....Without a great many qualified people, we will not achieve our goal." The third problem, comparatively easier to tackle, was the problem of eliminating Maoist remnants and followers of Hua's "whateverist" faction. Hua and his followers were phased out in two years and, paradoxically, the resolution of this problem aggravated the first and second problems, as a large pool of pre-CR cadres were restored to their former positions.

Selecting younger and politically reliable successors became one of the key components of Deng's political structural reform package. He was aware that the pre-reform cadre system was detrimental to the resolution of the recruitment and succession crises. He (1984:309) attacked strongly that

The problem facing us is that...the existing organizational system also works against the selection and use of the trained persons who are so badly needed for China's modernizations. We hope that Party committees and organizational departments at all levels will make major changes in this area, resolutely emancipate their minds, overcome all obstacles, break with old conventions and have the courage to reform outmoded organizations and personnel.
In a speech commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the PRC, Ye Jianying (1979) stated the three criteria for choosing political successors at all levels. First, they must support wholeheartedly modernization and the reformist political line and policies. Second, they must be selfless, obedient to the Party rules and state laws. Third, they must have a strong sense of responsibility and outstanding administrative abilities. Chen Yun (ZZWY 1987:289) proposed that the leading cadres must combine the qualities of socialist commitment and administrative abilities. But it was Deng (1984:308,396) who laid out the four authoritative criteria, namely *geminhua, nianqinghua, zhishihua, and zhuanyehua* (upholding the hegemony of the CCP leadership and the socialist road, younger in average age, better educated, and professionally more competent). Hu Yaobang incorporated the criteria into the political report he delivered in the Twelfth CCP Congress in 1982. The four criteria were written into the new Party Constitution (Article 34). In line with the spirit of the political structural reform in the early 1980s, Deng (1984:219) further called for the institutionalization of the selection process and mechanisms without which, he claimed, a complete solution to the problem was impossible.

Two pieces of significant policy in the cadre management system were the introduction of the mandatory retirement system and fixed term tenure for the Party/state senior leaders. The Party Constitution (Article 37) stipulated explicitly that the cadres, whether democratically elected or appointed, would not have a life-tenure job. If the old cadres were unfit for work, they should retire or *lixiu* (leave and rest at home). The 1982 state Constitution restricted the following posts to at most two consecutive terms, i.e. ten years: chairman and vice chairmen of the SC of the NPC (SCNPC), the president and vice-presidents of the PRC, the premier and vice-premiers, state
councillors, the president of the Supreme People's Court, and the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorates.  

The CCP passed a Decision Concerning the System of the Retirement for the Old Cadres in 1982. The Decision stipulated that senior cadres holding cabinet ministerial and vice-ministerial posts, Party secretary and deputy secretary posts, governorship and vice governorship in the provinces and autonomous areas, leading cadres of Supreme People's Court and Supreme People's Procuratorates should not exceed 65 years old. Those holding assistant posts should not exceed 60 years old (ZZWY 1987:414). "when we have regulations explicitly stating the retirement age for cadres of different levels and departments, everyone will know when he is supposed to retire." (Deng Xiaoping 1984:219) To mollify the old cadres, a Central Advisory Commission (CAC) was established, together with the provincial levels of the Advisory Commission. The Party Constitution (Article 22) stipulated that the Commission served "as political assistant and consultant to the Central Committee." The membership was limited to senior cadres who have at least forty years of Party experience. Their status would be the same as the Central Committee members and they could attend the Central Committee meetings. The vice-directors and the SC

---

22 The important omission was the post of the chairman of the CMC (PRC 1982 Article 94). As later events show, the omission was not an oversight. Deng was elected the chairman of the newly created state CMC. The CCP regime "grows from gun barrel". It is understandable that, despite his old age, Deng still clings on to the military power. He resigned in 1989 but his enormous influence in the army remained intact, until his death in February 1997.

23 In 1982, Deng (1984:393) stated that the Central Advisory Commission would be transitional. It was a preliminary step towards abolishing the life-tenure system. The Commission was formally disbanded in the Fourteenth CCP Congress in 1992 (CCCCP 1992:138).
members could even attend the CCP Politburo meetings. Their salaries and privileges would be kept, including superior housing, cars, drivers and access to the best hospitals and foodstores.\textsuperscript{24}

The reformist leadership decided to devise a three-echelon strategy in order to quicken the process of age rejuvenation. At every level of Party leadership, the core group was instructed to be composed of cadres from three age cohorts, roughly in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. The leaders exhorted breaking the old habits of sticking to seniority, urging talented young people be promoted regardless of their family background.\textsuperscript{25} From 1982 to 1985, 469 thousand younger cadres were recruited to the leadership positions of the county departmental level, and 1.25 million old cadres resigned. One hundred and thirty one senior cadres resigned from the CC, CAC, and the CDIC at the CCP national conference in 1985 (\textit{People's Daily} 9 February 1986). The average age of the leading cadres in the provinces, municipal, and county was lowered from 62, 56, and 49 in 1982 to 53, 49, and 44 respectively in 1985. The college-educated cadres reached 62\%, 55\%, and 54\% in the provinces, municipal and county respectively in 1985, up 45\% in average from 1982 (\textit{People's Daily} 26 June 1986). An organizational reshuffle at the ministerial and provincial levels in 1984/85 succeeded in lowering the average age from 61.5 and 57 to 56.5 and 53 respectively (Li Shengping 1989:143).

\textsuperscript{24}The CAC turned out to be a powerful institution within the CCP, though it was not supposed to be a decision-making body. The amalgamation of so many veterans with so much revolutionary experience exerted tremendous influence over the decision-making process. It was instrumental in forcing Hu Yaobang to resign in early 1987 when the student demonstrations spread throughout the country. It also played an important part in causing Zhao Ziyang's downfall during the 1989 pro-democracy movement.

\textsuperscript{25}The most celebrated case in recruiting young people to senior Party rank in the 1980s was Wang Zhaoguo (Cha, 1984). Then Wang was the Party secretary in a factory and he was picked by Deng who was making a tour of the factory. Wang was soon promoted to the CS. He is now the head of the CCP United Front Department.
An analysis of the Central Committee membership in the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth CCP Congresses, which cover eleven years, underlines the tremendous personnel transformation in the PRC in the 1980s. The following tables (3.1 to 3.5) show the average age, education level, and ratio of specialists of the CC members and the CCP Politburo members (all tables are taken from Li Cheng and Lynn White 1988).

Table 3.1

Average Age of CC Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CC</th>
<th>Year held</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2

Average Age of the CCP Leadership Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>12th</th>
<th>13th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC of the Politburo</td>
<td>73.75</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politbuto</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CC</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CC</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>11th</th>
<th>12th</th>
<th>13th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4(15.4%)</td>
<td>3(10.7%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pri. school</td>
<td>5(19.2%)</td>
<td>10(35.7%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>6(23.0%)</td>
<td>3(10.7%)</td>
<td>5(27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military school 1</td>
<td>5(19.2%)</td>
<td>3(10.7%)</td>
<td>1(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>6(23.0%)</td>
<td>9(32.1%)</td>
<td>12(66.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26(100%)</td>
<td>28(100%)</td>
<td>18(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average age of the CC members was reduced from 64.6 in the Eleventh Congress to 55.2 in the Thirteenth Congress, a reduction of 9 years. The average age of the Politburo members was lowered from 71.8 in the Twelfth Congress to 64 in the Thirteenth Congress. The percentage of the college-educated CC members was raised from 25.7 in the Eleventh Congress to 73.3 in the
Thirteenth Congress. The ratio more than tripled. With hindsight, the Twelfth CCP Congress was perhaps the most important one among the three CCP Congresses held in 1977, 1982, and 1987. Certainly, it had transitional characters. Basically, it rectified the reform measures initiated and implemented since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CC in 1978. In view of the emergent issues, it intensified the reform process and introduced new points of departure. The Eleventh CCP Congress in 1977 was still dominated by Maoist remnants and Mao's theory of the continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat was still unchallenged. In fact, Hua Guofeng's chairmanship of the CCP was not confirmed until that Congress. In the five years between the Eleventh and Twelfth CCP Congresses, China had undergone a "second revolution", in which the radical policies were completely overhauled, and Mao Zedong Thought was subject to new interpretation. Politics of modernization took precedence. Most importantly, the Twelfth CCP Congress was used by Dengist reformers "to begin the replacement of the revolutionary elite generation by the technocratic elite generation" (Mills 1983:19). It was really a replacement from "mobilizers to managers" (Li Cheng and Lynn White 1988:371). As Lee Hong Yung (1991:284-5) argued

The bureaucratic reforms succeeded in replacing the revolutionary cadres with bureaucratic technocrats who are qualitatively different from their predecessors in terms of political experience, socialization, and value orientation. This rise of technical experts marks an end to the Maoist era associated with the former revolutionaries... It also signals an end to the Maoist practice of selecting political leaders for their revolutionary potential rather than for the expertise needed to develop a modern society.

Admittedly, the replacement in 1982 had only a limited impact at the highest level of the CCP leadership. The membership of the SC of the Politburo remained largely in the hands of the septuagenarians and octogenarians. The exclusion of Hua Guofeng from the core of the political
power became confirmed and he was demoted to the CC. The old guard such as Li Xiannian, Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, and Xu Xiangqian retained their full membership of the Politburo. The addition of Hu Qiaomu 26 and Yang Shangkun, both of whom were Deng's strong supporters, gave the average age of the Politburo members of 71.8. Astutely, Deng was able to inject new blood into the CS. Six new members were added, including the CCP General Office Director Hu Qili, Hebei first Secretary Chen Pixian, and Minister of Textile Hao Jianxiu, all of whom were former subordinates of Hu Yaobang when he was the first Party Secretary of the Communist Youth League.

The addition of some young members gave the mean age of 63.7. There were 210 full members in the Twelfth CC. 99 were new members and 111 were re-elected from the Eleventh Congress. The change was more dramatic than that at the Tenth and Eleventh Congresses. The Tenth Congress had dropped one-third of the Ninth CC members and the Eleventh 40% of the Tenth CC members. The Twelfth Congress dumped 45% of the Eleventh CC members. In all, over 60% of the Twelfth Congress membership were new (Li Kwok-shing 1990:142-3). The accelerating rate of personnel turnover testified to the tremendous political transition, in particular the generational change in the 1980s. The Twelfth CCP Congress was transitional in nature in the sense that the injection of new blood was effected below the highest level, in particular the military

---

26Hu turned out to be a powerful conservative after the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Congress (Ruan Ming 1994; Wu Jiang 1995).
leadership. However, the elite transformation indicates the broad trends of change in Chinese society. In analysing the structural change of the Thirteenth CCP Congress, Li Cheng and Lynn White (1988:371) argued that

The history of the CCP indicates that changes in the leadership composition often reflect broad social, economic, and political changes in the country at large...But more important, (the new Central Committee) represents a new kind of political elite-managers and technocrats-who are qualitatively different from the old revolutionary veterans-mobilizers and ideologues-in terms of political experience, ideological outlook, administrative ability, and value orientation. This elite transformation, which started in the early 1980s and reached its peak in the Thirteenth Party Congress in October 1987 has been part of a wider and more fundamental change, a move from revolution to reform the Chinese society.

c) Streamlining the Party/state Bureaucracy

The problem of bureaucratism so vociferously criticised by Deng Xiaoping is closely associated with the centralized features of the CCP Party/state bureaucracy. China is the most populous country in the world, with a population of 1.2 billion in the mid-1990s. To exercise control over such a huge population and vast territory, a stalwart government apparatus is required. Two thousand years of centralized despotism makes matters worse. The CCP has established the world's largest bureaucracy since 1949. There were about 8 million state cadres in China in 1958 (Wang, C.F. 1989:145). Burns (1989b:120) estimated that there were 27 million Party and state

---

27 Deng was elected the chairman of the CMC and the three veteran marshals Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, and Xu Xiangqian were elected vice chairmen of the CMC. Ye resigned in 1985 and Nie and Xu in 1987. Deng passed the chairmanship to Jiang Zemin only at the Fifth Plenum of the Thirteenth CC in November 1989.
cadres in China in 1985. The "dual structures" of the Party/state bureaucracy have made the problem of bureaucratism intolerable. When the PRC was founded in 1949, the Administrative Council (later changed to State Council) had only 35 ministries and 4 special committees, namely Politics and Law Committee, Culture and Education Committee, Finance and Economics Committee, and People's Supervision Committee. The State Council was reorganized in 1954. Four special committees were cancelled and 64 ministries and 8 offices were established (Xie Qingkui 1991:459). The number of ministries was cut to 60 in 1959, but increased to 79 in 1964. At the time of the CR, it was reduced to 32. From 1977 to 1981, the State Council restored and newly established 48 ministries and offices. The total number of approved establishments in the State Council reached 100 in 1981, the highest in the history of the PRC (Xie Qingkui 1991:49). From 1979 to 1982, though the number of vice-premiers in State Council decreased from 18 to 13, the number of ministers increased from 83 to 99, and vice-ministers from 800 to 900. The total number of staff in the State Council reached 49,000 (ZGZXP 1987:181).29

Deng appealed to the whole Party that the reduction of redundant personnel in the central government and streamlining the Party/state bureaucracy was a matter of up-most importance, even life and death for the CCP. In fact, "it constitutes a revolution" (Deng 1984:374):

---

28In a speech in Shanghai in April 1986, Hu Qili disclosed that the number of cadres had increased from 19 million in 1980 to 26.5 million in 1985 (Li Shengping 1989:146), a figure not too far away from Burns' estimation.

29Two small examples will suffice to show how cumbersome Chinese bureaucracy is. First, in a city, the management of a factory decided to build a toilet in the factory. It had to obtain 96 chops of approval from various governments and offices (Chen Ruisheng 1992:191). Second, a municipality wished to build a foodstuff factory. The preparatory committee obtained 427 chops of approval, but still, unfortunately, it did not succeed (He Baocuan 1988:355).
If we don't carry out this revolution but let the old and ailing stand in the way of young people who are energetic and able, not only will the four modernizations fail, but the Party and state will face a mortal trial and perhaps perish.

Deng (1984:375) called for the trimming of five million Party/state cadres in the revamping of the Party/state bureaucracy. The 1982 Party Constitution formally incorporated the four formal criteria for picking successors who must be revolutionary (defined as keeping in line with the politics of modernization since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Congress), younger in average age, better educated, and professionally more competent (Article 34).

The CCP issued Certain Principles Concerning the Organizational Make-up at the Provincial Level in 1982, in which the Party suggested that the organizational structure must comply with the four criteria. It imposed the maximum number of vacancy for the following posts: Party secretary, deputy Party secretaries, Party standing committee members, governor, vice-governors; director, deputy-directors of the provincial Advisory Committee; secretary and deputy-secretaries of the provincial CDI; chairman and vice-chairmen of the provincial People's Congress; chairman and vice-chairmen of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). It stipulated that the number of Party secretary and deputy secretaries should not exceed 4 for small provinces, 5 for normal provinces, and 6 for large provinces or autonomous regions. The number of vice-governors should be within the range of 3 to 5. The number of deputy-directors and standing committee members of the provincial Advisory Committee should be 2 to 3 and 9 to 15 respectively. The number of the deputy-secretaries and standing committee members of the CDI
should be 2 to 3 and 7 to 9 respectively. Finally, the number of vice-chairmen of the provincial CPPCC should be 9 to 15 (ZGZXP 1987:278-9).

The streamlining and trimming based on the four criteria went into full force from October 1982 to March 1983. The 100 ministries and offices were cut to 60, and staff reduced by one-third. According to a survey compiled by the 38 ministries and committees, the number of the post of ministers, vice-ministers, directors, deputy-directors were reduced by 67%. The average age for the ministers and directors in the 41 ministries and committees/departments was lowered from 65.7 to 59.5 at the end of 1983. The percentage of college-educated ministers was raised from 38% to 50%. In the CCP directly affiliated working organs, the personnel structure had changed significantly. Based on the statistics on 13 departments and committees, the number of posts for the ministers, vice-ministers, directors, deputy-directors was reduced by 40%. The average age was lowered from 65.9 to 62.8. The college-educated percentage was raised from 43% to 53.5% (ZGZXP 1987:278).

At the provincial level, similar reorganization took place. The number of posts of Party secretaries, deputy secretaries, governors, vice-governors, standing committee members, etc, was reduced by 35%. At the same time, senior cadres holding concurrent Party and government posts were axed by 63.8%. The average age was lowered from 62.2 to 55.5. The college-educated cadres were raised from 20% to 42%. 71% of the newly promoted leading cadres were college-educated (ZGZXP 1987:280-1). Instructions were issued to the Party leaders at the municipal,
county, and town levels, urging them to launch the same reshuffling (ZGZXP 1987:190-1). The leading cadres at the municipal, district, and county levels were reduced by 36%, 29%, and 25% respectively in the 1982/84 reorganization (Lee Hong Yung 1991:255).

Despite the herculean effort by the CCP reformist leadership, the long term effect of the streamlining of bureaucracy remained elusive. By the end of 1986, the number of ministries and committees climbed back to 71. By 1988, the number reached 76 (Li Kwok-shing 1990:274). It looked like China's bureaucracy was caught in what Zhao Ziyang (1987b) described as an endless cycle of "streamlining-swelling-restreamlining-reswellling". In the political report delivered in the Thirteenth CCP Congress in 1987, Zhao Ziyang emphasized that the leadership tried to "work out a plan for restructuring the organs of the central government." Zhao envisaged the establishment of a new civil service system to resolve the problems of bureaucratism and political succession completely. Nonetheless, no sooner had the proposal been put forward than China was plunged into the most serious economic crisis in the reformist era. The leadership turned the attention to readjust and restructure economic priorities. In a compromise gesture between the reformists and the conservatives after the dismissal of Hu Yaobang, Li Peng replaced Zhao Ziyang as the premier of the State Council in the First Session of the Seventh NPC in 1988. Then came the brutal crackdown of the prodemocracy movement in 1989. It was not until 1992 that the idea of organizational reform was revived and put into implementation on an experimental basis. In the political report delivered in the Fourteenth CCP Congress in 1992, Jiang Zemin emphasized that:

At present the Party/state apparatus are overstaffed and overlapping. Many organs lack efficiency and are detached from the masses. This inhibits the changing of the
function of the economic units. The situation must be changed...Organizational reform and streamlining the bureaucracy is an extremely difficult task.

Unless the structural factors are identified and drastic measures taken, the problems of China's bloated bureaucracy will not go away.\textsuperscript{30}

d) Strengthening the NPC

The restructuring of the Party/state bureaucracy was in tandem with the reform of the NPC. When asked to describe the basic characteristics of the PRC political system, the standard answer one gets from the CCP leaders is that the system of the people's congress is the basic system of the PRC (Zhao Ziyang 1987b; Jiang Zemin 1991; Xie Qingkui 1991:66; Chen Ruisheng 1992:84). This standard characterization underscores the importance of the NPC. The NPC is defined as the "highest organ of state power" in the PRC Constitutions (PRC 1954 Article 21; 1978 Article 20; 1982 Article 57). The 1954 Constitution even deemed it the "only legislative authority in the country" (Article 22). Nevertheless, this "highest organ of state power" was reduced to less than a "rubber stamp" in the pre-reform epoch. During the CR, the existence of the NPC became a mere formality and it did not have a session from 1964 to 1975. In its first twenty-four years of establishment, no session was held in thirteen years. During the CR, 60 of the 115 members of the SCNCP were charged with being spies, traitors, counterrevolutionaries, and capitalist roaders (O'Brien 1990:56).

\textsuperscript{30}There were two more attempts at streamlining the state bureaucracy in the 1990s, in 1992/3 and 1996/97.
After years of neglect, the CCP reformist leadership began to revive the People's Congress as they embarked on the modernization drive. O'Brien (1990) argued that four motives prompted the CCP leadership to reform the NPC. First, the CCP aimed to enhance popular acceptance through institutionalized legitimacy. The legitimacy problem was particularly acute in the deep crisis of faith and belief in the aftermath of Mao's death. Second, the CCP tried to create a political environment conducive to economic reform. Third, the legislative reform would most probably enhance the efficiency of the bureaucracy, thus strengthening the Party leadership. Fourth, a stronger legislature would guarantee reform and contribute to political stability. Nevertheless, O'Brien missed two essential points. First, as I argue in the beginning of this chapter, the legislative reform is in fact a part of the legal modernization programme conceived by the CCP reformist leadership to institutionalize the legal framework left in havoc in the era of the CR. The leadership has stressed over and over again that the state of lawlessness must not recur and renzhi (the rule by man) must be abolished. By strengthening the NPC, the leadership set out to regularize the national political life.

By reviving and strengthening the NPC, the leadership made political life more predictable. Determined to avoid the past mistakes of overconcentration of power in one person, the legal restraints set by the NPC would set up a check and balance mechanism, albeit the Chinese way, within the political structure dominated by the CCP. Second, the economic imperative was essential. As China's economic reform spread from rural areas to the urban metropolis area, in particular the establishment of the four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in 1980 and the opening of the 14 cities in the coastal areas in 1984, the shortage of capital became apparent. To attract foreign
capital requires a stable legal code. The enormous amount of economic activity necessitate massive legislations in regulating commercial transactions. The revived NPC must bear the responsibility of formulating bills and laws. In fact, the strengthened NPC and its Standing Committee passed eighty-eight laws, amended and revised twenty laws, and made forty-five legal decisions from 1979 to 1989 (O'Brien 1990:158).

The other reform measure concerning the NPC was the enormous formal power vested in its SCNPC by the 1982 new state Constitution that recognizes the "National People's Congress is the highest organ of state power" (Article 57). The 1975 state Constitution (Article 16) qualifying phrase "under the leadership of the Communist Party" was dropped. Also omitted was the statement of Article 2 of both 1975 and 1978 state Constitutions "the Chinese Communist Party is the core of leadership of the whole Chinese people". In formalistic terms, the NPC is the sovereign power of the PRC. It has been given a wide range of powers and functions (PRC 1982 Articles 62-64), especially the SCNPC. In view of the mammoth size of the NPC and the consequent difficulty of convening meetings (the Sixth NPC in 1983 had 2884 deputies and the Seventh in 1988 had 2883 deputies), the SCNPC could easily substitute for the NPC. It is indeed "a legislature within a legislature" (O'Brien 1990:148).

To reform the SCNPC, the size of the SC was reduced from 196 to 155 with the aim of enhancing participatory ratio and convening lengthy plenary meetings (Peng Zhen 1982). In addition, to strengthen the back up support to the SCNPC, six permanent committees were set up, namely Law and Nationalities, Finance and Economics; Education, Science, culture and Public
Health, Foreign Affairs, and Overseas Chinese. In 1988, a new Internal Judiciary Committee was established. These Committees have enormous power and authority to investigate or study any issues that fall under the scope of jurisdiction of the SCNPC. In the second half of the 1980s, the membership of the Committees increased from about a dozen to a range of 17 to 30. By 1990, 80% of the members of the SCNPC served on the Committees (Chen Ruiseng 1992:48). Furthermore, the members of the SCNPC were prohibited to hold full-time state administrative posts to allow them more time for legislative activities. 31 A chairmanship core composed of the SCNPC chairman, vice chairmen, and secretary general was set up. With a membership of about 20 to 25 people, the group could have more flexibility in holding long meetings. To delegate more legislative power to the regions, the SC (PRC 1982 Article 96) in the provincial and county People's Congress was established. Subsequently, the power of legislation at the provincial and county levels vis-a-vis the NPC was enhanced. The supervisory function over the local people's government was also strengthened (Li Yongchun and Luo Jian 1987:129; Xie Qinkui 1991:245).

The introduction of competitive elections, both in direct and indirect elections at the provincial and county levels improved the deputies' quality markedly. At the Sixth NPC in 1983, the percentage of the college-educated deputies was raised to 44.5%, and 41.5% of the deputies were engaged in professional or technical work. 76.5% deputies were new and the average age of these newcomers was 53 at the time of their election. In the Seventh NPC in 1988, 76% of the deputies were under 60, and their average age was less than 53, and 56% were college-educated

31 This legislation was very often ignored. Some members of the SCNPC continued to hold state posts. One of the notable examples is Zhou Nan, director of the Hong Kong Xinhua News Agency which is a ministerial post. He was elected a member of SCNPC in the Eighth NPC in 1993.
(O'Brien 1990:132). The improvement, however, was not made at the level of the SCNPC. The average age of the members of the SCNPC was 69.3 years old. Even worse was the case of the vice-chairmen whose average age reached 74. Despite robust health, the SCNPC chairman Peng Zhen was 81 at the time of his election. Fortunately, he retired in 1988 and was replaced by Wan Li, a 72 year old reformist.

To improve the quality of the deputies and gain legitimacy for the NPC as an institution, competitive election to the SCNPC was introduced. In the Sixth NPC in 1983, the CCP still controlled the nomination of the SCNPC and vice-chairmen. In the Seventh NPC in 1988, nevertheless, competitive election, was introduced into the SCNPC. Nine of 144 candidates were eliminated but their names were not revealed. The number of votes received by the elected chairman and vice chairmen were, however, announced. Wan Li, the elected chairman, received 64 against votes and 11 abstention votes. Chen Muhua, a former Politburo member, received 313 against votes and 45 abstentions. The new vice president Wang Zhen received 212 against votes and 77 abstentions votes. Even the elected president of the PRC Yang Shangkun received 124 against votes and 34 abstentions. Li Guixian, one of the state councillors, received as many as 404 against votes and 29 abstentions (Yau Shing-mu 1988). The Seventh NPC was regarded as the most open and democratic congress the PRC had ever had.

---

I would argue that the announcement of the number of votes received by the chairman and vice-chairmen of the NPC, the president and vice-presidents of the PRC could be taken as a breakthrough on the part of Chinese political culture in which old age and seniority are often respected or even avowed. The gerontocracy considers the low election votes a public humiliation. The resistance to this reform must be tremendous but the reformists have got it through.

43
e) Liberalizing Intellectual Life

Liberalizing intellectual life can be an important measure to ameliorate the legitimacy crisis. Intellectuals were denounced as "stinking ninth category" in Mao's reign. Famous writers and prestigious academics were often the objects of repeated attacks during numerous political campaigns in the pre-reform period (Ye Yonglie 1992). Many committed suicide and some were tortured to death in the CR. The reformist CCP leadership realized that the success of the four modernizations relied on the contributions of intellectuals. The Dengists set out to redefine the role of the intellectuals in the era of rapid development and gave them a new status in light of the modernization drive. In an attempt to show adherence to Marxist orthodox and rally the intellectuals, Deng quoted Marxist and Leninist classics to argue that scientists and technological personnel were an integral part of the productive force, the promotion of which was now the chief task of the Party. Deng (1984:104) claimed that intellectuals were scholars, not capitalists. The nature and status of the intellectuals depend on whom they serve. "Mental workers who serve socialism are part of the working people" (Deng 1984:105). The intellectuals were thus reclassified as part of the working class. The reinterpretation relieved the intellectuals of their psychological fear that had overwhelmed them since the Anti-Rightists movement in the late 1950s.

In a speech commemorating the centenary of Marx's death, Hu Yaobang (1983) forcefully argued that
In the new era of modernization, the intellectuals play a particularly important role....The intellectuals are indispensable intellectual factors for modernization. They are the treasures of the whole country....and improving their working and living conditions should be considered as part of the infrastructural construction.

To boost the morale of intellectuals, the leadership introduced a system of professional titles for the intellectuals working in scientific, social sciences, and higher education fields in January 1986. The system was designed to institutionalize and regularize the promotion criteria which now began to emphasize the importance of professional competence and administrative ability. The system was first put into implementation on a trial basis in the Academies of Science and Social Sciences, State Education Commission and the ministries of agriculture, health, and mineral resources.\(^{33}\)

Once the ideological straighjacket of Maoism was removed and Mao Zedong Thought was interpreted as a collective effort jointly produced by the whole CCP veteran revolutionaries (CCCP 1981, 1982), the demise of Maoist ideocracy emboldened the intellectuals to assert their own power. They were eager to expand the realm of intellectual inquiry. Yan Jiaqi, then director of the Institute of Political Science of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), publicly argued that "in scientific research, there should not be 'forbidden zones'...Science is a world of three 'withouts': without forbidden zones, without icons, and without final truth" (1988:139). The pursuit

\(^{33}\)Despite the praise heaped upon the intellectuals, improvement of their living and working conditions remained elusive. The intellectuals still suffered "three heavies and two neglects", namely heavy family burden, heavy responsibility, and heavy pressure at work; inadequate remuneration and meager living condition (Ming Pao 6 March 1983). For that, I have again some personal experience. I went to visit Wen Yuankai, one of the boldest reformists at that time, in Shanghai in 1982. Wen was an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Science and Technology in Anhui Province. He was having a vacation of about ten days in Shanghai during the Chinese Lunar New Year. His Shanghai home was a mere 80 sq.ft. room with a double bed, a dinner table, a writing table, a bookself, with several chairs crammed into one room. Wen now lives in the United States.
of truth and beauty should take precedence over ideological commitment and no doctrine should be exempted from the critical analysis of social scientists. The implication of these messages was that Marxism-Leninism -- the ruling ideology of the CCP -- should not be a forbidden zone of critical intellectual inquiry.

Fang Lizhi, the outspoken vice-president of the University of Science and Technology in Anhui Province before his expulsion from the CCP in early 1987, made the most damaging remarks about the CCP and Marxism-Leninism. In a lecturing tour to several universities, he publicly castrated Marxism, claiming Marxism had already been obsolete (1987:3). Engels' book on natural dialectics could no longer become the guide of the scientific research (1987:95). He argued that no socialist state in the post-World War II period had been successful. "I am here to tell you that the socialist movement, from Marx and Lenin to Stalin and Mao Zedong, has been a failure...Complete westernization is the only way to modernize" (1987:183-4).34 Jin Guantao, a research fellow at the CASS, argued that socialist practice in China faced a tragic dilemma and socialist practice met with total failure (1990:22). Su Shaozhi (1988; 1992), then director of CASS's Institute of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought, called for the reconceptualization and re-evaluation of socialism, Marxism, and capitalism. The productive force of advanced capitalism, he claimed, in fact, was far superior to that of the state socialist countries. Yu Haocheng vehemently criticised the grave defects in China's legal system such as the privileges of the senior cadres and the massive abuse of power among the leaders (Cheng Ming September 1985:50-1). Wang Ruowang criticised

---

34 A succinct comparison of the ideas of Fang and Yan on China's political structural reform can be found in Chiu's book (1995:36-51).
that the devising of the so-called third-echelon strategy was similar to the succession arrangement in feudal dynasties (Cheng Ming December 1985:6-7). Li Honglin (1986) emphasized that without a highly democratized polity, socialist modernization could not be accomplished.

A young scholar Ma Ding (pen name) published an article entitled "The Ten Changes in the Research of Economics in Contemporary China" in Gongren Ribao (Worker Daily) on 2 November 1985. He argued that Marx's Capital could not provide answers to the problems of economic development in China nowadays. He urged the application of Western economic methods to the study of China's economic problems. Another young scholar Deng Weizhi was even bolder than Ma Ding and he pointed out bluntly that Marxism had been invalidated by the development of contemporary China (People's Daily 14 March 1986). Hu Sheng, president of the CASS, conceded that scholars should have the right to publish works that did not employ Marxist method of analysis. He even admitted that some of these works were beneficial to the people (Cheng Ming June 1986:9). In an article called "Theory and Practice" by a special commentator in the People's Daily on 7 December 1984, the author boldly charged that Marxism could not solve the problems of China's development, since the works by Marx and Engels had been written a hundred years ago.\footnote{In China's Party/state controlled mass media, usually the article by a special commentator in the People's Daily carries special significance. Apparently, the impact of that article was too much for the conservatives to bear. To mollify the conservatives, the next day, the editorial board retracted the sentence in question, and claimed that it should have read "Marxism-Leninist works could not solve all of today's problems".}
The new liberal Party propaganda chief Zhu Houze addressed a conference on the reform of the political structure at the Central Party School in Beijing in July 1986. He reiterated that young cadres should study, clarify, and even absorb relevant Western non-Marxist political thoughts. He urged that Party/state administrators should not intervene in the academic debates (Cheng Ming October 1986:20). In responding to Zhu’s call, some political theorists began to articulate unorthodox views about political reform. Yan Jiaqi suggested that China should seriously study parliamentary forms of government, and Su Shaozhi even recommended the introduction of political pluralism and multi-party competition (Cheng Ming October 1986:29). Yu Guanyuan, a CCP veteran economist, argued that Marx’s Capital could explain the inevitability of the socialist revolution, but it was certainly inadequate in accounting for socialist modernization (Cheng Ming April 1985:25).

Intellectuals engaged in artistic creation were also affected by the outspoken demands of the social scientists. They began to demand "freedom of creative writing". As early as 1979, in the immediate aftermath of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CC, in an address to the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists, Deng (1984:205-6) declared that CCP leadership in artistic circles doesn’t mean handing out administrative orders and demanding that literature and art serve immediate, short-range political goals. It means understanding the special characteristics of literature and art and the law of their development and creating conditions for them to flourish...It is essential that writers and artists follow their own creative spirit.

Writers and artists were urged to choose their own topics and methods of expression. Deng did not mention the notion of "freedom of creation", and he still insisted on the leadership of the CCP.
in the literary enclave but in a way different from that in the Maoist era. In a speech to the Fourth Congress of the Chinese Writers' Association in December 1984, Hu Qili (People's Daily 30 December 1984), a member of the SC of the CCP Politburo, noted explicitly:

Creation must be free, that is to say, authors must use their own brains to think and that they must have full liberty in choosing topics, themes and modes of expression....the Party, government and different social organizations must resolutely protect such creative freedom of the writers.

Though Hu still stated that creative writing should serve the cause of socialist modernization and the people, this is the first time since 1949 that one of the top CCP leaders coined the term of "freedom of creative writing". Wang Meng, a liberal author, who became the minister of culture in the Fourth Session of the Sixth NPC in 1986, pointed out that the Party should not engage in particular intellectual controversies but should pay more attention to the financing and maintenance of the cultural institutions (People's Daily 13 July 1986). Hu Jiwei, a former editor-in-chief and director of the People's Daily, made a similar appeal for creative writing at a meeting of journalists and scholars held in Shanghai in April 1985. Hu in fact was entrusted by the NPC to draft legislation about various issues in journalism, including freedom of the press (Cheng Ming May 1985:41). By 1985, intellectuals had experienced the most relaxed political and intellectual atmosphere since 1949. Their support of the CCP reform policies seemed genuine. The social liberalization had gradually established a relatively private realm that was not closely monitored by the CCP Party/state.
However, the intellectual thaw in the mid-1980s did not last long. Obviously the liberal leadership was handcuffed by the conservative forces within the Party. The standpatters were waiting for a chance to strike back. That chance came when the university students started to parade on the streets of Anhui Province and spread to a number of large cities. The student turmoil caused the resignation of Hu Yaobang in early January 1987. Together with Hu, three outspoken critics of the CCP, namely Fang Lizhi, Liu Binyan, and Wang Ruowang, were expelled from the Party, thus arresting the liberalization process of the intellectuals.

The Limits to Reform

Throughout the 1980s, Deng was the undisputed leader of the CCP. He claimed himself to be the core of the second generation of the CCP leadership since the founding of the PRC. The economic and political structural reforms initiated by him have changed the Chinese Party/state polity significantly. The ideological flavour of the regime has receded. The Party fundamentalists conceded step by step to the reformist pressures and failed to preserve a Maoist orthodox line. The state has become less interfering, thanks to the establishment of an economic sphere that was relatively independent of CCP control. A legal code has emerged and the Party/state began to take the rights of the citizens more seriously. There were lawsuits against local government for pecuniary compensation by common folks in social issues. The economic reform enabled individuals to have opportunities to seek wealth, thus developing personal potentialities. One of the seven aspects of the political structural reform in Zhao Ziyang's political report in the Thirteenth CCP Congress was the establishment of a system of consultative dialogue between the Party/state
and societal groups. Accepting the necessity of resolving conflicting interests peacefully, the CCP realized that the economic and political reforms had transformed the social structure of the PRC. Divergent social interest groups have emerged.

Before the suppression of the prodemocracy movement in 1989, China's political scene was the most relaxed and rational-legal in value orientation, especially for intellectuals, since 1949. Many of them were co-opted into the government decision-making mechanisms of the State Council headed by Zhao Ziyang (Zhu Jianmin 1995). The political life of the Party was enlivened as the principle of "democratic centralism" was reinterpreted with more emphasis being put on the democratic aspect. In the Party/state bureaucracy, the removal, transfer, and promotion of the cadres have been more institutionalized and the responsibilities of the Party/state functionaries more clearly defined. However, the basic gist of the political system remained unchanged. The political system of the Dengist reformist era has been variously characterized as "consultative authoritarianism" (Harding 1987:200), "market Leninism" (Kristoff and WuDunn 1994:431), "Leninism without Marx" (Brugger and Kelly 1990:174), and "market Stalinism" (Gordon White 1993a:50). All of these characterizations convey the same message: soft economics and hard politics.36

Despite ten years of political structural reform and Hu-Zhao's determination to restructure the CCP Party/state, the political reform definitely has limitations, as shown in the crackdown of

36 It looks like Singaporean model. Deng had repeatedly expressed his admiration for the economic development of Singapore.
The limitations can be analysed from two perspectives: the personality element and the ideological-political dimension. In terms of life experience, Deng and his peer groups such as Chen Yun, Yang Shangkun, Peng Zhen, and Wang Zhen, belong to the first generation of leaders of the CCP who had struggled their entire lives in revolutionizing the Chinese state and society. In their view, the socio-political system they built in 1949 had functioned quite effectively for a long period of time and had achieved great success in national prestige until the outbreak of the CR. The 1950s was the golden age of their rule. The system was perverted by the increasingly dictatorial work style of Mao Zedong. To them, the basic system was sound. Obviously, they would not attempt to push reform to such an extent that this basic system would be completely overhauled. The condemnation and rejection of the Western notion of "division of power" was not accidental (Deng 1993:195, 307).

Among the gerontocrats, Deng was perhaps the most liberal. He did see the Stalinist command economy had failed to deliver the goods to the people. The Soviet model of development had become obsolete. The perverted principles of socialism must be reinterpreted and the mistaken policies in the CR corrected, but the fundamentals of the system must be preserved. Meanwhile, the economic management system must be reformed to keep in line with the modernization drive. This is precisely the position of Deng when he began the "second revolution".

---

37 Even in Yanan period, Deng was the first senior Party leader to advocate the diminution of Party power (Lam Wo-lap 1995:240).

38 In launching the modernization drive, Deng could not fail to notice the emergence of the East Asian NICs in China's peripheries. In each of these dragons, market forces play a very important role in their respective economic development.
Maintaining a precarious balance between the will to uphold the hegemony of the CCP and the determination to modernize the economy, Deng was walking on a tightrope. He was engaged in a "two front" battle. He was neither a leftist nor a rightist. He was both a reformist as well as a conservative. In fact, in a talk with George Schultz, a former Secretary of State of the United State of America, Deng (1993:209) frankly admitted that

In China, nobody is totally opposed to reform. Some people overseas take me as reformist; take others as conservatives. I am a reformist; this is correct. If you say upholding the four cardinal principles is conservative, then I am a conservative as well. To be more exact, I am a zhishi qiushi pai (pragmatist).

In the concluding speech to the Party's Theoretical Work Conference on 30 March 1979, Deng raised the slogan of upholding four cardinal principles, namely the socialist road, the hegemony of the CCP, the dictatorship of people's democracy, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. He argued that the upholding of the four cardinal principles was the prerequisites of China's four modernizations. Ideologically, on the one hand, he attacked the "phony, ultra-left socialism" and "feudal fascism" of the "Gang of Four"; on the other, he (1984:172-4) also warned a handful of people who were spreading ideas against the four cardinal principles, and the CCP must "struggle unremittingly against these currents of thoughts." The speech vividly demonstrated Deng's two-front battle: against ultra-leftism and bourgeois liberalization. This inherent instability of Deng's ideological mindset explains why the reform process was moving like a pendulum. This also explains that the reform policies always fall half way. The Maoist remnants in the Party, including Deng himself, constituted structural obstacles to the political reform. Trying to avoid confrontation with the Party conservatives, the reformists conceded whenever strong resistance occurred. As
Gordon White (1993a:197) observed, the reform era has created a "struggle between two parties within the Party."39

The separation of the Party and government functionaries was easier said than done. According to the reform plan, the Party leaders were supposed to decide the general orientations and directions of the policies. They should only exercise leadership over ideological and political work, not meddle with the daily administration of the government. In reality, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish political work from administrative work. With the principle of the monistic leadership of the CCP enshrined in the state Constitution, there is no guarantee that the Party officials exercise power only over the general direction of the Party and national policies. It is up to cadres to exercise self-restraint not to interfere with state affairs. Besides, the government officials who reject and resist the intervention of the Party cadres could easily be labelled as engaging in "anti-Party" activities. Furthermore, is it possible for someone to have power and not to use it? The answer is negative. The functioning of the Western democracy is based on the assumption that power should not be concentrated in one person or a group of people. There must be check and balance. "Absolute power corrupts absolutely" as Lord Acton said. The reformist intellectuals realized this and they introduced Western political theories to the Chinese audience gradually (Li Shengping 1989). The separation of the functions of the Party and government has not been ensured by constitutional means; rather it was outlined by the Party and the oscillation of the policies is too just obvious. In addition, in announcing the separation of the Party and government functions, the CCP also called for the strengthening of Party leadership. For the cadres,

39 In fact the reform process proceeded like a cycle. For a detailed analysis, see Baum (1994).
to strengthen means to control and have more power. The CCP policies in fact involved two inherently contradictory elements.

The introduction of the direct elections of the People’s Congress at the county level may have improved the quality of the deputies, in terms of educational background and age cohort, but it affects little the national political system as a whole. In fact, there occurred various kinds of difficulties at the level of implementation. Many middle-level cadres did not comply with the Election Law. Some increased the government representation to more than that allowed by the law. Some failed to provide more candidates than the posts to be filled. Some intervened in the nomination process and some even halted the entire election process in the midway (McCormick 1990:145-56). The competitive elections were only extended, at the highest level, to the SCNPC and CCP Central Committee. The method of electing the chairman and vice-chairmen of the NPC, the president and the vice-presidents of the PRC, the members of the CS, Politburo, and Standing Committee of the Politburo remains unchanged. The chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission and the state CMC has been occupied by the same person and in contrast to other key government posts, the term of service for the chairman of the state Central Military Commission is not stated in the new state Constitution.  

---

40 Taking one district from Nanjing as an example, McCormick (1990:130-56) provides an excellent case study on the problems emerging at the implementation level during the direct election at the county level. In fact, the student demonstrations at the end of 1986 started as a protest to the cadre’s abuse of power in the nomination stage in the county election (Tsang Wai-yin 1989).

41 About the personal experience of a NPC deputy, see Ng Hon-man (1990).
The arrangement of the political succession to the top Party post derailed when the two general secretaries Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang were dismissed. In fact, since the founding of the PRC, the succession arrangement has never been solved. Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao, the two successors anointed by Mao, met with tragic death. Hua Guofeng's reign was shortlived and he became a victim of political and ideological struggles. Since his third ascendance to power in the late 1970s, Deng had realized the urgency of the problem. He was a 74 year-old man when the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CC was held. Hu and Zhao were staunch reformists and they were Party veterans. Hu had been closely associated with Deng since the 1930s. He became the first secretary of the Communist Youth League in the 1950s. In the course of the CR, he was purged along with Deng. He was first restored to the position of the head of the important CCP Organization Department, a key position that was in charge of all the personnel change in the CCP nomenclature system. He held the concurrent post of the CCP Propaganda Department in June 1979. Under his leadership, a large number of old guards had been rehabilitated and three million cases of persecution had been reassessed (People's Daily 1 June 1989). He was elected the general secretary of the newly reinstated Central Secretariat in the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh CC in 1982, becoming therefore the nominal top man in the Party/state structure. It turned out that Deng's support was indispensable. He was accused of being lax in combating bourgeois liberalization and ignoring the four cardinal principles, which culminated in the student demonstrations in 1986. He was forced to resign.

Zhao was less intimate with Deng and his power basis was principally in Guangdong Province where he served as the first Party secretary before and after the CR. He was transferred to
Sichuan Province in December 1975, where he started to implement the agricultural responsibility system, together with Wan Li in Anhui Province (Liu Yan 1993). Zhao was so successful in his endeavour that there was a saying circulating in China in the late 1970s, "if you want foodgrain, look for Ziyang." He was picked by Deng and moved to the central government. Zhao replaced Hua Guofeng as the premier of the State Council in the Third Session of the Fifth NPC in 1980. When Hu resigned, Zhao succeeded as the acting general secretary. He was confirmed as the general secretary in the Thirteenth CCP Congress in 1987.\(^{42}\) Zhao was extremely unwilling to take up the top post. He repeatedly said that it was more appropriate for him to be the premier than the general secretary. In an interview with a Japanese journalist, he prophesized that he would be \textit{zai jie nan tao} (he could not escape the fate of being purged) (\textit{Ta Kung Pao} 28 February 1988).\(^ {43}\) Prophetically, he was charged with splitting the Party in handling the 1989 prodemocracy movement. Zhao (1994) defended his position but to no avail. He was dismissed from all Party/state posts except to keep his membership in an expanded CCP Politburo meeting in June 1989.\(^ {44}\) The notion of "third echelon" was not mentioned by the official press after 1987.

\(^{42}\) According to Wu Jiang (1995:128-9), Zhao’s political orientation was different from Hu Yaobang’s. In fact, the political line of "anti-leftist in economic arena, anti-rightist in political-ideological arena" was first proposed by Zhao in 1978 when he was still in Sichuan.

\(^{43}\) In Chinese, the four characters mean that the misfortune would definitely fall on me. In the political context in which the interview was conducted, what Zhao really meant was that the fate of being purged could not be avoided.

\(^{44}\) Since 1935, the expanded CCP Politburo meeting has become an extremely important venue in making major Party decisions. Here are some examples. Mao was elected the chairman of the Military Affairs Commission in Zunyi Conference in 1935. The CCP made the decision to establish the People’s Commune to accelerate the collectivization process in 1958. Peng Dehuai was purged in 1959. Mao circulated the 5.16 notice, announcing the beginning of the CR in 1966. Deng was dismissed by Mao in 1976. Hua Guofeng agreed to resign from the Party chairman post in 1980. Deng delivered the seminal speech on the political reform in 1980. Finally the resignation of Hu in 1987 and the dismissal of Zhao in 1989. All these important decisions were made in the expanded CCP Politburo meetings. It could be argued that the expanded Politburo meetings could co-opt more non-Politburo members in the discussion process. But it could be argued the other way round, at the time of crisis, very often the formal mechanisms would be brushed aside and non Politburo members could exercise
Despite the attempts at reducing the Party/state personnel in the 1980s, the problem of over-staffing remained serious. As of 1987, only 16% of the Party/state cadres were college-educated (He Buochuan 1988:359). According to the government figures (Chen Ruisheng 1992:101), the administrative expenditure was 2.5 times in 1990 that of 1980. In Gansu Province alone, the number of administrative staff expanded from 200,000 in 1980 to 660,000 in 1990. There were 2 million redundant staff in the county Party/state apparatus over the whole country. In the Central government, the total number of ministries and committees had gone up to 85 in 1992. The State Council was contemplating another round of administrative streamlining in 1993 (Li Peng 1993). Again, the Chinese bureaucracy seemed to fall into the vicious circle of "swelling-streamlining-reswelling-restreamlining". Structural incentives are inherent in the Party/state. Unless the structural elements are identified, the problem of over-expansion will not go away.

In every country, power begets opportunities. In China, political power is monopolized by the CCP which means the monopoly of opportunities or avenues of social mobility. In the reformist period, individuals could seek wealth through self-enterprising efforts but the Party/state officials still wield enormous power. In a country permeated by paternalism, nepotism and back-door guanxi, the political power of the officials gives them access to special privileges. The loss of political power may mean the loss of everything. The structural incentives in the enlistment of powerful influence over the decisions. The facts testify to the institutional weaknesses and unpredictability of the political process within the CCP and the lack of the Party's formal crisis-resolving mechanisms.
Party/state functionaries are almost unlimited. In the reformist era, the political opportunities have been transformed into economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{45}

The four cardinal principles were asserted in the 1982 state Constitution (Preamble). Among the four principles, Peng Zhen (1982) said that upholding the leadership of the CCP was the most important one. The strengthening of the NPC was construed as a means to contribute to the collective leadership dominated by the CCP. It was not envisaged to become an independent political machinery. This "highest state authority" is under the leadership of the Party. In a political crisis, it was simply cast aside. The case of Hu Jiwei, a former member of the SCNPC, is a case in point. Hu was a liberal and had been an editor-in-chief of the People's Daily in the early 1980s. In the debates on "socialist alienation",\textsuperscript{46} he was criticised. He was elected as a member of the SCNPC in 1988. In line with the power conferred by the Constitution as a SCNPC member, he called for an emergency meeting to discuss the political situation during the 1989 prodemocracy movement. His appeal was joined by another 56 SCNPC members. After the crackdown, he was criticised for acting improperly and was dismissed from the SCNPC and the vice-directorship of the SCNPC's Education, Science, literacy, and Health Committee in 1993.

\textsuperscript{45}The off-spring of the old veterans have been doing business in Hong Kong and becoming billionaires, for instance, Deng Zhifang, the younger son of Deng Xiaoping; Wan Chongchang, son of Wan Li; Wu Jianchang, son-in-law of Deng; Chen Weili, daughter of Chen Yun; Ye Xinfu, son of Ye Xuanping, etc. Autobiographical sketches of other princelings, see He Pin and Gao Xin (1995).

\textsuperscript{46}Deng intervened in the debates and the conservatives scored an intellectual victory.
In retrospect, the mid-1980s seemed to be the prime time for the outspoken intellectuals. Many expressed unorthodox views about the political system and Marxism. More importantly, the reformist leadership was sympathetic to their views. Having been classified as part of the working class and an important component of the productive force, intellectuals received more respect. At one time, leading academics were invited to give lectures to the leaders in Zhongnanhai. But the CCP leadership seemed to divide the intellectuals into two types: one technical and technological; the other liberal-humanistic. The leaders were never at ease with the latter. The 1980s saw the interspersing of political campaigns against the liberal-humanistic intellectuals. The campaign criticising Bai Hua, an army writer, was launched in 1981. Then the debates on "socialist alienation" ended as a number of key proponents lost their jobs. Hu Jiwei was one of them. Wang Ruoshui lost his post of deputy editor-in-chief of the People's Daily. The anti-bourgeois liberalization movement resulted in the expulsion of Fang Lizhi, Liu Binyan, and Wang Ruowang in 1987. The 1989 crackdown on intellectuals was the most severe one, resulting in the imprisonment of hundreds of intellectuals.47

In sum, ten years of reform have loosened Chinese polity and society considerably. Social liberalization has taken place. Social structure has differentiated and the occupational system has diversified. Popular culture has emerged and the privileges of the leading cadres have been broken to some extent. By the mid-1980s, the combined economic and political reform measures were able to ameliorate the legitimacy crisis. In the second of the 1980s, China encountered serious

47 Usually, the CCP would be lenient to the prominent intellectuals or students and harsh on ordinary citizens and workers.
economic problems, such as hyper-inflation and dislocation. The political corruption of the Party/state had led to dissatisfaction from all walks of life. By the end of the decade, the PRC faced severe challenges from university students and intellectuals.
References


*Beijing Review*, China, various issues.


Cheng Ming Monthly (Contending), Hong Kong, various issues.


Hu, Yaobang. 1981. "Zai qingzhu zhonggong zhengli liushi zhounian daihui shang de jianghua" (Speech Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the CCP), Hong Kong: Tai Kun Pao, 2 July.

----------. 1982. "Chuanmian kaichuang shehui zhuyi xiandaihua de xinjumian" (To Create a New Phase of the Socialist Modernization Comprehensively), Report delivered at the Twelveth CCP Congress. Hong Kong: Wen Wei Pao, 8 September.

----------. 1983. "Makesi zhuyi weidai zhenli de guangmang zhaoyao women qianjin" (The Great Truth of Marxism leads us Forward), Hong Kong: Wen Wei Pao, 14 March.

----------. 1985. "Guanyu dandexinwen gongzuo" (Concerning the Press Work of the Party), Hong Kong: Wen Wei Pao, 15 April.


Ming Pao News Daily, Hong Kong, various issues.


Open Monthly, Hong Kong, various issues.


Ruan, Ming. 1994. Deng Xiaoping Empire. Taipei: China Times Cultural Enterprise Ltd.


Ta Kung Pao, Hong Kong, various issues.

The Mirror Monthly, Hong Kong, various issues.


Wan, Li. 1986. "Juece minzhuhua he kexuehua si zhengzhi tizhi gaige de yige zhongyao keti" (To Make Decision-Making Scientific and Democratic is an Important Part of the Political Reform), Renmin Ribao, 15 August.


Ye, Jianying. 1979. "Zai qingzhu zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengli sanshi zhounian daihuishang de jianghua" (Speech Commemorating the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Establishment of People's Republic of China), Hong Kong: Wen Wei Pao, 13 September.


