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Bureaucracy and Policy Making

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INTRODUCTION

At first glance, policy making in China appears to have somewhat of a Hobbesian quality to it. However, confidential interviews with officials at the Center and local levels, analyses of speeches and official rollouts of key policy pronouncements, access to internal document flows, and the ability to use comparative frameworks with other political systems have allowed scholars to identify and document key structures and processes that explain what occurs within the black box of policy making in China. In doing so, they have been able to transform our understanding of what may seem like highly idiosyncratic behavior (within a highly complex institutional context) into rational, quasi-predictable outcomes.

To understand policy in China – how it is made, how it is implemented and enforced, and how it is manipulated and transformed along the way – it is essential to understand the specific government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) institutions that provide the opportunities, constraints, and incentives that shape the policy process. This includes understanding how and why a specific policy gains prominence at a given time, how various competing interests force their preferences onto the agenda, and how the delivery systems translate policy to action, all within a continental-sized country possessing (until recently) an extremely underdeveloped infrastructure, and containing the largest population in the world.[1]

Many of the organizational pathologies confronting Chinese leaders and citizens alike are a result of attempting to graft a globalized, market-based system

onto a pre-existing Mao-era structure. At the same time, key contours of Chinese policy making have their origins in or are a conscious rejection of their antecedents in the pre-modern era. Thus, it is useful to trace our analysis back even beyond the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 to the practice of statecraft in Imperial China.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The traditional Chinese state was highly centralized, yet extremely limited in its penetration of society. On the one hand, the emperor was expected to be fully engaged in the affairs of the state. This would, of course, vary based on the individual abilities of the men holding the title; the stage of the dynastic cycle (consolidation, pinnacle, and decline); the presence or absence of domestic challenges to his rule, such as famine, flooding, or drought; and external threats to the empire, among other considerations. On the other hand, the state had an extremely limited span of policy activity. The administrative structure established during the Sui Dynasty (581–617) was that of 'three departments and six ministries' (三省六部), in which the latter (also called 'boards') consisted of personnel (吏部), revenue (户部), rites (礼部), defense (兵部), justice (刑部), and public works (工部).[2] Falling outside of this policy universe, what would today be regarded as other potential 'policy areas' were not of central concern to the state.

Equally important were the limits to the spatial reach of the state, which only extended down to the county (县) level. Below that, cities, towns, villages, and hamlets were managed by local elites who sought these authoritative offices for prestige or financial gain. As G. William Skinner has argued, most Chinese's universe of social interactions was contained within a very limited economic sphere into which politics rarely intruded.[3] As for the officials who occupied the administrative levels (province, prefecture, and county) between the emperor and the sub-county local elites, they were appointed and promoted according to meritocratic criteria reflecting, among other things, Confucian standards of stable and harmonious governance. To limit their power, they were subject to the Law of Avoidance and the Law of Mourning, which, respectively, made them ineligible to serve in their home regions and required them to mourn for up to three years after the death of a close relative, seriously interrupting their career trajectories and preventing them from amassing too much power independent of the emperor.[4]

The first half of the twentieth century saw a period of political dissolution in which attempts to modernize governance beginning after the 1912 founding of the Republic of China were thwarted by the Japanese invasion, civil war, and by the Nationalist Government's institutional weaknesses. This changed dramatically after 1949. In the newly established People's Republic of China (PRC), the state, encompassing the government and the CCP, extended beyond the county

level, to the townships (镇), the villages (乡), and even to the hamlets (村). This increased by an order of magnitude the arena within which policy was formulated and contested. In order to manage this change, the functional expanse of the state also multiplied, particularly after 1953, with the creation of Soviet-styled ministries spanning the policy world from education to agriculture, metallurgy to transportation, and finance to national defense. The scale of this enhanced state apparatus would have been impossible for traditional Chinese officials to contemplate. How to achieve any semblance of coherence within this extraordinarily complex and ever-evolving matrix of interests and incentives through the execution of policy has been the challenge for China's leaders ever since.

PARADIGMS OF POLICY MAKING IN CHINA

The *ur*-text of what we know about the institutional structure of the Chinese state is A. Doak Barnett's pioneering 1966 volume, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*.[5] Although specific pieces of the puzzle he unravels have changed over time (e.g., communes have been retired as an administrative level in China), much of what he documented remains startlingly intact. As such, Barnett's work remains fundamentally important as a descriptive indicator of institutional durability in China. Subsequent scholarship has built on this, extending and deepening Barnett's descriptive snapshot to capture the dynamics of the policy process in China along a longitudinal axis.

Power Politics

In their seminal *Policy Making in China*, Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg (1988)[6] identify (and debunk) what they call the 'power model' that explains policy making and policy change in China.[7] This follows the conventional wisdom that politics is simply about power and the person or institution with the most power will prevail in a given political contest. Such a scenario may have appeared to conform to the pre-reform era of the PRC when the degree of Mao's authority allowed him to prevail with his policy preferences even when the rest of the Politburo Standing Committee was united in opposition.[8] Teiwes suggests that other top leaders' access to Mao was hindered by 'the dangers perceived in getting too close to the awesome power in Mao's grasp.'[9] However, this approach leaves out several things. First, there were times that Mao's policy preferences did not carry the day, such as the proto-capitalist policies introduced following the Great Leap Forward. Second, Mao often needed powerful allies with independent preferences, as when he mobilized the military, the cultural apparatus, and the person of Zhou Enlai to enable the launch of the Cultural Revolution. Finally, even if one posits for the sake of argument that the power model worked for China under Mao, it does not apply to much of the post-Mao reform era.

Rational Choice

In contrast to the 'power model', this approach posits that out of a competing set of policy prescriptions, the option with the highest payoff relative to cost will carry the day. This line of thinking follows much of the dominant assumptions of mainstream political science. But it also has a number of shortcomings. First, costs and benefits are hardly uniform among the various parties involved in a particular policy formulation body, let alone among implementation agents. Second, it ignores the empirical reality of widespread policy failures scattered throughout the past seven decades of Chinese history, which cannot be attributed solely to unanticipated outcomes. Third, it eliminates the concept of power from the discussion of actual politicking, flattening the topography of political interaction. Finally, it similarly denies institutional constraints and incentives that can, and often do, lead to organizational choices and patterns that deeply affect the process and substance of policy.[10]

Political Bargaining

In 1987, David Lampton introduced the concept of policy making as a **bargaining** process, what he called the 'bargaining treadmill.'[11] What made Lampton's formulation so innovative was that it suggested important points of comparison with other political contexts, such as the legislatures of democratic countries, by casting policy making as a non-regime-specific case of horse-trading, 'logrolling,' or just plain old 'pork-barrel politics,' as common in Baton Rouge as in Beijing. It also laid out various dimensions of the policy making process that were not captured by or which were inconsistent with earlier models: bargaining as a process marked by sluggishness, by decisions made on principle with details left for later deliberation, and by separate bargaining arenas at all stages of the policy making and implementation process. Variation in effective processes and outcomes were positively correlated with elite attention, and the specter of corruption always lurked around the corner. Officials were constantly trying to game the system with 'foot-in-the-door' projects and *faits accomplis*. For Lampton, bargaining emerged from an institutional context of massive parallel bureaucracies with ineffective horizontal coordinating mechanisms, societal interests baked into institutional culture, and a decentralized system dominated by local political concerns and tempered by norms of fairness and consultation.[12]

Fragmented Authoritarianism

Anticipated by Lampton's work on bargaining, Lieberthal and Oksenberg formulated what remains perhaps the most durable framework through which to understand Chinese politics: **fragmented authoritarianism**.[13] This framework extends Barnett's earlier descriptive framework for understanding Chinese

bureaucratic politics – with its emphasis on functional bureaucratic clusters (系统), gatekeeping functions (口), and vertical (条) and horizontal (块) **authority relations** – into the dynamics of the policy process. Fragmented authoritarianism posits that, in order for policy to stand a chance at implementation, no matter how imperfectly, it must take into account the various interests of implementation agents (that is, local governments or functional bureaucracies) at all administrative levels of the system who take advantage of institutional fragmentation to leverage their own parochial interests. In short, it is based on consensus. During this process, the content of the policy is repeatedly negotiated at all administrative levels, sometimes only bearing passing resemblance to the spirit and letter of the original formulation. Thus, fragmented authoritarianism is neither solely a top-down process (power) nor does it reflect a meritocratic (rational) policy process. Rather, it is the configuration of the divergent interests of all relevant parties necessary for successful implementation that is built into the substance of a policy at the policy making stage. This has become especially true during the reform era, when much economic – and by extension, political – decision making has been downshifted to the localities, and thus is increasingly dependent on local support for compliance success.[14]

Recent Trends

During an extended period of opening up starting from about 2002 and lasting until around 2007, there was a noteworthy degree of political liberalization during which 'policy entrepreneurs' in China (much like their counterparts in liberal democracies) exploited newly salient issues, often by altering the ways they were framed in policy discussions and in the media, in order to 'expand the sphere of political conflict' (a process noted by E.E. Schattschneider in democratic policy contexts a half-century ago), thereby changing the political calculus of decisionmakers in the policy making process.[15] This was a significant development because it lowered the barriers to entry into the policy process for actors hitherto denied access. It was seen most vividly in the environmental policy sphere, but also extended into such unlikely areas as international trade.[16] In the age of social media, gaining celebrity status (referred to as 'Big V' actors) within China provides another such entrée of one's preferences into previously rarefied policy circles.[17] That said, beginning in the second Hu Jintao administration and extending into the era of Xi Jinping, the promising political liberalization of a decade ago that animated this pluralization of the policy process has taken a number of steps back.[18]

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Part of what shapes the contours of the policy process in an authoritarian state like China is the leadership style of the individual at the top of the system.

While it is important to avoid overstating the power of even the most formidable of modern Chinese leaders when it comes to policy, the authority of the person steering the ship of state has allowed his policy preferences and leadership style to affect to varying degrees the political and institutional nexus within which policy was formulated and executed.

Mao Zedong (1949–1976)

No Chinese leader since 1949 has had the degree of authority that Mao Zedong was able to amass during the Communist rise to power from the 1920s through the 1940s. On the one hand, Mao's articulation of his political vision was largely abstract, Utopian, and almost poetic – often comprised of big ideas with necessarily considerable spaces for discretion or interpretation. On the other hand, as Teiwes has argued, Mao also initially (during the 1950s) carefully fostered a norm of **democratic centralism** (民主集中制), in which policy was discussed extensively, even heatedly, among top policy makers with the understanding that opposition during the policy making stage to what eventually would be adopted would be forgiven if the leadership presented a united front of support for the policy once it was agreed upon.[19] Complicating the process was the fact that Mao was a voracious reader whose indication of having read a Central Committee document was necessary (after 1953) for that document to be considered valid and official.[20] In addition, Mao oftentimes changed his mind and indicated his preferences in opaque and suggestive ways that were difficult for many of his associates to understand. Mao was a novice when it came to certain key policy areas, notably the economy, yet this did not prevent him from giving his opinions on even the most arcane policy details, or forcing his colleagues to accept dramatic changes in fundamental policy orientation.[21]

These tensions were mitigated to a degree by the sheer number of face-to-face meetings the top leadership convened during this time in locations throughout the country, enabling them to get a somewhat-less-distorted sense of local conditions than they would get in Beijing, and bringing local leaders (often nominally) into the policy making process.[22] But this had its limits.

In the late 1950s, Mao sought to rein in some of the power that he saw the government amassing at the expense of the CCP. In 1958, he discounted expertise and instead mobilized human capital to achieve agricultural and production goals through the Great Leap Forward (GLF, 1958–1961) through the mechanism of mass **political campaigns** (运动). From the earliest days of the People's Republic, campaigns were one of the key delivery systems for policy implementation and enforcement in China. Local cadres were given instructions on what a given campaign's goals, scope, and duration would be, and their citizens would be incentivized to participate, and thus be invested in the outcome. Mass movements (going back to the 1930s–40s experiments at governance in the Yan'an base area)[23] were premised on the idea that China's resource endowments greatly

favored (largely uneducated) labor as human capital, coupled with the idea that the masses could be properly informed through propaganda. If the state could mobilize enough politically enlightened people to tackle a problem, it could be solved – regardless of scientific or natural conditions.

The pathologies that emerged from the campaign approach had as much to do with poorly-thought-out ideas at the policy making stage as with imperfect implementation. Although relying on feedback effects to recalibrate policy, these channels were overwhelmed by and subsumed under the sheer energy, enthusiasm, and career advancement opportunities for (as well as the potential to use national policy goals to advance the parochial interests of) the local leaders that these mass movements unleashed. This culminated in the over-reporting of crop yields during the GLF, which, when coupled with draconian extraction policies based on these inflated numbers, left the countryside without food, and led to the deaths of up to 40 million Chinese.[24]

Norms of democratic centralism suffered a serious setback at the Lushan Plenum in July 1959, when Mao's takedown of Minister of Defense Peng Dehuai because of the latter's criticism of aspects of the GLF during the policy *making* process led to Peng's immediate dismissal and subsequent purge. The result was a slow but steady trend toward a fracturing of the policy making and policy implementation processes, in which the norms of democratic centralism were *reversed*. In the early 1960s, the Socialist Education Movement demonstrated this corrosive new dynamic: the leadership would ostensibly agree with the general goals and contours of the program during the policy making stage but would deviate from Mao's preferences during the policy implementation stage. This debasement of democratic centralism was untenable politically, as it sowed suspicion among elites and opened a vast political chasm.

This trend ultimately led to the Cultural Revolution (CR), which, above all, was a gargantuan power struggle within the CCP over the country's direction after the revolutionary generation of leaders had passed from the scene. Although the CR is often remembered for its violence and the almost complete breakdown of the Chinese political system, it also counted among its key dimensions a set of policy shifts. Institutionally, this meant the creation of power structures and policy making bodies actually antagonistic to the CCP's traditional structures. This included the Cultural Revolution Small Group, which was in open conflict with established leaders in the Politburo. On the policy front, Mao was preoccupied with the inequalities that were growing between urban and rural citizens as well as within the state and society at large, particularly in education, culture, and medicine. The CR sought to reverse these trends through mass mobilization via political campaigns that violently targeted the very government and Party institutions (now also competing with newly formed revolutionary committees, 革命委员会) that he had spent the previous fifteen years establishing.

By severely weakening these institutions, however, Mao unintentionally made them more flexible, and ultimately more durable. Indeed, what is striking is how

many of these same policy making institutions, created in the 1950s and sub-verted in the 1960s and 1970s, remain in service today, underscoring an impressive degree of organizational continuity in post-1949 China.

Deng Xiaoping (1978–1992, 1997)[25]

Given the ways in which post-Mao reforms in China deviate so fundamentally from the Mao era, it is easy to forget that Deng Xiaoping – the man who was purged twice by Mao and who led China through its first decade-and-a-half of reform – was a member of Mao's political faction. The key difference between the two is that Deng was at heart a pragmatist. Like Mao before him and China's leaders since, Deng embraced the goal of making China wealthy and powerful. Unlike Mao, Deng was largely secular when it came to the means of achieving this outcome. The saying most closely associated with Deng is that 'it doesn't matter if a cat is black or white; if it catches mice, it is a good cat' (不管黑猫白猫 捉到老鼠就是好猫), reflecting his adept manipulation of Mao's own language to 'seek truth from facts' (实事求是) and that 'practice is the sole criterion for truth' (实践是检验真理的唯一标准) to employ non-Maoist means to achieve policy goals.

Much of what Deng sought to do was to dismantle the components of the state – mostly economic – that hindered China's progress. Deng also attempted to maintain CCP control without it being socially and intellectually stultifying. Deng fostered a sense of **consensus-building** among his senior colleagues while providing political cover for his younger protégés to push the envelope of what could be considered 'Marxist.' When the negative externalities of such policy shifts such as corruption or inflation emboldened more traditional or conservative elements among the top leadership, Deng would undertake tactical retreats, so long as the overall reform trajectory remained positive.

As noted, Deng sought to embrace a consensus-building norm at the top of the system, whether through a credible counterweight in the person of Chen Yun (according to Richard Baum) or as the first among his top lieutenants (according to Joseph Fewsmith).[26] He restored the norm of democratic centralism and enhanced it by offering everybody a little of something in order to give them a minimum investment in any given policy.

Two crucial changes under Deng further deepened this bargaining approach to policy making and implementation. The first was a political calculus. In order to shift the political balance in his favor, he needed a counterweight to political inertia and outright opposition to reform among elites at the Center. He accomplished this by enticing central stakeholders and local leaders to invest further in reform by delegating an unprecedented amount of economic decision making to the localities, what Susan Shirk calls 'playing to the provinces.'[27] Once duly empowered and supportive, these local cadres were recruited into the CCP Central Committee at hitherto unseen levels.

The second change was economic, but with tectonic political effects: the slow dismantling of the planned economy. This was a series of experiments, half-measures, and inelegant political compromises that weaned the economy away from bureaucratic interests and toward market incentives, what Barry Naughton has called 'growing out of the plan.'[28] Initially modest and based in the countryside under the 'household responsibility system,' it expanded into urban areas in 1984 and met with considerable challenges. For the sake of policy making, the main consequence of the dismantling of the planned economy was that local leaders could no longer be compelled or deterred from certain courses of action by the threat of withholding key economic inputs for the mandated economic outputs upon which their evaluation and promotion depended.

As under Mao, successful local policy experiments became **models** for the entire country to emulate (encapsulated in the reform-era aphorism of 'crossing the river by feeling the stones,' 摸着石头过河). Target areas would be given the political cover necessary to try new approaches to emerging or intractable problems and, if successful, would be rewarded and their policies adopted nationwide. This was particularly true in the economic realm, but also extended into other policy areas.

Toward the end of the 1980s, **factionalism** arose among China's top leaders, based largely on differing opinions surrounding the scope, depth, and pace of reform, with particular attention to the ways in which economic reform (which was sanctioned) might lead to calls for political reform (which was not). This culminated in the purge of Deng's two anointed successors, Hu Yaobang (in 1987) and Zhao Ziyang (in 1989), and the rise of protests in 1986–1987 and, on a much larger scale, in 1989. Following the 1989 protests in many of China's cities and the massacres in Beijing and Chengdu, reform was put on hold. Deng struck back with his 'Southern Tour' (南巡) in January 1992, during which (ironically, in truly uncharacteristic, Maoist fashion) he visited the sites of early economic reform as a private citizen and uttered a few catchphrases endorsing China's continued opening up, thus enshrining the economic trajectory upon which the People's Republic of China continues today.

Jiang Zemin (1989–2002) and Hu Jintao (2002–2012)

The leadership styles of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao could not have been more different, yet both witnessed increases in the power of institutions and some degree of decline in the power of the individuals at the top. The mechanics of policy making and implementation did not differ radically between the two, even as their policy preferences did – sometimes markedly so.

For Jiang, his first few years in power were spent consolidating his political gains from succession and taking command of what he had largely inherited from Deng by the time the latter's health took a turn for the worse in 1994. Jiang embraced a supply-side approach to economic wealth creation and distribution

and encouraged opportunities for actors throughout the system, often extending deep into the state itself to generate wealth. He continued previous trends of policy experimentation, creative policy implementation, and consensus-based policy making. As far as the latter is concerned, Jiang was constrained and assisted, respectively, by the more unpopular conservative Li Peng and the talented ultra-pragmatist Zhu Rongji. Perhaps counter-intuitively, this allowed Jiang to pursue reform in previously unapproachable policy areas such as the state-owned enterprise (SOE) sector in 1998, as well as to contain the challenges presented by the Asian financial crisis of 1997.

Hu Jintao, on the other hand, took redistribution of wealth as his mandate. Hu sought to rebalance the socioeconomic order and reduce income inequality, channeling economic gains into the less-developed regions of the country through massive infrastructure projects. In particular, Hu championed pro-rural reforms, such as lifting the tax burden on farmers around 2005–2008. On the policy making front, Hu was even more of a consensus-builder than his predecessors, arguably to a fault. If consensus could not be achieved on a particular policy area, it was tabled or sent back for review.

The thing that makes the Jiang and Hu eras stand out in terms of policy making is the complexity of policy and the institutional politics of **policy coordination**. Although China had for a long time been playing catch-up between internal and external demands and the capacity of the state, by the 1990s, it had globalized to a degree that the traditional institutions created early in the Mao era could no longer manage the complexities that they faced in any number of policy areas. As a result, the largely silo-based approach that governed policy coordination under Mao and Deng increasingly gave way to a much broader and more complex set of institutional arrangements to better coordinate policy (see *xitong* and leadership small groups below). Consensus was key to policy success.

This is not to say that campaigns have disappeared from political life altogether. Elizabeth Perry and others have noted echoes of the past in the form of 'managed campaigns,' in which top-down, state-managed campaigns have been used to mobilize resources around state priorities and generate normative interest and investment among the citizen-consumers of those policies, such as in the New Socialist Countryside movement of the 2000s.[29]

Xi Jinping (2012–)

The tenure of Xi Jinping provides an extraordinary contrast to the gradualist cadence of the Hu administration. It has been marked by bold, controversial political acts that have sought to concentrate increasing amounts of power in the hands of Xi and his supporters within the CCP more generally. Faced with an inevitable economic slowdown after a generation of double-digit growth, it has become clear to Xi (as it was to Hu Jintao before him) that the export-based manufacturing model can no longer sustain China's economic growth and needs

to be replaced with a more service-based, innovation-grounded economy combined with a dramatic increase in consumer spending (thus necessitating fundamental financial reform). This goes against the incentives of tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of local cadres, whose financial coffers and prospects for promotion have been dependent on the *status quo* since the introduction of reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Given the concentrations of power at the local level, this presents a formidable obstacle to the Center's desires to reform the economy.[30]

While the more consensus-based Hu Jintao sought to usher in such economic reform, Hu's failure to do so became a cautionary tale for Xi about how not to effect such policy change. As a result, we have seen Xi's enhanced accumulation of power extending throughout the government and party apparatus in the form of an intense anti-corruption campaign undertaken by the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (中央纪律检查委员会), combined with dramatic institutional changes and concentration of CCP power (both represented by the Comprehensive Deepening of Reform leading group, 中央全面深化改革领导小组), which together seem to be a means of leveraging entrenched opposition throughout the system to allow for the fundamental structural economic reform necessary for China to maintain the minimum degree of economic growth required to meet societal expectations and ensure political stability.

DYNAMICS OF POLICY MAKING

It should be stated at the outset that not all policies are created equal. When supported by demonstrated elite commitment, a dedicated policy-specific financial or budgetary outlay (or, by contrast, strong sanctions for non-compliance), or if they can be easily quantified, all things being equal, such a policy is likely to be more successful. As a dramatic example of this, China's One-Child Policy was able to successfully regulate the most intimate behavior of more than a billion people for more than a generation.[31] However, casual observers often draw the wrong conclusion: they accurately see the One-Child Policy as what the Chinese state is able to do, but they inaccurately conclude that if Beijing can enforce such a draconian policy, it can also simultaneously enforce any and all other (often more easily enforceable) policies with the same degree of attention and success. This is a fundamental error in evaluating China's state capacity. In fact, Beijing can only mobilize the resources for a handful of such sustained state priorities at any given time, reflecting the main concerns of Beijing at that moment. This does not mean that these other (that is, the vast majority of) policies are not taken seriously; it simply means that they are not seen as overwhelmingly pressing (demographic trends presented an existential threat to China; poor enforcement of intellectual property doesn't yet) and are therefore subject to the institutional constraints and procedural challenges described below.

China's leaders sit atop a policy making Leviathan comprising tens of millions of government officials, Party members, activists, and others engaged in the policy process. China's top leadership recognizes that it needs to carefully navigate the policy making apparatus in order for its political preferences to be successfully translated into policy. Although this seems an impossibly overwhelming task, it represents, in fact, the day-to-day operations of the Chinese state. This section identifies and explains some of the key dimensions of the structure and process governing policy making in China.

Administrative Rank

As complicated and opaque as the Chinese state might appear at first, its administrative ranking system is a remarkably useful indicator as a first cut at identifying power relations. Every bureaucratic unit in China has a specified rank, which determines where it fits within the administrative hierarchy. At the Center, a ministry (部) has a higher rank than a bureau (厅/局/司), which, in turn, has a higher rank than does an office (室); a commission (委员会) is a half-step higher than a ministry,[32] while other units (署) may indicate a commission- (审计署) or ministry-level (海关总署) unit. While equal-ranking units cannot issue binding orders to one another, they are incentivized to find a solution among themselves when conflicts arise; otherwise, they have to kick the problem upstairs and risk (1) aggravating a superior and (2) being faced with a solution by which they receive none of the benefits they would have otherwise obtained through a compromise. In short, they have every incentive to negotiate a bargained outcome.

As Table 17.1 shows, there is a clear delineation of rank among Chinese administrative units from the top of the system all the way down to the bottom (Center, province, prefecture, municipality, county, township/village, and hamlet). Such a ranking is defined both functionally in top-down fashion as well as spatially across China's landmass; for example, a ministry in Beijing has the same bureaucratic rank as a province (省). The fact that these two multidimensional categories of bureaucratic agents have the same two-dimensional administrative rank conceals the fact that spatial and functional coordination draw on different mechanisms in the policy making and implementation process.

Document Rubrics

In addition to the grading of offices in China, there is also a rank ordering of policy documents, covering everything from who has access (and what type of access) to the document stream, how much flexibility they allow for implementation, as well as what stage of development they are in at the policy making stage. At one extreme, orders (命令) are to be carried out without question; decisions (决定) allow an ever-so-slight degree of flexibility in their implementation; regulations (规定) posit those cases to be followed to the letter while specifying

Table 17.1 Rank and authority relations in China

Administrative Level (Spatial)	Top-Level Government Unit	Functional Units within (under) the Government[1]
National	State Council (国务院)	Commission/*weiyuanhui* (委员会) Ministry/*bu* (部) Bureau/*ting, ju* or *si* (厅, 局, or 司) Department/*chu* (处) Office/*bangongshi* (办公室)
Province/*sheng* (省) Provincial-Level Municipality/*zhixia shi* (直辖市) Autonomous Region/*zizhi qu* (自治区) Special Administrative Region/*tebie xingzheng qu*(特别行政区)	Provincial Government – *buji* (部级) – same rank as Ministry (部)	*ju* (1) 一级局 (*zheng*) *ting* (厅) *ju* (2) 二级局/副级局 *ju* (3) Same as a *chu* – 县级局
Prefecture/*di zhou shi* (地 州 市)	Bureau/*ju* (局)	*ke* (科)
(Rural) County/*xian* (县) (Urban) District/*qu* (区)	Department/*chu* (处) – may use 'ju' (局) – but actual rank is *chu* (处)	*gu* (股) – county government functional units have centralized leadership relations with their township counterparts (*zhan*/站), or, if such counterparts do not exist, exercise direct control at the town/township/village level
Town/*zhen* (镇) – over 10 per cent of the population registered as *non*-agricultural (often, there is no distinction between 'town' and 'township')	*zhan* (站) – township-level functional units (rare)	
Township/*xiang* (乡) –often, *xiang* is referred to as 'village')		
Village or hamlet/*cun* (村)		

[1]*Note*: These distinctions can be muted in practice, particularly at the national level.

others in which only the spirit of the policy is to be considered; instructions (指示) provide an opportunity for experimentation, subsequently reviewed by higher-ups; circulars (通知) are used as cover letters for reference materials to

explain how they are to be used; while opinions (意见) suggest that the policy is still being discussed at the policy making stage and considered tentative. These document rubrics provide important information for local cadres in terms of how to approach any given policy initiative by which they are confronted. They are thus a key source of information for officials on how to maneuver within the complexities and hidden dangers of the policy realm.[33] Indeed, local governments are incentivized to expand their number of functional offices so that they can maximize the amount of information supplied through the document stream.

Spatial Coordination

The traditional aphorism 上有政策 下有对策 ('those above have their policies while we down below have our countermeasures') has a long and distinguished pedigree in China. One of the key challenges to the leadership in Beijing on the policy front is to take this into account when formulating policies as well as establishing the enforcement mechanisms and incentives necessary to implement them. At the same time, even at the height of China's centralization under the planned economy, the PRC was substantially less centralized than the Soviet Union.[34] In fact, much of China's government is, surprisingly to many, highly decentralized. According to Pierre Landry, it remains one of the most decentralized governments in the world.[35]

This is explained by and reflected in the configuration of authority relations, something that is invisible to the naked eye but absolutely fundamental to the policy process in China. Any single bureaucratic unit has a number of formal and informal responsibilities that link it to a constellation of other units in China (sometimes referred to in the bureaucratic vernacular as 'mothers-in-law' 婆婆) that may wax and wane, depending on where within the policy space it finds itself at a given place and time. Without an organizational logic to untangle this Gordian knot, the system would grind to a halt. The way by which the Chinese state is able to accomplish this is simple and powerful: distinguishing between centralized and decentralized leadership relations.

To simplify, there are two types of authority relations in China. They are non-binding, consultative 'professional' relations (业务关系) and binding 'leadership' relations (领导关系). A given bureaucratic unit in China can have professional relations with any number of other bureaucratic units, but it can *only have leadership relations with one other unit*. The trick is to identify which unit is the one with which a subordinate unit has leadership relations. Those units that have leadership relations with their functional equivalent at the next administrative level up (e.g., a provincial-level customs bureau will have leadership relations with the national General Administration of Customs) are said to have centralized leadership relations (条上领导). In such a case, the provincial-level customs bureau has only non-binding, consultative relations with the provincial

government in which it is ostensibly embedded. The vast majority of Chinese bureaucracies, however, have decentralized leadership relations (块上领导) in which a functional unit has leadership relations with the government at the same administrative level. For example, a provincial agriculture bureau will not have leadership relations with the national Ministry of Agriculture, but rather with the provincial government in which it is rooted.[36] The logic is that local governments understand the conditions in their locales than would a ministry in Beijing. However, this also introduces a degree of 'implementation bias' (bending the
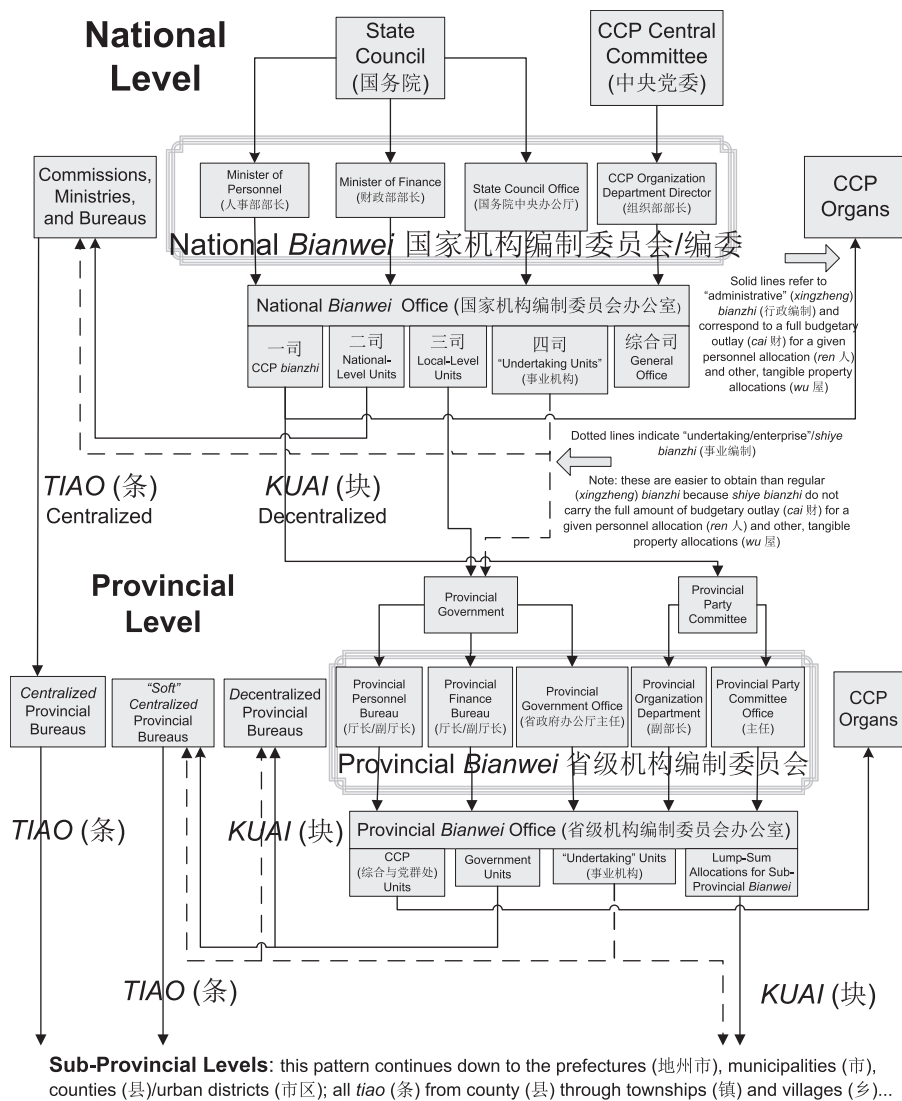

Figure 17.1   Budget-based authority relations

spirit of the law into unrecognizable contortions to accord with local incentives while staying, sometimes barely, within the letter of the law) into the streams of policy implementation.

The question of authority relations is much more than a simple conceptual distinction. Real power over the disbursement of government funds is held by relatively few (in the neighborhood of 3,000[37]) high-ranking cadres, and the ways in which these funds are translated into personnel, budgets, and property (人财屋) and transmitted from superior to functionally- or spatially-subordinate units is the mechanism through which authority relations throughout the system are exercised. These resources are transferred through what is called a personnel/budgetary allocation (*bianzhi*, 编制) that is handled through a government- and Party-controlled leading group and its local counterparts throughout the system.[38]

As was the case with Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's reporting on Watergate, when attempting to understand authority relations in China – and, by extension, how policy is made and implemented – it is necessary to 'follow the money.' *Bianzhi* is at the very root of, institutionally, who has power over whom in China, as shown in Figure 17.1

In the past twenty years, there have been attempts to re-centralize the system, or to re-establish some of the control that Beijing has given up in empowering local state actors. In 1994, the government instituted tax reform,[39] while in the early 2000s, there was an attempt to recentralize certain key financial, commercial, and regulatory bureaucracies, with mixed success.[40] Under Xi Jinping, formal and informal mechanisms are being introduced to further centralize Xi's power. These attempts illustrate one of the most important tensions inherent in enforcing policy in China.

In addition to instituting a mandatory retirement age and limiting tenure at any given position, a key method by which superior administrative units try to rein in the localities under their jurisdiction is through managing the criteria by which local leading cadres are evaluated for promotion. One way to explain patterns of policy enforcement is to separate out policies that are easily quantifiable from those that are not (e.g., economic growth rates, birth rates, incidence of protest). Because their results are more concrete, policies concerning the former tend to have higher rates of enforcement than do the latter.[41] Over the past decade or so, certain policy areas – particularly environmental protection – have become more privileged among these promotion criteria and have thus received more attention. Under Xi, there has been a shift toward more ambiguous indicators (such as quality of life) that are far more open to interpretation and for which it is more challenging for local cadres to demonstrate compliance.[42]

Functional Coordination

China's complex network of government ministries, commissions, bureaus, and other administrative units was forged under the Stalinist-oriented First Five Year
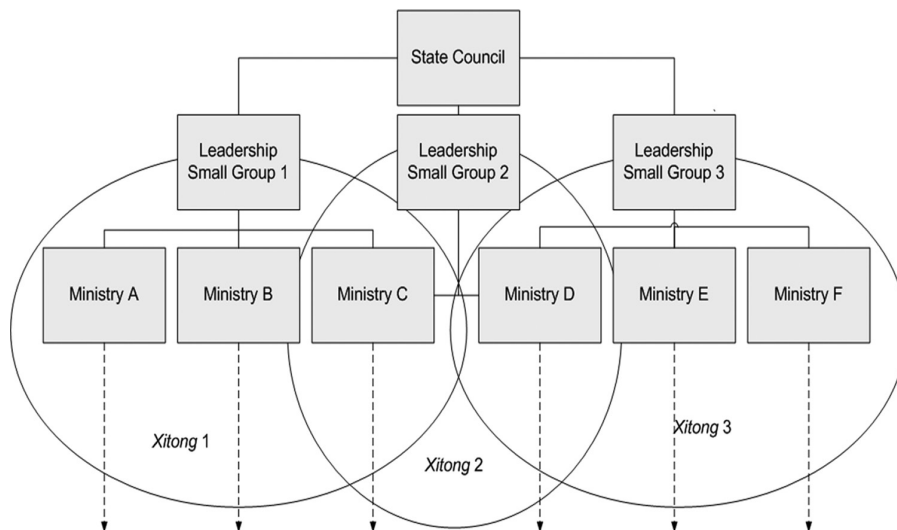
Figure 17.2 *Xitong* **and leading groups**

Plan of the early 1950s. Although they have evolved over time, they remain in many ways products of the period in which their functions and organizational logic were institutionalized. Traditionally, these bodies were coordinated by the roles they played in the planned economy. Since the end of the Mao era, two things have occurred which have changed these main government bodies. First, as noted, the planned economy has been dismantled, and with it the key coordinating mechanism that provided the functional anchor of these entities within the system. Second, in the twin eras of reform and globalization, many of the challenges that China faces are dramatically different from and in many ways more complex than those that these ministries and other units faced when they were first established. Policy areas are multifaceted, in flux, and do not fit neatly within the purview of an individual ministry or bureau. The result has been a proliferation of coordinating organizations (协调机构) to match up relevant bureaucracies with a given policy area. The most important of these are the *xitong*, as indicated in Figure 17.2.

Xitong (系统) translates into 'system,' but in the context of policy making and implementation, it is a cluster of bureaucracies that are placed in a working relationship around some policy area and which is ultimately coordinated by a **leadership small group** (领导小组) – comprising the leaders of some of the key bureaucracies that make up the *xitong*, as well as other elites that outrank even these leaders – that sits at its apex.

Alice Miller articulates the peculiar but very real logic of power for leadership small groups over the *xitong* they sit atop.

Leading small groups are not formalized bodies in any meaningful sense. They lack bureaucratic documentation, they lack standard operating rules, and they cannot appoint their own

members. They occupy no dedicated office space as a group, nor do they hang out a shingle. They have no dedicated budget to expend funds. They have no legal authority to issue formal orders to other offices; instead, they rely on superior or related institutions to issue documents that circulate internally within the political order and that do have binding force. They meet only a few times over the course of a year, mainly to hear reports. At the same time, the general offices of leading small groups have serious bureaucratic power.[43]

Miller distinguishes between 'leading small groups' and 'coordination small groups,' but the distinction can be parsed even further. She cites Zhou Wang, who identifies three types: permanent, term-oriented, and task-oriented. Permanent small groups – and the *xitong* they sit atop and supervise – were 'established to deal with broad policy sectors and issues of abiding strategic importance, these are the most important, highest-ranking, and most authoritative… [including] foreign policy, Taiwan affairs, the economy, and other issues and several State Council groups, such as the State Science, Technology, and Education Leading Small Group.'[44]

Term-oriented small groups are established to coordinate a certain task in policy areas that no longer fit comfortably into the traditional *xitong*. Their terms may vary; some are one-shot efforts, while others can be brought back on a fairly regular basis, as necessary. These have multiplied over time (paralleling the similar proliferation of Central ministries); the State Council in 1981 had 44 leading groups, but by 1988 there were 75 and by 1991 there were 85. They were then reduced to 26 in 1993 and then to 19 in 1998, but by 2008 they had grown to 29. Finally, there are the most specific (and most common) leading groups, task-oriented small groups, which are more *ad hoc* in nature and convened to manage natural disasters, large-scale social eruptions, and other emergency situations. Bureaucracies that make up these latter two types often belong to two or more *xitong* at any given time. As was the case in the above section on rank, there are powerful incentives for equally ranked members within a *xitong* to resolve issues among themselves.[45]

The utility of leading groups and *xitong* has not been lost on Xi Jinping, who has placed certain policy areas once squarely within the government's purview – most notably the economy – under leadership small groups headed by the Party. Many have focused on the role of the CCP's Central Discipline Inspection Commission within the anti-corruption campaign in China, but equally if not more significant is the creation of the Comprehensive Deepening of Reform leading group.[46]

Government–Party/CCP Relations

Another critical dimension of the policy process is the relationship between the government and the Party. Charlotte Lee writes that single party systems serve a very clear purpose to the stakeholders of the system in which they are embedded: 'parties lengthen the regime's time horizon for survival,' managing short-term setbacks against long-term gains, thus generating 'expectations that [parties] will remain in power, which in turn promotes elites' willingness to invest' in them.[47]

Leninist parties consist of a set of elite 'professional revolutionaries' that 'coordinate political functions [and] distribute economic power' by managing the state (read: government) bureaucracy. In China, one of the most decentralized of authoritarian states, Party control is particularly challenging, especially in the post-Mao era, as 'organizations forged during and for a revolutionary context have limited purchase in the management of a state no longer bent on revolution but rather focused on routine.'[48]

There are several ways to conceptualize the relationship between the Party and the government. One of these is that the government handles the everyday running of the state, all the way down to the most mundane and prosaic tasks, while the Party provides the larger normative or ideological context. One might even make a more secular argument that the Party simply prioritizes the multitude of tasks that the government undertakes. Another way of looking at government–Party relations is that the CCP supervises the implementation *of government and Party* policies. Traditionally, the Party would implement policies through mass-based political campaigns; today, Party activism continues to soften up the body politic for shifting CCP priorities, but in a more targeted fashion.[49] Earlier in the reform era, the Party concentrated less on micromanaging the government in terms of actual policy, focusing instead on ensuring that government and Party cadres involved in policy making and implementation maintained the values and priorities of the Party. This trend away from micromanagement appears to be reversing under Xi Jinping.

Barnett, Lieberthal, and others, particularly John Burns,[50] identify some key mechanisms through which the CCP manages and controls the government that have a direct bearing on policy: *nomenklatura* appointments, 'interlocking directorates,' and Party core groups.[51] Apart from the direct control of the military (the military reports to the Party and not to the government in China), *nomenklatura* (职务名称表) is the mechanism through which the CCP maintains its monopoly of power over the Chinese state. The Party Organization Department (中国共产党中央组织部) holds the monopoly right on placing individuals of its own choosing into any and all top government (and Party) positions throughout the country via government personnel allocation lists (the *bianzhi* described above). Since most organizations in China – including schools, hospitals, and factories – are government entities, this gives the Party a remarkable degree of control throughout the system.

'Interlocking directorates' refers to the fact that in the hierarchy of Party committees that parallel government organizations at all points within the system, the leaders in both of these (i.e., the provincial governor and his counterpart in the CCP apparatus, the provincial Party secretary; the mayor and his Party counterpart, the municipal Party secretary; and so on) are CCP members, and ultimately beholden to it. In addition, although the *administrative* rank between these two office holders is the same, the individual within the CCP apparatus holds a higher *Party* rank than his government counterpart.

Party groups (党组) exist throughout any given organization in China to ensure that the organization is complying with the political 'line' (路线) at any given time. These groups include leaders as well as a seemingly random set of other individuals representing the various parts of the organization. Moreover, the Party ranks (as opposed to the public, administrative ranks) of these individuals can be highly idiosyncratic to the outside observer. William Alford once recounted how the ranking Party member – that is, the individual with the most political power – for an entire legal institute in Beijing during the early 1980s was, in fact, the driver assigned to the unit.

One of the hallmarks of Zhao Ziyang's tenure as Premier (1980–1987) and then as Party Secretary (1987–1989) was to separate out the Party from the government and to rationalize the relationship between the two. Jiang Zemin sought to reverse this trend, although in a relatively gradual fashion. Under Xi Jinping, as noted, the role of the CCP in policy making has increased dramatically. Party-based leadership small groups have increasingly taken over key policy areas that had long since been clearly within the domain of the government. Yet another has been a re-emphasis on the normative molding of Party cadres.

Normative ideology and Policy

Douglass North was able to square the circle on how organizations can police themselves without incurring costs so prohibitive as to render the entire project unworkable. The solution was the existence of an 'ideology' that would encourage an investment in the system and therefore reduce considerably the costs of compliance.[52] This has been a foundational feature of the Chinese policy world since the Mao era.[53] In addition to the basic mechanisms of policy making, there are regular normative, educational drives (there is some disagreement as to whether they are 'campaigns' or 'movements') to prime key cadres (usually from the department-level 处 on up) so that they provide more support and/or less resistance to a particular policy bundle. These movements can be a function of policy shifts – reflecting elite policy differences – at the top (the 1984 'Anti-Spiritual Pollution' campaign) or the canonization of a given leader's legacy (such as Jiang Zemin's 'Three Represents' 三个代表 or his lesser-known 'Three Stresses' 三讲 movements).[54]

More recently, authors have reoriented their focus to the importance of ideology in the policy making process, not simply as an explanation for how transaction costs might be reduced but of how longstanding behaviors (immune to capture by a purely structure-based approach) normatively endure. Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry find that normative historical practices deeply embedded within the fabric of the Party continue to shape cadres' approach to policy formulation and enforcement.[55] Christian Sorace looks at the flip side of this phenomenon, arguing that Maoist conventions and repertoires continue to

trip up local cadres in their attempts to square China's revolutionary traditions with the practical challenges they face on the ground today.[56]

CONCLUSION

The Chinese state is extremely complex and often opaque, but it is not a black box. There are all sorts of formal and informal institutions, rules, and norms that act as a roadmap both for cadres within the system as well as for scholars attempting to make sense of it. Being able to understand even some of the broad contours of the structure and processes of policy making and implementation in China provides us with the ability to assign some transparency and even some predictability to this fundamental area of Chinese politics. Understanding the ways in which it has changed as well as the ways in which it has remained stable over time also helps us understand seemingly irrational outcomes and behaviors as normal responses to the crucible of a highly complex and fragmented policy environment.

Notes

1 I focus on domestic policy making in China, but some of what is contained herein applies to some key aspects of foreign policy, particularly non-strategic (commercial- and trade-centered) foreign policy, especially with policy that involves or affects subnational-level actors in implementation or enforcement.

2 Arthur P. Wright, The Sui Dynasty (581–617), in Denis C. Twitchett, John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3, Sui and T'ang China, 589–906*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 81–82.

3 G. William Skinner, 'Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China, Parts I, II, and III,' *Journal of Asian Studies* 24, 1 (Nov. 1964): 3–44; 24, 2 (Feb. 1965): 195–228; 24, 3 (May 1965): 363–99.

4 Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution through Reform*, New York: Norton, 1995, p. 13.

5 A. Doak Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

6 Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

7 On the 'power model,' Lieberthal and Oksenberg cite Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution Vol 1: Contradictions Among the People, 1956–1957*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1974; Lucian Pye, *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics*, Cambridge: Oelgeschlager, Gunn, and Hain, 1981; Jurgen Domes, *The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1985; Byung-joon Ahn, *Chinese Politics and the Cultural Revolution: Dynamics of Policy Processes*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976; Parris Chang, *Power and Policy in China*, University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1978; and Edwin Rice, *Mao's Way*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

8 These include China's entry into the Korean War, the pace of agricultural collectivization in the mid-1950s, and the launching of the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1957.

9 Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990, p. 19.

10 They cite Graham T. Allison's *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Boston: Little, Brown: 1971, particularly Allison's Model 1. It is also important to note that Allison implies that

this model is an ideal type that misses much of what occurs during the policy making process, thus necessitating Model 2 (organizational process) and Model 3 (bureaucratic politics).

11 David M. Lampton, 'Chinese Politics: The Bargaining Treadmill,' *Issues and Studies* 23, 3 (1987).

12 Lampton, 'The Implementation Problem in Post-Mao China," Lampton, ed., *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 3–24; and "A Plum for a Peach," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds., *Bureaucracy, Politics and Decision Making in Post-Mao China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 33–58.

13 Not surprisingly, Chinese leaders themselves would characterize the overall policy making arena somewhat differently – that is, as far more cohesive – as they utilize the same bureaucratic and administrative conceptual shorthand upon which the FA framework is constructed.

14 Lieberthal and Oksenberg, *op cit*.

15 E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960; and Andrew C. Mertha and William R. Lowry, 'Unbuilt Dams: Seminal Events and Policy Change in China, Australia, and the United States,' *Comparative Politics*, 39, 1 (Oct. 2006): 1–20.

16 Mertha, '"Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0": Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process,' *The China Quarterly* 200 (Dec. 2009): 995–1012.

17 Elizabeth Plantan and Chris Cairns, 'Hazy Messaging: Framing Air Pollution on Chinese Social Media' (unpublished manuscript).

18 Jessica Teets, *Civil Society under Authoritarianism: The China Model*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. See also Timothy Hildebrandt, *Social Organizations and the Authoritarian State in China*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013; and Diana Fu and Greg Distlehorst, 'Grassroots Participation and Repression under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping,' *The China Journal* 79 (Jan. 2018): 100–122.

19 Frederick Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993.

20 Kenneth Lieberthal, with the assistance of James Tong and Sai-cheung Yeung, *Central Documents and Politburo Politics in China*, Ann Arbor: Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies 33, 1978, p. 2.

21 Teiwes, *Politics in Mao's Court*, *op cit*.

22 See, for example, Kenneth Lieberthal and Bruce Dickson, *A Research Guide to Central Party and Government Meetings in China, 1949–1986*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1989.

23 Mark Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

24 MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958–1969*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

25 Deng gave up his key position in 1989, and retired completely from politics in 1992, but his 'era' is recognized as ending with his death in 1997.

26 Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; and Joseph Fewsmith, *Dilemmas of Reform in China: Political Conflict and Economic Debate*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

27 Susan Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

28 Barry Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978-1993*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

29 Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Mao's Invisible Hand*, Cambridge: *The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance*, Harvard Contemporary China Series 17, 2011; and Kristen Looney, 'China's Campaign to Build a New Socialist Countryside: Village Modernization, Peasant Councils, and the Ganzhou Model of Rural Development,' *The China Quarterly* 224 (Dec. 2015): 909–932.

30 Fewsmith, *The Logic and Limits of Political Reform in China*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

31 Tyrene White, *China's Longest Campaign: Birth Planning in the People's Republic, 1949–2005*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

32 Of course, there are some complications, such as bureaus with ministerial rank (部级局), which fall between the two in terms of actual authority. Of course, depending on function or individual leadership (often correlated) some ministries (or, for that matter, provinces) are more equal than others, and so on down the functional or geographic line.

33 Lieberthal et al., *Central Documents and Politburo Politics in China*, pp. 12–13.

34 Huang Yasheng, 'Information, Bureaucracy, and Economic Reforms in China and the Soviet Union,' *World Politics* 47 (Oct. 1994): 102–34.

35 Pierre Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

36 Lieberthal, *Governing China*, chapter 6.

37 Kjeld-Erik Brødsgaard, 'Managing China's Civil Servants,' in Wang Gungwu and John Wong, eds., *Interpreting China's Development*, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2007, pp. 44–47.

38 Brødsgaard, 'Institutional Reform and the *Bianzhi* System in China,' *The China Quarterly* 170 (Jun. 2002): 361–386.

39 Le-yin Zhang, 'Chinese Central-provincial Fiscal Relationships, Budgetary Decline and the Impact of the 1994 Fiscal Reform: An Evaluation,' *The China Quarterly* 157 (Mar. 1999): 115–141.

40 Mertha, 'China's "Soft" Centralization: Shifting Tiao/Kuai Authority Relations,' *The China Quarterly* 184 (Dec. 2005): 791–810.

41 Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, 'Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China,' *Comparative Politics*, 31, 2 (Jan. 1999): 167–186.

42 Jeremy Wallace, 'The New Normal: Reform, Information, and China's Anti-Corruption Crusade in Context' (unpublished paper).

43 Alice Miller, 'More Already on the Central Committee's Leading Small Groups,' *China Leadership Monitor*, Hoover Institution 44 (Summer 2014). See also Lieberthal, *Governing China*, chapter 7.

44 Miller, *op cit*.

45 It is also important to note that *xitong* are replicated at lower levels of the system but vary in size and composition due to local policy considerations.

46 Naughton, 'Reform Retreat and Renewal: How Economic Policy Fits into the Political System,' *Issues & Studies*, 51, 1 (March 2015): 23–54.

47 Charlotte Lee, *Training the Party: Party Adaptation and Elite Training in Reform-Era China*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 3.

48 Ibid., p. 12.

49 Joel Andreas and Yige Dong, '"Mass Supervision" and the Bureaucratization of Governance in China,' in Vivienne Shue and Patricia M. Thornton (eds.), *To Govern China: Evolving Practices of Power*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 123–152.

50 John Burns, 'China's Nomenklatura System,' *Problems of Communism* 36 (Sept.–Oct. 1987): 36–51.

51 Lieberthal, *Governing China*, chapter 7.

52 Douglass North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, New York: Norton, 1982.

53 Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies and University of California Press, 1969.

54 Mertha, '"Stressing Out": Cadre Calibration and Affective Proximity to the CCP in Reform-Era China,' *The China Quarterly* 229 (Mar. 2017): 64–85.

55 Heilmann and Perry, *op cit*.

56 Christian Sorace, *Shaken Authority: China's Communist Party and the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017.