

## Limits to Power

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### Abstract

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As difficult as it is to gain power, maintaining and exercising it appears even harder. Chinese population policy provides a vivid example of the potential magnitude of power. Yet the evolution of Chinese population policy also demonstrates the serious limits to power.

Mao successfully employed ideology and inspiration to lead a guerilla war with minimal bureaucratic infrastructure. Victory gave Mao absolute power. Mao hoped minimizing bureaucracy would maximize his discretion. Instead weak bureaucratic structures necessitated continued political struggle to maintain control and interfered with Mao's ability to implement his policies. Reversals of Mao's population policies allowed population growth to overwhelm the food supply, necessitating more drastic interventions after his death.

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### 1. Introduction

In the early autumn of 1949, Mao enjoyed an immense reservoir of what Max Weber categorized as charismatic authority. Good decisions during the Chinese civil war earned him considerable latitude in organizing the People's Republic of China. Mao carried two classic books as he triumphantly approached Beijing in 1949, *Shi Ji* (Records of the Historian) and *Zhi Tang Qian* (the General Mirror for the Aid of Government) (Leiberthal, 1995:157). Both the Chinese classic system and soviet Stalinism derived their legitimacy from ideology (*ibid*).

Ideology is a source of power. While Mao was fighting the Nationalists and the Japanese, Chester Barnard (1938) wrote that authority is granted from below. According to Barnard, followers decide day to day whether to obey. He stated four factors that were necessary for followers to obey. The first two are mundane. First, an order must be understood. Second, the follower must be physically able to perform the task. The third and fourth are more relevant for understanding power. Third, the follower needs to believe the order is in the best interest of the organization, and fourth the order must not be against the follower's best interest. Ideology plays a pivotal influence on determining whether followers perceive that an order is in the best interest of the organization or even their own.

Confucius had an opposite understanding of authority. Confucius taught authority flowed down from the top. It was the duty of followers to obey. Yet even in Confucian philosophy, there was a rare but important exception. If the ruler failed to promote the welfare of his subjects, the ruler could be disobeyed and overthrown. Here again, ideology can shape whether a follower believes the actions of a ruler are in the best interests of his subjects.

Mao lead by ideology. Mao's leadership style has been labeled revolutionary mobilization (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:25). Revolutionary mobilization developed out of Mao's guerilla war experience where ideology and indoctrination lead cooperative effort towards a common victory without the need for control bureaucracies.

### 2. Historical Context

Mao once wrote the most beautiful characters can be written on a blank piece of paper. Difficulty in establishing a guiding ideology arises when followers already have been influenced by competing ideologies. While Marxists worked together during the civil war to defeat common foes, Marxism is not monolithic. A competing Marxist ideology, Stalinism, influenced leaders who were trained by the Soviet Union (*ibid* p.8). Stalinists ruled by "bureaucratic professionalism" (*ibid*, p.25). This "all roads lead to Moscow" approach favored bureaucratic control, hierarchy (*ibid* p.8), and obedience to Moscow.

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A third wave, Reformism or “Socialist Marketization” (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:25) would not be relevant until the late 1970s when Deng Xiaoping used pragmatism to rebuild a country devastated after the ideological carnage of the Cultural Revolution. Before Deng, ideologues of both the Maoist and Stalinist persuasions denounced pragmatism as a rightist deviation and purged pragmatists from the party.

**2.1 Revolutionary Mobilization.** Mao’s brand of Marxism grew out of his guerilla war experience and emphasized leading by ideology with minimal control (ibid:8). Indoctrination and shared values would assure fidelity to the goals of top leaders even without information and other systems to assure compliance (Lieberthal 1992:6). Mao’s vision had little room for bureaucracy. Mao feared bureaucracy would interfere with his discretion to remake China (Lieberthal, 1995:82). Mao’s program was revolutionary (Ringen 2016:57). “Governance and revolutionary change are . . . mutually antagonistic” (Lieberthal 1995:59). Mao believed bureaucracies were inherently conservative and wanted to avoid creating a bureaucracy that could later frustrate his plans for revolutionary social change (Lieberthal 1995:82). The imperial hierarchy had placed power in the hands of the older, more conservative elements of society (Lieberthal 1995:8). Mao wanted to be unconstrained by law or regulation (Lieberthal 1995:98). The primary tools of revolutionary mobilization, as practiced by Mao, is persuasion, propaganda, and education (Greenhalgh and Winkler, 2005:58). Revolutionary Mobilization is more inspirational than operational and cannot precisely regulate the kind or amount of effort desired. A mass movement utilizing the initiative and enthusiasm of lower cadres creates its own momentum, which top leadership cannot control. (Chang, 1976:180). This style of leadership may cause overzealous local leaders to over-fulfill their assignments (Greenhalgh and Winkler, 2005:37). Maoist revolutionary mobilizers were prevalent in party affairs, propaganda, education, and the security sectors (Greenhalgh and Winkler, 2005:33).

**2.2 Bureaucratic Professionalism.** Mao’s revolutionary mobilization was not the only approach to Marxism in China. Many leading party members were trained in the Soviet Union and were heavily influenced by Stalinism. Soviet advisors who helped create state-run industries in the early years of the People’s Republic also spread Stalinist ideas. Stalinism favored a centrally planned bureaucracy, hierarchical control, functional specialization, and formal procedures (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:8). Mao had philosophical differences with Soviet-style centralized planning and its top-down control, bureaucratic procedures, and job specialization. Such a bureaucratic system would create inequalities in prestige, income, and power (Lieberthal, 1995:99).

### **3. The Development of Marxism with Chinese Characteristics.**

Mao developed Marxism with Chinese Characteristics. He was attracted to the party as a student. The Paris Conference of 1919 gave German concessions in China to Japan rather than returning them to China. Chinese students rejected western liberalism (Schram 2017). The communist party provided an outlet for Chinese students concerned about foreign domination. Mao was attracted to the party and rose to leadership in 1935 (ibid).

Mao established ideological hegemony over the Chinese party and became the Chairman of both the Secretariat and the Political Bureau, or Politburo (Schramm 2017). Unlike many other leading members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Mao never studied in the Soviet Union, nor could he read Marx or Lenin in the original. Soviet officials had misgivings that Mao was more of a nationalist revolutionary than a communist. Mao argued against blindly applying Soviet ideas to China: (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:64).

There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, only concrete Marxism . . . Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China. (Schram 1969:172).

Differences between Mao and the Soviet-oriented faction led to conflict in the Rectification campaign of 1942-3. Mao purged those not loyal to him.

#### **3.1 Loose Organizational Structures**

The basic framework of Mao’s administrative system still borrowed heavily from the Soviet Union (Lieberthal 1995:77). Mao’s China would be a party-state (Ringen 2016:47). Parallel party and state apparatus stand side-by-side in which the Party was to make policy, and the state to implement it (ibid). China has three poorly integrated bases of power, the party, the state (government), and the military. The government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which the Chinese usually call the “state” *guojia* (Lampton 1992) is subordinate to the party. Yet within the state, no single body has authority over the others (ibid). Sometimes departments work at cross-purposes. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA), is a state within a state (Lieberthal 1995:77-8) and answers not to the government, but only to the party (Lieberthal 1992).

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has national and provincial structures parallel to the government but does not have the machinery to accomplish policy objectives without the expertise and the organizations of the state (Lampton 1992). The party acts as the “principle”, and the state acts as “agent” (ibid). Party members are appointed to top positions in state agencies.

### 3.2 The Party

The party structure resembles a stepped Aztec pyramid with a wide base and a small flat summit, without a pointed pinnacle. At the bottom, less than five percent of the population belongs to the Party. Most are part-time participants in party activities, and full-time job employees in a non-party job. Next and smaller yet are about one million full-time party employees, called cadres, make up the formal institution (Lampton 1992). Party cadres may be all-purpose party representatives in rural areas or a party presence in a factory or government office. The next smaller level of the pyramid is the Party Congress, which meets infrequently. The party congresses meet every five years, with 2,280 representatives participating in 2017. Smaller yet and able to meet more frequently is the central committee, which has about 204 members. Smaller yet is the Political Bureau the “Politburo” which has 32 members. As the number of members in the politburo increased from its original nine, a smaller standing committee of the politburo was formed with seven full-time members who are available for frequent meetings and may meet as often as once a week. During Mao’s era, he was a member of each of these committees.

In hierarchies, any conflict between two bureaucrats usually pushes decision making upward to the supervisor. Westerners might assume power flows down from the top, but that is not always the case. In the Chinese system, conflict among the oligarchy at the top tends to push decision making downward to include more people. Theoretically, the more participants involved the more authoritative is the meeting. Major changes are ratified at major meetings. In practice, smaller committees hold more influence. When the central committee is not in session, which is usually the case, and if the Politburo’s standing committee members are in essential agreement, their decision carries enough influence to gain broad acceptance (Chang 1976:182). When top leadership was deadlocked, however, the issue was referred to the central committee (ibid) and occasionally downward to even larger bodies.

In a system without clear lines of authority, it may be more accurate to think in terms of influence rather than power. Mao’s role as Chairman was not described. One influential responsibility reserved for Chairman Mao was the authority to write the official minutes of major annual communist conclaves and central committee meetings, which sometimes “deviated significantly” from the actual thrust of the meetings (Lieberthal 1995:84-5).

### 3.3 Adhocracy

While Mao had influence, his positions did not always prevail. Programs he favored were sometimes blocked by other party leaders with opposing opinions (Chang, 1975:182). To get his way, Mao devised ad-hoc strategies to circumvent official party channels. For example, many top leaders resisted Mao’s effort to accelerate collectivization, because they remembered the difficulties caused by collectivization in the Soviet Union (Chang 1975:10). When blocked by opposition in the center, Mao visited provincial leaders to gather support for the collectivization of agriculture (Chang, 1975:182). In July 1955 Mao called a meeting of provincial party secretaries (a body which existed in neither the 1946 nor the 1956 Party constitution) in Beijing and called for collectivization, which provincial leaders essentially carried out before the Enlarged Sixth Plenum of the Seventh Central Committee met on October 4, 1955 (Chang, 1975:15). Mao “convened the plenum to formally endorse and legitimize” the collectivization campaign he had already set in motion and to criticize those with “rightist tendencies” in the center who opposed it (ibid).

Adhocracy became a precedent for a new *modus operandi*. When the center opposed Mao’s plans for the Great Leap Forward, Mao again visited provincial leaders to gather support (Chang, 1975:182). While Party officials in the center theoretically have authority over those in the provinces, the center may choose not to discipline provincial leaders because they need the support of provinces in the central committee (Lampton 1992:84). Mao escalated this destabilizing precedent by pushing struggle even farther downward when his influence over central party leaders declined after the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Mao went beyond the party, enlisting the PLA to remove opponents (Chang, 1976:182). Mao later used students as Red Guards to attack the power structure during the Cultural Revolution. (ibid). Each power play weakened the Party.

### 3.4 Ideological Campaigns

Mao’s revolutionary mobilization led by ideological struggle rather than hierarchies. In Mao’s version of Marxism, the concepts of dialectics further expanded into the concept of contradictions.

Tensions existed, including those between bureaucracy and intellectuals, intellectuals and the party, tradition versus change, centralization and decentralization, pragmatism versus ideology. Mao sometimes diffused pressure building behind potential criticisms by temporarily agreeing with them. After being surprised by destalinization and the Hungarian revolution, Mao opened the hundred flowers campaign encouraging intellectuals to offer constructive criticism of the state saying, "Let a hundred flowers bloom" (Chang, 1975:37) and "Criticism of the bureaucracy is pushing the government towards the better" (Szczepanski 2018). Mao may have wished to dissipate discontent or to use criticism of bureaucracies he wished to reform. When intellectuals at Beijing University went too far and criticized the Party, Mao suppressed the hundred flowers campaign, denounced critics as rightists, and initiated an anti-rightist campaign. Mao initiated a contradiction campaign almost every year (Lieberthal 1995:68). Mao lent his influence on the side of each contradiction which favored his vision for socialism. Losers in each campaign would be purged and lose their government or party positions. Mao's campaigns inflicted costs upon both the state and the Party. Observant political actors became cautious about sharing information or observations, reducing the quantity and accuracy of the information available to top leaders (Lieberthal 1995:66). Mao was able to maintain and exercise power, but only through unending ideological struggle.

### 3. Population Policy

The policy area in which China is a pioneer in its exercise of power, population policy, also demonstrates the limits of that power. First, is ideological competition. Mao did not begin with a blank page. Marx and Lenin had already staked out a position. Marx had been philosophically opposed to Malthus's prediction population would inevitably outpace food production, opposed birth control, and maintained socialism could meet the need for food production and distribution. Lenin's sparsely populated Soviet Union had no use for birth control. Marxism-Leninism was philosophically pro-natal.

Mao, on the other hand, adapted Marxism to the realities in China. During WWII, the Liberation daily, the base area newspaper, wrote that under wartime conditions, party members should postpone marriage and once married should practice contraception (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:64). Mao's position on population control was more nuanced than Marx or Lenin.

#### 3.1. Initial Population Policy (1949-1953)

The first ideological statement on population policy from the People's Republic was reactive and anonymous. In 1949, a U.S. State Department White paper called the population in China an unsolvable problem. The New China News Agency issued a rebuttal that reflected an orthodox Marxist response by combining pre-existing arguments of Lenin and Sun Yat-sen:

It is a very good thing that China has a big population. Even if China's population multiplies many times, she is fully capable of finding a solution in production. The absurd argument of Western bourgeois economists like Malthus that increases in food cannot keep pace with increases in population was not only thoroughly refuted in theory by Marxists long ago but has also been completely exploded by the realities of the Soviet Union and the liberated areas of China . . . (Whyte, et al. 2015).

While the rebuttal was anonymous, but many assumed it reflected Mao's position. Because Mao led by inspiration, not supervision, that assumption is an over-reach.

Mao's policies, however, followed a less orthodox path more consistent with his 1942 pro-contraception position. The marriage law of 1950 increased the legal marriage age to 18 for women (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:246), which reduced the birthrate. Ironically, the "bourgeois" Malthus also recommended delayed matrimony as a means of population control (Tien 1966:170). Mao would later delay marriage to an even later age to reduce the birth rate as part of his effective 1971 "Later-Longer-Fewer" campaign. Yet the new law was politically astute as it was ideologically correct for multiple reasons. The law weakened the family as an institution by taking marriage out of control of families (Tien 1966:274). The act improved the status of women by preventing the practice of selling young daughters. In 1950, Mao also integrated women into the workforce (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:246), which further increased the equality of women and further decreased the birth rate.

Mao's policies, while not blatantly anti-natal, were unambiguous in reducing the birth rate. Never-the-less, improvements in life expectancy that resulted from the end of the civil war and the new regime's improvements in basic health care and disease control so dramatically reduced the death rate that the population still increased 20 million a year despite declining birth rates (Gupte 1984:178). More direct intervention was necessary.

### 3.2. First Five-Year Plan (1954-1958)

China's first five-year plan in 1954 included an overt, unambiguous birth control campaign. In August 1953, the State Council (the highest administrative organ in China) had already instructed the Ministry of Health to help the masses control reproduction and revised regulations concerning contraception and abortion (Tien 1973:177). Ten months later, the 1953 census results revealed the population had grown to 600 million people (Kammeyer and Ginn 1958:286; Gupte 1984:179). By 1956 an intensive family planning program included "distribution of contraceptives, educational programs on reproductive physiology and a propaganda program extolling the virtues of small families" (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:247).

Mao's approach was still cautious. The first population campaign was only implemented in cities, where only 20 percent of the people lived. This caution was astute for two reasons. First, Chinese traditional culture was pro-natal, (Greenhalgh and Winkler, 2005:19), especially in the countryside where families depended on a son to help in the fields and to provide for parents in old age. Mao insisted on cautious intervention against peasant resistance (Greenhalgh and Winkler, 2005:56). His second reason to tread cautiously was that he planned the collectivization of agriculture in 1956. Taking the land farmers had only acquired in 1949 would be unpopular. A second unpopular move could easily undermine support for the party in the countryside. Introducing birth control was delayed in the countryside because the collectivization of agriculture had higher priority (Gupte, 1984:197).

In keeping with Mao's revolutionary mobilization, he did not initiate a new bureaucracy for birth control. Mao pursued birth planning with periodic campaigns through existing institutional channels. Periodic campaigns caused an "on-again, off-again" pattern of policy implementation (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:60).

#### 3.2.1. Resistance

While Mao theoretically held absolute power (Wei 2011), his population control efforts still encountered resistance.

3.2.1.1. Resistance in the Health Ministry. Birth policy was delegated to the health ministry, where fragmented authoritarianism enabled the department to work at cross-purposes with the party's five-year-plan. Both Lenin and National hero Sun Yat-sen were pro-natal. The health ministry was dominated by pro-natal communist military doctors and pro-natal holdovers from the nationalist regime (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:65). The health ministry opposed even voluntary contraception (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:49). The health ministry crafted regulations restricting access to birth control and instructed PRC customs to block imports of contraceptives (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:65).

Fragmented authoritarianism also enabled the health ministry to resist high state officials. In January 1953, the party announced a change in priorities from revolution to development and called on women to participate. The head of the All-China Women's Federation and the wife of Premier Zhou Enlai submitted a report asserting women's participation in development required access to contraception. The State Council (the highest government administrative organ in China) instructed the health ministry to facilitate access to contraception. Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping "repeatedly" instructed the health ministry to lift its import band on contraceptives, which it did not do (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:65). The health department did not relent until July 1954, and not until August 1956 did the health ministry instruct its sub-national organs to propagandize in favor of contraception (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:66).

3.2.1.2 Resistance in the Propaganda Ministry. The propaganda ministry attracted the revolutionary mobilization faction of the party. Most of these ardent revolutionaries were well versed and deeply committed to the Marxist-Leninist party line and were opposed to population control on ideological grounds. The People's Daily denounced birth control in 1952 as, "A way of slaughtering the Chinese people without drawing blood" and called people, "The most precious of all categories of capital" (Gupta, 1984:178). The People's Daily, the Party's most authoritative media, declined to campaign for birth control through most of the Mao era (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:62). Passive opposition by the media severely constrained the effectiveness of Mao's birth policies because the Maoist revolutionary mobilization style relied heavily on propaganda.

#### 3.2.2 Policy Outcomes

Voluntary contraception under the first five-year-plan cut the birth rate substantially from about thirty-seven per thousand population to about twenty-four (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:247f). A more aggressive policy, planned childbirth, began to supplant birth control as the Mao's doctrine. Mao endorsed the need for birth planning in public from 1956 to 1957 (Population Policy 2014). In February 1957, Mao said:

Our country has so many people, which no country in the world can compare with. It would be better to have fewer births. [Re]production needs to be planned. In my view, humankind is completely incapable of managing itself. It has plans for production in factories, for producing cloth, tables and chairs, and steel, but there is no plan for producing humans. This is anarchism—no governing, no organization, and no rules. This government perhaps needs to have a special ministry—what about a ministry of birth control? (Whyte et al. 2015)

### 3.2.3. Foreboding

By the mid-1950s Mao could not govern by charisma alone because the charismatic authority he enjoyed in 1949 began to erode. Mao's ally, Stalin, died in 1953. In 1956, Khrushchev initiated de-Stalinization and denounced personality cults and one-man rule. The effects of de-Stalinization also influenced party leaders in China. Whereas the "1945 Seventh Party Congress had enshrined Mao Zedong thought as part of the Party's ideology," the Eighth Congress in 1956 wrote rules "equivalent to a new constitution" that only Marxism-Leninism was the Party's guiding ideology (Lieberthal 1995:100). Mao's charisma would further erode from the failure of the Great Leap Forward.

### 3.3. The Great Leap Forward (1958-1961)

The Great Leap Forward attempted to realize Mao's vision of economic growth through labor and socialist enthusiasm. "Human investment" and increased effort led to building dams with shovels. Rapid industrialization would come through backyard steel production, using labor diverted from agriculture (Aston et al. 1984:625). Over-zealous cadres melted down farm tools to increase steel production. Over-optimistic targets and exaggerated reporting by local authorities led to a reduction in the land set aside for grain production and an increase in grain exports (Aston et al. 1984:629; Liew 1997:42). Seedlings were planted too close together, which rather than increasing, reduced output (Liew 1997:42). Drought followed, compounding problems (Aston et al. 1984:630-631). The largest famine in world history occurred in China during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) when 30 million people died of famine during government efforts to collectivize agriculture and to shift resources from agriculture to industry (Aston et al. 1984:614, 625). The famine reduced the birth-rate by at least a third compared to before the Great Leap campaign (Tien et al., 1992:18-19), preventing 33 million births (Ashton et al., 1984:614) and wiping out a "missing generation."

The Great Leap Forward interrupted birth work (Greenhalgh and Winkle 2005:55). Some party members had been ideologically opposed to the official adoption of contraception in the first five-year plan. The first birth program was abandoned in 1958 due to political infighting between factions (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:255). The Great Leap promised to eliminate the need for birth control by increasing agricultural output (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:74). Some officials most identified with family planning were also suspected of working against the socialist revolution, were denounced as rightists, purged from the Party, dismissed from ministerial posts, and their policies repudiated (Gupte 1984:179; Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:253). While famine temporarily suppressed rural fertility during the Great Leap (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:75) afterward the birth-rate increased rapidly forty-five births per thousand population (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:247f).

### 3.4. China's Second Population Campaign (1962-1966)

Following the Great Leap's failure, Liu Shaoqi supplanted Mao as head of state of the People's Republic of China, but Mao still retained leadership of the Party (Ashton et al. 1984:614). Liu was a long-time supporter of contraception (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:66). During the third five-year plan, Mao also pressed more forcefully to make birth control government policy (Gupte 1984:179). China's second population campaign began in 1962 with a reinstatement of the previous population policies and programs (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:247). A central birth planning office was established, and contraceptives finally became widely available again in 1962. (*ibid.*) By June 1965, Shanghai had already reduced its population growth to 1.5 percent using political work and propaganda, without tough regulations or coercion (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:81). Mao was dissatisfied that birth work had not progressed in the countryside, and on June 26 ordered most health personnel reassigned to the countryside where they must do birth control (*ibid.*).

### 3.5. Cultural Revolution (1966-1970)

In 1966, Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution to replace Liu Shaoqi as head of state and consolidate his control over the government. Like most government activities, the second population campaign and distribution of contraceptive supplies were interrupted (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:247). Red Guards sought to weed out anti-revolutionary elements in society (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:253) and persecuted family planning cadres (Ma 1996:265). The cessation of the population campaigns during both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution led to a decade without an effective population program and resulted in a baby boom in the 1960s.

By the time Liu Shaoqi was ousted as head of state in 1970, fertility had increased to six children per woman (Gu 1997:41).

### 3.6. China's Third Population Campaign "Later-Longer-Fewer" (1971 - 1978)

Political instability precluded a well-organized birth limitation program before 1971 (Kaufman et al., 1989:708). A pragmatic politician does not champion unpopular programs during a power struggle. Mao's "Later-Longer-Fewer" campaign began in 1971 after he had reconsolidated his control. "Family planning" came to mean central planning. A quota system rationed births under Later-Longer-Fewer (Population Policy, 2014). National birth quotas were passed downwards to the local level through the administrative hierarchy (ibid). Couples wanting a child had to request a planned birth card from their local family planning committees to obtain obstetric care, while alternatives, such as abortions, sterilizations, and IUDs were provided free of charge (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:249).

The Later-Longer-Fewer campaign stressed three reproductive norms: wan ("later" as in later marriage), xi ("longer" as in longer spacing between children) and shao ("fewer" as in fewer total children) (Kammeyer and Ginn 1986:247; Tien et al. 1992:8). Committees for planned birth were organized at every administrative level. The delivery of contraceptives was closely tied to the provision of basic health care by local clinics in urban areas and by the barefoot doctors in the countryside. Medical means of birth control were supplemented by peer group pressure in factories, enterprises, urban streets, and rural villages. Each small group received its allocated number of births. As a result, decisions regarding family size became subjected to intervention by the state and peer group pressure (Population Policy 2014).

Later-Longer-Fewer marked a transition from revolutionary mobilization to bureaucracy. While Later-Longer-Fewer was a slogan and was accompanied by a propaganda campaign, this last campaign also initiated a bureaucracy to implement it. Beginning around 1975, the People's Republic built a massive bureaucratic apparatus for centralized planning of the population (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:19). The Later-Longer-Fewer campaign resulted in one of the fastest fertility reductions in recorded history, from just below six per woman to just below three (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2006:3, Fong 2016:xiii).

### 3.7. The One-Child Policy

The one-child policy emerged after the death of Mao under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The Chinese Party-State can be divided into three major eras, the first initiated by Mao, the second by Deng Xiaoping, and the third by Xi Jinping (Ringen 2016:xi). The one-child policy initiated under Deng Xiaoping was modified to a two-child policy under Xi Jinping.

Mao's cultural revolution destroyed both the economy and the political system (Ringen 2016:6). Mao's revolutionary mobilization depended on ideology for legitimacy, but ideology lost legitimacy after the failure of the Great Leap and the violence of the Cultural Revolution (Lieberthal 1995:173). Mao's hand-picked successor did not remain in power. Mao's era died with him.

#### 3.7.1. The Deng Era

The Deng era was initiated by Deng Xiaoping and continued under the leadership of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

3.7.1.1. Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989). Seeing how one-man rule had virtually destroyed the party, Deng moved from individual to collective leadership (Ringen 2016:5). By 1978 a second generation of eight elders secured leadership, mentored by Deng Xiaoping. During the Deng era, leaders also abandoned lifetime tenure in favor of retirement. Deng Xiaoping would restore the legitimacy of the party by improving the standard of living of the people (Ringen, 2016:5). Deng's era represented a move from revolution to gradualism and from ideology to pragmatism (Ringen 2016:5). Deng likened his pragmatic leadership by trial and error to crossing the river by feeling for the stones. While Deng moved cautiously in economic policy, he moved quickly on population policy.

Controlling the population was necessary to improve per capita income. While Later-Longer-Fewer reduced births, large numbers of children born during previous lapses in population policy in the 1950s and 1960s left a baby boom approaching their own child-bearing years in the 1980s. (Gu 1997:42; Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:91). The problem was not women having more babies, but more women having babies (Gupte 1984:182). Half of China's population was under 21 (Daugherty and Kammeyer 1995:239). With half-a-billion young people approaching their child-bearing years, if each couple were to have only two children, a population explosion was inevitable (ibid).

China was already importing between 15-20 million tons of grain to feed its people (Gupte 1984:162). In 1980, China's population appeared destined to reach 1.4 billion by 2000, surpassing the country's ability to feed itself. In the 1970s, a military rocket scientist Song Jian used computerized models to project that under a two-child quota, the population would balloon, and even under a one-child policy, the population would still grow for another 25 years (Fong 2016:53). China needed to limit each couple to a single child (Ma 1996:265) for three decades (Fong 2016:58).

3.7.1.2. Introducing the One Child Policy. On September 25, 1980, an open letter asked communist party members to voluntarily limit their family size to one child. "This was not a request" (Fong 2016:x). The policy was first applied to regime members, then to urban residents in 1982, and finally to rural residents in 1983 after the disappointing results of the 1982 census (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:105). The one-child policy shifted from regulating the timing of births to regulating the number of births, and to aggressive implementation (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:91). The one-child policy progressed through three phases: 1) a restrictive policy with strong implementation, 2) a liberalized policy with relaxed implementation, and finally, 3) a liberalized policy, with stronger implementation (Greenhalgh, Zhu and Li 1994:374).

3.7.1.3 One Child Policy, Phase One. The first phase was a restrictive policy with increasing implementation. This policy was leniently enforced during 1980-81 (Greenhalgh 1986:491). Fines would be levied on families who violated the policy, based on family income and other factors. From the central government to the local level, Population and Family Planning Commissions were created to raise awareness among the populace and to provide surveillance for the implementation of the policy (Dewey 2004).

In 1983, circulars appeared calling for mandatory IUD insertion for women with one child, abortions for unauthorized pregnancies, and sterilization for couples with two or more children (Greenhalgh 1986:491). A strict application of the one-child policy followed. (Greenhalgh, Zhu and Li 1994:374). National annual birth quotas were allocated to the provinces, which assigned responsibility to local governments to set the number of births permitted in each area (Li 1995:563). Local officials, either heads of work units or village heads, selected the families authorized to have a child (Li 1995:563). Birth permits were not automatically granted to new couples; to achieve targets local authorities required people to wait until they got a permit (Li 1995:568). Pregnancies outside the plan (without permits) had to be terminated (Li 1995:563). The birth rate dropped to 1.385 per woman in 1984 (Ma 1996:267), but there were unanticipated consequences. Some couples, desperate for a son, committed female infanticide (Greenhalgh, 1986:491). Unanticipated levels of resistance erupted; women illegally removed their IUDs or ran away to cities or the wilderness to have children, and people attacked family planning workers (Greenhalgh 1986:508).

3.7.1.4. One Child Policy Phase Two: "Document Seven" With party legitimacy still weakened by the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, the one-child policy was relaxed. The second phase of the one-child-policy was decentralization and local flexibility in implementation.

By 1984, the nationwide one-size-fits-all measure proved so unpopular that the central government was forced to decentralize a large portion of the one-child-policy. It circulated new provisions enshrined in what population scholars call Document 7. Document 7 gave each province more power to adapt the one-child policy to local circumstances. (Fong 2016:71).

Document 7 encouraged the development of local policies at the local level to suit local needs (Greenhalgh 1986:493). Revisions to the one-child policy in the second phase enabled those most in need of a second child to be permitted (Greenhalgh 1986:507). to ease political strains at the local level (Greenhalgh 1986:492). Each of the 30 provinces developed its own family planning laws, to meet five-year targets set by the Central Family Planning Commission (Sampson 1989:28). Families with an urban household registration status could have only one child. Policy divided citizens with rural or agricultural household registration status into three categories. Residents in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Sichuan provinces still needed to follow the one-child rule. In Hainan, Qinghai, Ningxia, Yunnan, and Xinjiang provinces, residents with rural household registration status were allowed two children. Families in the other 19 provinces would follow the rule of 1.5-child policy which means if the first child was a girl, a second child was allowed. The liberalized policy allowed more rural couples whose first child was a daughter to have a second child (Greenhalgh, Zhu and Li 1994:374) as long as their births were within the plan and did not jeopardize the goal of limiting population to 1.2 billion by the year 2000 (Greenhalgh 1986:492).

The second reform in the second phase of the one-child policy strengthened the cadre responsibility system (Greenhalgh 1986:493) and held local cadres accountable for successful implementation. Cadre responsibility systems spelled out the rewards for success and penalties for failure (Greenhalgh 1986: 503).

Cadres deemed unsuited to family planning work were dismissed and replaced (*ibid*). Multiple children were discouraged by levying fines (Gu 1997:42).

A third reform during the second phase was the Information Management System (Greenhalgh 1986:504). A continuous program with systematic monitoring of fertility assured that targets were met (Greenhalgh 1986:499). The Information Management System recorded the women of reproductive age, marriages, those who meet conditions for giving birth, pregnancy status, contraceptive used, distributed birth quotas, single child certificates, births, and deaths (Greenhalgh 1986:504). Every six months, family planning workers performed ultrasounds on women using birth control to ascertain if the steel ring IUD was in proper position and to catch babies conceived outside the plan early enough to perform safe abortions (Lawrence 1994). Any pregnant woman lacking an allotted space in the official quota was expected to have an abortion (*ibid*).

3.7.1.5. One Child Policy Phase Three: Liberal Policy with Strong Implementation. The birth rate, which was 13.85 per thousand under the strict policy in 1984, rose to 20.0 per thousand under the relaxed policy from 1986-89 (Ma 1996:267). Even soft-liners did not want lax enforcement, so enforcement tightened (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:119). In 1988 The third phase of the one-child policy combined a liberalized policy with stronger implementation. One-daughter-only rural couples would be allowed a second child, but only after a wait. Rules would not be loosened further (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:120). For local areas that had allowed more second children, this was a tightening of policy (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:121).

Despite organizational progress, elements of the revolutionary campaign model re-appeared. In winter 1988 the first of four annual instructions for winter propaganda months were issued. Most provinces launched crash campaigns to abort all “out of plan” pregnancies (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:125).

In 1990 the central government instituted a nationwide accountability system. Called *yipiaofoujue* (loosely translated as “one-vote-veto”), it made birth-planning targets a major objective for all provincial authorities. Officials – not just family planning specialists but also garden variety administrators who did not meet their area's birth quotas would face sanctions in the form of wage deductions, demotions, or even dismissal (Fong 2016:73).

Village cadres would also have their salaries docked for poor performance (Greenhalgh, et al. 1994:389).

*Yipiaofoujue* became the stick the central government held over provincial officials, and this in turn incited them into harsher acts. Some provinces would impose even tighter quotas, just to be on the safe side. (Fong 2016:73).

Responsibility systems caused local governments to enforce birth rules but sometimes resulted in crash campaigns (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:123). Fertility fell below the replacement rate (*ibid*). Outcomes were no longer driven by policy, but by efforts of subnational leaders to perform (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:128) and then to report results that could never be achieved in real life (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:129).

3.7.1.6. Jiang Zemin (1993-2002). Deng retired. Jiang Zemin and his successor Hu Jintao continued Deng's policy of gradualism and increasing the legitimacy of the party through improving citizens' lives. Jiang introduced the idea of “Deng Xiaoping Population Thought,” which provided some ideological cover for reform (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:135). Under Jiang, the focus shifted from increasing local programs' control over the public to central control over local programs (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:131). Jiang tried to increase efficiency, (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:25) and eliminated the Mao era's periodic campaigns in favor of continuous propaganda, contraception, and professional work (*ibid* p.8). During Jiang Zemin's tenure, china's population program became a mature, effective, rational-legal system. By 2000, the annual increase in population was about 1 percent, which was Zhou Enlai's original target, and the population was under Deng's goal of 1.3 billion (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:132). The baby boomers of the 1960s were safely passing without creating an echo boom (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:136).

3.7.1.7. Hu Jintao (2003-2012). Jiang Zemin retired. Hu Jintao pursued harmony. Hu attempted to make birth policies kinder using market mechanisms. Hu initiated more social policies to guarantee people's economic security (Greenhalgh and Winkler 2005:9) and reduce the incentive to have children.

3.7.2. Xi Jinping Era (2012 – present)

Xi Jinping initiated a third major era in the party (Ringgen 2016:xi). Whereas Deng bought legitimacy for the party with increasing standards of living, slowing economic growth precluded Xi from using that strategy. Xi returned to using an ideology “China Dream” for legitimacy. “China Dream” appeared three years earlier as the title of a book used in Chinese military schools written by Senior Colonel Liu Mingfu of the PLA. China Dream means to be the world's leading nation, both economically and militarily (Liu 2015:1).

Xi also returned to Mao era practices of one-person rule, reestablished the personality cult (Ringen 2016:18), and lifetime rule. The Xi era also brought significant changes to population policy.

3.7.2.1. Selective Two-Child Policy. After the Eighth session of Third Plenary in November 2013, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee revised regulations, the most important of which was the selective two-child policy. Families formed by the marriage of two single children could have two offspring (Deng 2013). When Beijing adopted the selective two-child policy in 2013, only about one-tenth of couples who were eligible applied to have a second child (Fong 2016, xii). Many say it is too costly and stressful to raise a second child (ibid).

3.7.2.2. Two-Child Policy. Officials implemented a two-child policy in late 2015 because the one-child policy created a labor shortage and an aging society. A second child will be allowed regardless of their household registration. The family planning bureaucracy, however, has been preserved. The party-state still maintains a claim upon this most personal matter. Thirty-five years of the one-child-policy has allowed many Chinese to internalize the one-child household as the ideal. Unless Beijing can reverse this thinking, China's population will peak between 2020 and 2030, and then decline to 1950 levels by 2100 (ibid). As China approaches its demographic apex, Xi Jinping may feel rushed to press his geographic and economic claims.

3.7.2.3. How do you Push a String? How can power influence citizens to do something most perceive is contrary to their best interests? In May 2020, participants in the important pair of meetings in Beijing called Two Sessions raised a variety of ideas for possible future discussions. Ideas ranged from eliminating the fine for third children to lifting the family planning policy, to introducing child credits for extra children, to reducing income taxes for families with more than one child (Zhang 2020). Additional ideas include expanding the pool of potential mothers to those once considered ineligible, such as allowing unmarried women to use reproductive technologies such as egg freezing and in vitro fertilization (ibid). Will China again test the limits of state power to accomplish something never been done before? No developed country once falling below-replacement fertility has ever recovered. Sub-replacement fertility becomes permanent (Last 2013: 94).

#### 4. Conclusion.

What lessons about the limits of power can we glean from the most daring attempt to control population in human history?

1. Absolute power is not absolute. Historical hindsight shows Mao was correct about population and had his plans not been interrupted, one-child would not have been necessary. Still, even when correct, Mao proceeded cautiously, justifying initial ambiguous measures on multiple grounds, delaying a more direct program until the first five-year-plan, temporarily yielding to more orthodox opponents of the program during the second plan, and delaying programs in the countryside to maintain the support of farmers and to accomplish other priorities. Power is subject to the situation.
2. Leaders not only lead but are also constrained by their followers,
3. The road to power may not be the same path to follow in power. Ideology can unite followers in a revolution against the status quo but does little to channel the zeal or efforts of followers into progress. Mao's revolutionary mobilization degenerated into years of political struggle which undermined the credibility of the Party. During Mao's era, China remained poor and under-developed. Pragmatism during the Deng era lifted China to new prosperity and super-power status. Xi's return to legitimacy through ideology in the form of "China Dream" appears to be re-creating conflict, this time with China's neighbors and trading partners.
4. While obtaining power is difficult, retaining and exercising it can be even harder. A charismatic leader riding an initial crest of popularity may neglect the opportunity to build more stable rational-legal institutions. Charismatic authority is fleeting. Rational-legal systems are easier to build before charismatic authority fades.
5. Governing unconstrained by bureaucracy may seem liberating. But followers may feel also feel liberated to act guided only by their own ideological interpretations. Only a quarter-century after becoming an "absolute ruler," Mao felt a need to launch a cultural revolution to reconsolidate his power. After the cultural revolution, Mao showed evidence of a new appreciation for bureaucracy. While Mao's Later-Fewer-Longer campaign retained a slogan in keeping with his revolutionary mobilization style, Mao also built a bureaucracy to assure the accomplishment of its purpose.

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