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MAO ZEDONG

Communist Party dictatorship (1893–1976)

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Mao Zedong's dictatorship emerged out of the troubled political conditions that China faced in the early twentieth century. Seeking to address both intense imperialist pressures and violent domestic divisions, Chinese elites advocated a paternalistic approach to reuniting the country and strengthening its international standing. While elites in China held different positions on what had to be done, they agreed that an enlightened leadership should oversee the molding of the Chinese people into a more modern, cohesive, and disciplined group that prioritized serving national development and security. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) embodied this historical trend with the Marxist-Leninist belief that its mission was to lead China toward Communism. The CCP only gained the state authority to act on this conviction when it established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 after waging decades of war and revolution against the nationalist Guomindang (GMD) of Chiang Kai-shek and the Japanese Empire. This political experience produced an enduring CCP leadership core that took Mao's thought as their guiding doctrine and had shared their formative years running political campaigns that rallied people around defending and improving China and its international stature – popular political desires that carried over into the PRC.

During the Mao era, the CCP repeatedly used campaigns to mobilize resources nationwide, demarcate legitimate political conduct, and suppress politically incorrect activities. The overriding goal of political campaigns was constructing a socialist society led by the industrial proletariat. Conflating itself with the proletariat and austerity with being proletarian, the CCP reorganized society into rural and urban workplaces, channeled resources away from the countryside to urban industry, and curbed consumption to spur heavy industrial growth. The party also classified people as members of a "good" or "bad" political class, and it assigned them to an urban or rural workplace – designations that stuck for decades and influenced people's life chances. Taken together, these measures extended the state's reach into

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100508-4

local society, while at the same creating a cellular, party-centered structure that made Chinese citizens inclined to treat politics as a local party affair and think of their political position in terms of their party-given political classification.

Mao briefly broke with this cellular structure during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, in which he urged national criticisms of the regime. This loosening of acceptable political practice did not last, as Mao and his colleagues ordered the repression of critics and mobilized the entire nation in the Great Leap Forward, which sought to create a Communist society with higher living standards and give China a secure, leading, international position. When the Leap morphed into a huge famine, CCP leaders shored up their authority by resuscitating the economy and limiting the extraction of rural resources, while also enhancing Mao's personality cult and pushing blame onto localities and the Soviets.

When Mao became concerned that his colleagues' policies were leading to a capitalist revival, he and his supporters reoriented his cult in the Cultural Revolution toward purging the party-state of people who putatively sought to benefit from a state-led capitalist restoration. This political maneuver led to people drawing on Mao's ideas to attack authority figures for a plethora of reasons. Through all the tumult of the Cultural Revolution, Mao, nevertheless, still maintained a monopoly on legitimate violence – a power he exercised to violently pacify factional conflicts. Although this imposition of military authority redirected political affairs back toward more manageable channels, this policy also caused much disenchantment with Mao's leadership. Mao and the party-state's continued domination of national flows of information and material resources, however, ensured that Mao's Communist Party dictatorship lasted until his death in 1976.

Paternalistically making a modern China

To understand how Mao came to head up a Communist Party dictatorship, it is necessary to discuss the turbulent world into which he was born in 1893. Before Mao turned two years old, China's last dynasty – the Qing – lost its position as the top East Asian power in the Sino-Japanese War. In the wake of China's defeat, European powers took advantage of its weakness and carved out spheres of influence. Concerned that the country might soon be wiped off world maps, some Chinese elites argued that China had to follow the way of the world's great powers and establish a new regime whose authority was based on popular sovereignty.[1]

What Chinese elites had in mind was usually not rule by the people but rather rule of the people by enlightened leaders. Prominent turn-of-the-century intellectual, Liang Qichao gave voice to this viewpoint when he called in 1905 on Chinese elites to investigate "the methods followed by other nations . . . select . . . superior points and appropriate them to make up for our own shortcomings."[2] In this way, national leaders could "make a new people" out of China's population that would be better prepared to thrive in the truculent world of modern international affairs.[3] A constitutional monarchy was Liang Qichao's preferred political instrument for constructing a wealthier, stronger, and more internationally competitive China.

Although Liang's dream of a revitalized monarchy was not realized, as the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911, his penchant for paternalistic solutions to addressing China's problems endured in the Republic that emerged out of the dynasty's ashes.[4] Most notable in this regard was revolutionary politician Sun Yat-sen. According to Sun, China's problem was that its people were "a sheet of loose sand and so have been invaded by foreign imperialism and oppressed by" great powers. What China needed was for a revolutionary group to fashion China's populace "into an unyielding body," like a firm rock.[5] The fracturing of Republican China into warlord regimes in the 1910s reinforced Sun Yat-sen's resolve that his party – the Guomindang – had to discipline the ways of modernity into the Chinese people.

Sun stated in 1918: "As a schoolboy must have good teachers . . . so the Chinese people . . . must have a farsighted revolutionary government" that instills in them the importance of national loyalty and dedication to constructing a powerful and prosperous China.[6] Only with a more disciplined and obedient citizenry could China overcome internal divisions and regain international prominence. The GMD received support for its nation-building efforts from the Soviet Union in the early 1920s when the GMD only controlled the southern province of Guangdong. Moscow sent advisers to help train its military, teach political mobilization techniques, and transform the GMD into a regimented Leninist party. Soviet representatives also came to assist in founding the CCP in 1921, an event at which Mao was present.[7] During its first few years, the CCP was organizationally weak, ideologically loose, and reliant on the Soviet Union, and so it had to accept Moscow's proposal to form a United Front with the GMD in 1923 to rid China of warlords and imperialists.[8]

While many CCP members were reluctant to ally with the GMD, this partnership provided sustained experience mobilizing workers and peasants and significantly boosted party rolls.[9] When GMD armies militarily took over much of the country in 1927, its new leader Chiang Kai-shek saw the CCP's influence as a threat and made annihilating them into a lifelong objective.[10] Pushed underground, CCP leaders remade the party from an organization that, in Hans van de Ven's words, "was made up of friends who were equals in all respects" into a Marxist-Leninist organization whose central leadership "represented the correct party line and . . . possessed the right to . . . give instructions to . . . members, who were . . . to accept its authority in all areas of life."[11]

Like other Marxist-Leninist parties, the CCP thought that history's ultimate destination was Communism and that its political mission as the revolutionary vanguard was directing society to this final historical phase. Throughout the 1920s, CCP leaders adhered to the Marxist-Leninist view that they should mobilize the industrial proletariat in an urban revolution. Mao famously advocated an alternate revolutionary strategy in 1927, predicting in his report on the Hunan peasant movement that several hundred million Chinese peasants will soon "rise like . . . a force so swift and violent that no power . . . will be able to hold it back. They will smash all the trammels that bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation."[12]

Faced with this massive revolutionary force, the CCP had three choices: "To march at their head and lead them. To trail behind them. . . . Or to stand in their way and oppose them."[13]

Mao's analysis of the peasantry shows the dual character of his understanding of its revolutionary power. On the one hand, Mao's comments can be read as a cry for the CCP to shepherd the peasantry's political energies toward socialist revolution.[14] On the other hand, they can be read as a sign of Mao's awareness of how popular forces could exceed the party's direction, a political possibility which Mao would later use to devastating effect during the Cultural Revolution against his fellow party members.[15] However, when Mao wrote about Hunan peasants, he was not yet a top party leader. The party center was still in Shanghai, encouraging urban uprisings.

After several failures, party leaders fled in 1932 to the Jiangxi Soviet where Mao and military commander Zhu De were engaged in rural revolution. New arrivals quickly took over local leadership positions, as they outranked Mao and had Soviet ties and training. Mao, however, elevated his political stature by building the Red Army and successfully waging guerilla war against two GMD annihilation campaigns.[16] In 1934, GMD forces, nevertheless, overwhelmed the Jiangxi Soviet (also often referred to as the internationally unrecognized Chinese-Soviet Republic, set up by Mao and Zhu De in November 1931). The CCP began the Long March – a 6,000-mile trek through harsh landscapes, with the GMD in hot pursuit, to a base area in Yan'an in the northwestern province of Shaanxi.

The Long March had three important consequences for Mao's political rise. First, in Guizhou, a mountainous province in southwest China, the party held the Zunyi conference in which Soviet-trained party members were criticized, and Mao was granted a spot on the CCP's Standing Committee as well as command over the Central Red Army.[17] Second, the Long March's travails inculcated in participants a spartan determination to advance China's socialist revolution with any available resources, a mindset which the CCP would later try to socially engineer into all Chinese citizens. Third, the social bonds forged in the violent crucible of the Long March became the bedrock of elite politics in Mao's China, as participants occupied CCP leadership positions into the 1990s.[18]

The Long March would have probably not been so consequential if the Japanese had not invaded China in 1937. Pushing the GMD into the southwest, Japan's assault opened up a vast rural region for the CCP to build up political power in the name of national defense as well as by helping with rural welfare.[19] Mao's dominance within the CCP, however, was only solidified in the 1942–1944 rectification campaign during which Mao finally rose above Soviet-trained officials. The rectification campaign was also fundamental to establishing Mao's personality cult, as party members were indoctrinated into a worldview that presented Mao's leadership as crucial to besting China's warlords, defeating imperialism, and building a new socialist Chinese society.[20] Another important consequence of the war against Japan for Mao's political ascension was that it seriously weakened the military and economic capabilities of the nation's existing dictator –Chiang Kai-shek and his

party the GMD – which the People's Liberation Army (PLA) defeated in the civil war that erupted after the Japanese Empire collapsed in 1945.[21]

Making China socialist in the 1950s

When the CCP founded the PRC in 1949, it quickly launched a flurry of political campaigns. This practice would define Mao's tenure in power with one campaign coming after the other in quick succession.[22] Campaigns set out the goals of the party-state and charted out which social practices were legitimate and which were marked for rehabilitation or elimination. While some campaigns were local, for instance those targeting ethnic minorities, the party's propaganda apparatus promulgated many national campaigns, delineating what objectives local cadres should concentrate on, where they should allocate resources, what social groups to mobilize, how they should motivate participation, and how to talk about campaign activities. Although the language of campaigns never turned into the sole medium of national communication, it did generate standardized linguistic patterns for official functions and became an integral part of everyday life.[23]

One of the CCP's most momentous rural campaigns was land reform, which lasted from roughly 1946–1952. Rural cadres were instructed to conduct land reform as laid out in Mao's report on the Hunan peasant movement. As Mao stated in this foundational text, revolution was not a refined affair like a "dinner party": it was "an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."[24] In accordance with this idea, local cadres led peasant associations in a wave of terror against landlords and other local powerholders to establish a new political order in which land was distributed more equitably. Through this process, the party also expanded the state's leverage in local society, as land reform's beneficiaries became the party's local representatives.[25] However, the central party set limits on its rural influence. Markets persisted, private ownership remained, and material incentives were still used to stimulate labor productivity. These three conditions all made a wider swath of rural residents amenable to the CCP's new regime.[26]

In urban areas, Mao and the CCP also undertook campaigns to cultivate regime support and assert political control. As in the countryside, physical violence and psychological pressure were regular features of urban campaigns, making it difficult to ascertain whether people were complying with party dictates out of compulsion, their own volition, or some combination of the two. The CCP sought to garner popular backing in cities by initially circumscribing its clout, creating what it called a people's democratic dictatorship under which private ownership continued to exist and the urban bourgeoisie, working class, and peasantry would all contribute to state-led capitalist development.[27] Some urban intellectuals, business people, and former GMD officials viewed the early PRC favorably because their desires to strengthen China's economy and bolster its geopolitical position were echoed in party propaganda.[28] Some overseas Chinese returned to the PRC for similar reasons, while others considered the job opportunities of the emerging party-state as a way to advance their career, like their counterparts within China.[29]

Meanwhile, Mao and other party leaders thought that they knew the historical path that the entire country had to follow. China had to move toward socialism and later Communism and construct a dictatorship of the proletariat. In 1949, the CCP still had at its disposal a very small working class. The party's solution to China's underdevelopment was to paternalistically substitute itself for the proletariat, such that proletarian consciousness, values, and interests were what the CCP leadership said they were, and party leaders determined how to build a proletarian dictatorship.[30] In Mao's view, the CCP should achieve this political objective by adhering to the developmental program presented in Stalin's *Short Course* on how the Soviet Union had rapidly constructed a socialist country, a process that was advanced by Moscow sending technical advisers and machinery and training Chinese in the Soviet Union.[31]

Key to China's transition toward socialism was restructuring its political economy. Private ownership had to be phased out and replaced with public ownership because private property was ideologically linked to the capitalist profit motive, the pursuit of individual interests, and the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, state-run enterprises were by dint of the CCP's administration designated as serving the collective. In line with this political position, the party launched a series of campaigns between 1953 and 1956 that remade urban and rural society into publicly run urban work units and rural collectives, so that their resources could be mobilized for collective goals. Talk of collective aims might seem to suggest the existence of a high degree of socioeconomic equality throughout China. The CCP, however, produced a clear socioeconomic hierarchy.

Stratification was based on the Marxist-Leninist idea that the industrial proletariat was the most politically important group in a socialist society, and so the party's dictatorship had to allocate more resources to its development. CCP leaders thus allotted very few resources to the countryside and instead funneled resources, especially grain, away from rural collectives to augment urban industry.[32] In accordance with this favoring of urban areas, the government also instituted a household registration system in which almost everyone was made a member of a specific urban work unit or rural collective.[33] As the CCP prioritized industrial growth, it provided guaranteed rations and welfare to urban workers with permanent positions while the central state told rural collectives to rely on local resources, which resulted in barebones living. Temporary urban workers, likewise, earned lower wages and were deprived of welfare coverage.[34]

Within urban areas, there also existed a hierarchy of work units with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) obtaining more resources than urban collectives and heavy industry gaining more than light, since heavy industrial development was thought to be more valuable for building socialism, partially because of its centrality to national defense.[35] One policy that the party did impose nationally that induced social leveling was limiting resource allocation to so-called non-productive uses. These included consumer industries, housing, and welfare services. The government suppressed investment in these sectors because they took resources from expanding industrial production, which CCP elites conceived of as the top priority

for building China's proletarian dictatorship, and because they equated austerity with proper proletarian conduct.[36]

Meanwhile, in rural areas, the party's attribution of a class status to every person divided society, as people with "good class" backgrounds, namely lower or middle peasants, had better access to party membership, the PLA, and government jobs, whereas people classified as landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, or rotten elements were regularly attacked in struggle sessions and assigned more trying work.[37] Overall, the CCP's division of society into different social groups had one very significant consequence. It brought about the parcellation of society into groups with competing interests, which looked to the party to address their political grievances.

As part of the party's dictatorship, the state also restricted interactions between different work units that were not officially sanctioned. This state-centered system of socialization had a few notable effects for the upholding of the party's dictatorship during Mao's time in power. First, it gave society a honeycomb-like structure in which vertical ties between work units predominated, and horizontal connections were curbed. This setup imparted society with a cellular character in which local cadres either sought to defend their localities from extraction by higher levels of the state or endeavored to make higher-level policies serve local interests. In both cases, the net result was that members of work units tended to have an inward-looking disposition, thinking of politics in local terms and making political demands at the local level.[38]

The CCP, however, did undertake two major campaigns that encouraged Chinese citizens to air discontent with the regime at a national level. The first campaign began after Soviet Premier Nikolai Khrushchev spoke out against Stalin's cult in his 1956 secret speech. Seeing how Khrushchev's criticisms prompted revolts in Eastern Europe, Mao decided to launch the Hundred Flowers Campaign and elicit public complaints about the PRC.[39] When social dissent exceeded Mao's expectations, he initiated the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957 to stamp out public criticism, labeling as "rightists" especially intellectuals but also provincial and county cadres, who were dispatched to the impoverished countryside for re-education. This political shift caused many intellectuals and administrators to learn that when the party asked for criticism of its policies, it was best to remain silent and comply with state directives, a social tendency that had disastrous consequences during the Great Leap Forward, started in 1958.[40]

On Mao's troubled road to socialism

The Leap was Mao's attempt to transform China into a Communist utopia whose industrial output would overtake "Britain in fifteen or more years."[41] China did not have the technically trained labor force nor the production, transportation, or communication capacities to economically modernize so quickly. Faced with this developmental predicament, Mao advocated making up for domestic shortages by mobilizing all the nation's resources in a militarized labor-intensive campaign to

increase production and build economic infrastructure, which motivated workers by collective objectives instead of material incentives.[42] In taking this developmental direction, the CCP would not only forge China's own road to socialism, but it would also build on its wartime experience of mass mobilization campaigns during which the party had compensated for a lack of technical expertise and machinery by relying on native methods and local resources.[43]

Mao's elite colleagues carried out the Leap for a variety of reasons, as did the larger society. First, many leaders supported the acceleration of China's transition to Communism. Second, officials competed to exceed production quotas to demonstrate their loyalty to Mao and the Communist project. Third, some officials and citizens were concerned that if they opposed the Leap, then they might be characterized as a "rightist" and punished like during the recent Anti-Rightist Campaign. Fourth, Mao drew on tensions with the GMD and the United States in the Second Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958 to make the Leap into a matter of not just domestic development but national security. Fifth, urban and rural militias were massively expanded and employed to coerce Chinese citizens into partaking in the Leap. Lastly, the Leap spoke to widespread popular aspirations for China to have higher living standards and become a well-developed country that was internationally influential and recognized for its accomplishments.[44]

In the end, the Leap's results were not at all what Mao intended. Instead of creating a Communist society, the Leap caused a massive famine that killed 30 million people at least and led other CCP leaders to question Mao's capabilities in economic affairs.[45] Beijing blamed economic problems on Moscow, which withdrew technical advisers in 1960, and it shifted responsibility onto natural disasters and local cadres, thereby directing public discontent to outside China's borders while simultaneously making public dissatisfaction into a local affair and placing responsibility on natural phenomena beyond human control.[46]

Public knowledge about the famine was also limited, as the media did not discuss it, and the honeycomb character of Chinese society restrained information flows between urban and rural areas, which suffered much more due to the party's urban bias. Especially worried about how the famine might undermine the morale of the PLA, which principally came from the countryside, the Minister of National Defense Lin Biao initiated a campaign that echoed the Rectification Movement of the 1940s. Troops were required to regularly read Mao's works and reflect on how much China had improved since the CCP had liberated it from Chiang Kai-shek and his American imperialist sponsors. Through this process of historical comparison, soldiers were supposed to acquire a deep commitment to serving Mao and building socialism despite any hardships. This practice was so successful that Mao and his supporters would later extend it to the whole nation in the lead-up to the Cultural Revolution.[47]

In the early 1960s, PRC Chairman Liu Shaoqi and other party leaders were focused on a more pressing matter – engineering an economic revival after the Leap. While living standards remained low, the government was careful to not remove too much grain from the countryside. Household plots were reallowed

after having been eliminated as part of the Leap's push to mobilize all resources – a policy that had left households without the means to grow their own food. Rural markets were also again permitted. Material incentives were reintroduced. Investment in agriculture was raised. Capital investment and accumulation were decreased. There was less emphasis on the political redness of experts, and the party even flirted with the idea of endorsing a rural practice that had emerged as a survival tactic during the Leap – contracting pieces of land to households to fulfill state quotas. This last policy, however, was a political bridge too far for Mao.[48]

If China followed this path, Mao thought that the party would be abandoning its project to make China socialist. The CCP, from Mao's standpoint, had also to push back against the expansion of rural markets that were allowing new rural elites to form that were more concerned about profits and individual interests than the party's proletarian collective objectives. To check these tendencies, Mao launched the Socialist Education Campaign in 1962 because he was worried that China was backtracking from a socialist country into a capitalist nation. Outside work teams were brought in to lead struggles against local cadres who were accused of colluding with rich peasants to enrich themselves. Charged with leading this initiative was Liu Shaoqi, who worked against Mao's efforts to mobilize the masses against local cadres, because Liu was concerned that rural clashes might derail China's post-Leap economic recovery.

Mao was so dissatisfied with Liu Shaoqi's actions that he accused him of being among the people "in positions of authority within the Party" who were taking a capitalist road.[49] The idea of "capitalist-roaders" in the CCP leadership came out of China's struggles with the Soviet Union over the direction of international socialism in the early 1960s. While Soviet Premier Khrushchev sought to reduce tensions with Washington, Mao depicted China as the new leader of international socialism, and he called for revolutionary wars in the decolonizing world. Mao also claimed that a privileged bureaucratic stratum had come to power in the Soviet Union that was in favor of restoring capitalist inequalities. Concerned that similar political tendencies were developing in the PRC, Mao intensified his criticisms of CCP elites, who allegedly were attempting to move the country toward Soviet-style revisionism in 1964.[50]

While Mao reproached his fellow comrades behind closed doors, his personality cult shone brighter in the limelight, as the whole country was ordered to learn from the PLA and especially from a regular solider named Lei Feng, who died in an accident in 1962 and left a possibly fabricated diary in which he declared his ardent devotion to Mao, the CCP, and serving the people. Mao's cult received another boost with the publication of what became known as the *Little Red Book*, which started with an appeal from Lei Feng to go all-out in accomplishing Mao's commands. In 1965, public adulation of Mao spread across the country with the reading of his works and efforts to embody his directives becoming normal everyday practice.[51]

In 1966, Mao turned his personality cult on CCP elites in the Cultural Revolution, championing attacks on people who had "sneaked into the Party, the

government, the army, and various spheres of culture" that strived to "seize political power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."[52] Mao and his supporters first mobilized elite students in Beijing to confront school administrators. Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and a few other party leaders tried to use work teams to channel students into Red Guards units that condemned people with "bad class" backgrounds, like in previous campaigns. Mao's allies struck back, urging the removal of work teams from campuses and the formation of competing Red Guards. Over the fall of 1966 and the winter of 1967, Red Guards were established in schools, factories, government offices, and rural collectives, as Mao's backers encouraged Red Guards to fan out across the country and share their revolutionary experiences struggling against people they perceived to be "capitalist-roaders" in positions of power.[53]

Mao hoped that youth involved in the Cultural Revolution would purge the party-state of people who were leading China toward a capitalist restoration while at the same time generating a new revolutionary generation that would remain dedicated to achieving his policies even after he died. In practice, Red Guards employed Mao's ideas for a multitude of different purposes. Some toppled party leaders, as directed by Mao's elite supporters. However, Red Guards also engaged in many other activities. They settled old scores, abused people with "good and "bad" class labels, pleaded for higher wages and permanent positions in SOEs, ransacked homes and seized "bourgeois" materials, beat up people with "bourgeois" hairstyles and clothing, and pushed out colleagues who were blocking their career advancement.[54] This list could go on and on. The point is that during the Cultural Revolution, Mao's ideas did not have a well-defined set of meanings. Rather, political factions and individuals instrumentalized Mao's statements to advance their manifold interests.

In 1968, Mao and the people around him decided that factional struggles had to be contained, partially because of rising Sino-Soviet border tensions. The CCP employed this national security rationale when it deployed the PLA to establish new local power structures, a decision which unleashed a wave of violence that lasted until 1971 and killed many more than the Red Guards.[55] With the military in charge, urban youth were shipped to the countryside to undergo reeducation at the hands of local peasants and contribute to local development. Although some youth were still committed to following Mao's orders, many others lost faith in view of constant factional fighting, while others were disabused of their fidelity to Mao when the PLA was dispatched to crush the Red Guard movement. Others became disillusioned with Mao's dictatorship when they arrived in the countryside and saw how underdeveloped it still was nearly two decades after the PRC's founding.[56] Mao's political prestige was further tarnished when the National Defense Minister Lin Biao, who was designated as his successor in 1969, fled after an apparent failed coup in 1971 and died in a plane crash.[57]

Despite all these issues, Mao still held onto power for the last half decade of his life. He was partially able to maintain control because veteran party leaders remained beholden to him for their authority. The same was true of people who

Mao's supporters helicoptered into elite circles during the Cultural Revolution. Mao played off both against each other, weakening their respective power bases. These factional conflicts gave politics in the early 1970s a whiplash character, as the country lurched from one campaign to another, a process that made Chinese citizens only more cynical about the purpose of Mao's revolution.[58]

On the other hand, the CCP's capability to still execute campaigns showed the durability of the party-state. As Mao and his allies retained sway over the propaganda apparatus, they were still able to disseminate their campaign directives and political commentary nationwide and shape what counted as legitimate political language and activities in localities. That the party's dictatorship could still mobilize China's populace in this way was inextricably linked to a few features of state–society relations in the PRC that endured all the way to Mao's passing in 1976. Chinese citizens remained governmentally tied to certain urban and rural workplaces for their subsistence. The party also continued to closely regulate the movement of physical resources and information between cities and the countryside as well as within them. Last and most definitely not least, CCP leaders, despite all the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, remained committed to employing the powers of the party-state to paternalistically fashion a new socialist Chinese nation.

The afterlives of Mao's dictatorship

After Mao's demise, CCP leaders abandoned certain features of his dictatorship. Especially consequential was their relinquishment of the party's revolutionary mission. While the propaganda apparatus still talked about socialism, it was delinked from a revolutionary impulse, as reform replaced revolution as the party's dominant political framework. As part of this transformation, the CCP abolished political labels related to class status; it stopped stressing the importance of class struggle and Marxist-Leninist objectives, and the industrial working class lost its political prominence and had its special welfare entitlements phased out.[59] The party also did away with the honeycomb organization of society in Mao's China and granted more influence to market forces in the distribution of resources, flows of information, and socioeconomic stratification.[60] Keenly aware of the dangers of a personality cult, Deng Xiaoping and other veteran party members transitioned toward a collective leadership system so that no individual would again have ultimate authority over the party-state's formidable infrastructural power.

This last transformation has proven less durable than the other changes, as Xi Jinping has recently recentered China's regime on his own person. Xi's ability to make this political shift is linked to what the CCP did not discard of Mao's dictatorship. Although party elites relaxed their hold on the national circulation of resources and information, they did not give it up, as they still maintained a paternalist worldview and considered the Chinese people to be incapable of self-governance. CCP leaders also still strive to keep political discontent local to maintain their authority, and they emphasize national security threats to persuade people that CCP leadership is the best way to ensure China's defense, prosperity, and stability. Until Chinese

nationalism is no longer conflated with the necessity of CCP rule, the Mao era will continue to cast a long shadow over Chinese politics.

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