

From Mao to Xi: Chinese Political Leadership and the Craft of Consolidating Power

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Abstract

During 1965-66, a great power struggle engulfed Chinese politics while the Vietnam War escalated. While most scholars study this period for the Cultural Revolution Mao launched, this research proposes to examine the role the Vietnam War played in China's political power struggle. Specifically, my research will show how Mao used the issue of Vietnam to defeat his rivals and consolidate power. The Chinese political structure has changed considerably since the mid-1970s. Yet, current President Xi Jinping has attempted to purge rivals and consolidate power during his term in office. Given this largely successful attempt, I want to know the extent to which Xi has the power to personally dictate how to handle problems along China's periphery. This question is important because China is becoming a world class naval power, has an ever-growing economy, and has the potential to become a hegemon in Southeast Asia. This research compares the Vietnam War's impact on Chinese politics during 1965-66 with Xi Jinping's contemporary anti-corruption campaign. Specifically, I use Causal-Process tracing to compare and contrast consolidation of power under Mao and current President Xi Jinping. I draw from primary government sources of the time period, but also employ secondary sources to contrast them with each other. The results of this study finds that the PLA was the dominant source of strength for both Mao and Xi. Additionally, both Mao and Xi's wives played critical roles in their success. Furthermore, the creation of new organizations helped both Mao and Xi circumvent the Party apparatus when they needed to further consolidate their personal authority. Current indications suggest that Xi Jinping is attempting to hold onto power for the foreseeable future, even after his expected retirement in the year 2023.

Introduction

China has a long and colorful history of stories regarding power and politics. This article focuses on two individuals from two important time periods who consolidated power: Mao Zedong during the mid-1960s and China's current President Xi Jinping. Mao consolidated power from 1965-1966, just as the Vietnam War started to escalate. Xi has rapidly consolidated power from the time he took over as president in November of 2012.¹ China's leadership moved away from a strong man rule after Mao's death in 1976, to a government led by a collective group of leaders. Between 1992 and 2012, no individual dramatically stood out from the rest. However, China has turned again to strong man rule since Xi has taken power.² Because of the change, this article explores the potential political, economic, and social changes that might result from the shift toward strong man rule. This is important for numerous reasons. China's sheer physical and economic size, as well as its geographical location, render Chinese geopolitics more influential than any other Asian country. Furthermore, China is building a world class navy,³ and

¹ Zheng Yongnian and Lance L. P. Gore, *China Entering the Xi Jinping Era* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 1, accessed May 27, 2015, <<http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=1864786>> See also Joseph Fewsmith, "Xi Jinping's fast start." *China Leadership Monitor* no.41 (2013): 3-4, accessed June 3, 2015, <http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/748504/xi-jinpings-fast-start.pdf>

² Willy Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping: Renaissance, Reform, or Retrogression?* (Routledge: 2015), 7, accessed May 20, 2015, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=966034> see also Elizabeth Economy, "China's Imperial President." *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 6 (2014): 80-91, accessed May 28, 2015, http://sites.saschina.org/innovationinstitute/files/2014/10/FA_Chinas-Imperial-President-14j2thu.pdf

³ Robert Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (New York: Random House, 2014), 14. See also Jeremy Page and Rob Taylor, "Deep Threat: China's Submarines Add Nuclear-Strike Capability, Altering Strategic

its economy has become critical to the global economy.⁴ Because of these characteristics, anything that happens to China in the future will certainly have an impact on the rest of the world.

I employ a case-oriented qualitative comparison to explore how both Mao and Xi consolidated power in this study. The main variables I use to explain consolidation of power include: international crises, economic conditions, leadership qualities, corruption, and control of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The results of my analysis demonstrate that leadership qualities and control of the PLA proved to be important for both Mao and Xi's consolidation of power. Additionally, I employ a historical timeline analysis of events to assist in identifying the causal factors that are important for both Mao and Xi's consolidation of power. I argue that two causal factors were important for both Mao and Xi. (1) Both Mao and Xi's wives played critical roles in their success and (2) both Mao and Xi established new organizations to sidestep existing power structures and build more personal authority. The first section of the article provides the background to the research question. Next, I describe the variables I use and explain why they played an important role for both Mao and Xi. Next, I provide historical analysis that highlights additional causal factors for both Mao and Xi's ability to consolidate power. Finally, I summarize the results of my analysis and address potential implications for China.

Background

1962

Li Zhisui—Mao's personal physician—described 1962 as a turning point in Mao's political life.⁵ That turning point began in January, at the seven thousand cadre's conference—so named as a meeting of the top seven thousand officials from across the country. The previous three years were a tumultuous period for the Chinese Communist leadership. In 1959, Mao relinquished his post as head of state to Liu Shaoqi. Liu was Mao's handpicked successor, and the number two man in China behind Mao. Although Mao remained chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Great Leap Forward (GLF) damaged his credibility. The GLF from 1958-1961 is a dark hole in China's history that the CCP still does not acknowledge. Estimates vary, but most scholars agree the death toll is anywhere between 30-45 million people—most of the deaths occurred from a great famine that it produced.⁶ Mao started the GLF to accelerate the economy and catch up with the West, but it resulted in disaster. Mao blamed the results on the weather conditions.

The CCP—and the country—is run by the handful of men that make up the Political Bureau Standing Committee (PBSC). Usually consisting of 7-9 members, it is led by the general secretary, or chairman during Mao's time, who is the president of China and leader of the party. From 1962-1966, the members consisting of the PBSC were Mao (who was chairman of the Party), Liu Shaoqi (head of state), Deng Xiaoping (general secretary of the party), Zhou Enlai (premier), Lin Biao (Minister of Defense), Chen Yun, and Zhu De.⁷ Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were trying to right the ship after the tragedy of the GLF, which meant opposing Mao's disastrous domestic policies. Liu gave a speech criticizing GLF policies at the seven thousand cadre's conference, which, in essence, was a criticism of Mao.⁸ More importantly, Mao offered a self-criticism at this conference.⁹ Mao had become an immortal figure, and this self-criticism was a shock to many people. Philip Short writes, "Minimal though it was, Mao's acknowledgement of liability electrified the meeting. He did not need to say more: in a Party

Balance." *Wall Street Journal* October 24 2014, accessed May 24, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-submarine-fleet-adds-nuclear-strike-capability-altering-strategic-balance-undersea-1414164738>.

⁴ Justin Yifu Lin, "China and the Global economy" accessed July 22, 2015, <http://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/files/Lin.pdf>. See also Jonathan Fenby. *Tiger Head, Snake Tails: China Today, How It Got There, and Where It Is Heading* (New York: Overlook, 2012), 4-5.

⁵ Li, Zhisui, and Anne F. Thurston, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician*. (New York: Random House, 1994), 385.

⁶ Frank Dikotter puts the figure at 45 million, or possibly even more, in his account of the Great Leap Forward, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962* (New York: Walker & Co, 2010)

⁷ Roderick Macfarquhar, *The Politics of China, 1949-1989*, Appendix 2 (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 535.

⁸ "Factionalism in the Central Committee: Mao's opposition since 1949" *CIA Caesar, Polo and Esau documents*. (May, 2007): 21, accessed June 20, 2015, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/14/polo-23.pdf.

⁹ Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 387.

which had learned to regard him as infallible, it was extraordinary enough for him to admit to any failings at all.”¹⁰ Furthermore, Mao did not have plans on stopping the campaign of the Great Leap Forward.¹¹ Liu’s speech caught Mao off guard, and more importantly, Liu’s speech was supported by the majority of cadres in attendance. The top officials throughout China expressed their disapproval of Mao’s policies.¹² A bitter experience, this triggered a counterattack that would begin later in the year. After this conference, Mao increasingly became dissatisfied with Liu Shaoqi and the rest of the leadership. Mao retreated to Hangzhou for the spring and summer to prepare his counterattack, leaving the leadership and operation of the CCP to Liu, Deng, and Zhou Enlai.

Jiang Ching—Mao’s fourth wife—made her first public appearance in a meeting with the wife of Indonesia’s President Sukarno in September.¹³ Jiang Ching is an important figure in the power struggle between Mao and Liu, and played a prominent role in Chinese politics during this time. Additionally, the American presence in South Vietnam had grown by the end of 1962. There were a little over three thousand military advisors at the end of 1961. That number increased to over nine thousand by the end of 1962.¹⁴ This development would continue to play an increasingly important role in Chinese politics.

1963

At a Central Work Conference in February, Mao declared the Party had to fight revisionism through class struggle. This conference also introduced the ‘Four Clean-Ups’ campaign launched in the rural areas (check production team accounts, granaries, housing, and the allocation of work-points).¹⁵ After this conference Mao once again retreated to see how the leadership implemented his programs. Controversially, Liu Shaoqi made a speech titled ‘the second ten points’ that upset Mao shortly after the new programs Mao established.¹⁶ Mao was upset because Liu deviated from the policies Mao outlined in the SEC. The internal party struggles over policy started to rapidly escalate.

Mao welcomed a delegation from the VWP (Vietnam Worker’s Party) on June 4th.¹⁷ During this meeting Mao attempted to continue driving a wedge between Hanoi and Moscow. On November 2nd, Ngo Dinh Diem, President of South Vietnam, was assassinated in a coup. This escalated events in Vietnam, further sending the country on a road to war.

1964

An increased amount of aid to North Vietnam was approved in mid-June at a CCP work conference. Zhou Enlai led a CCP delegation to Hanoi in July to meet with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and Pathet Lao about America escalating its actions in Indochina, and Vietnam in particular.¹⁸ A five-man group led by Peng Zhen that became the precursor to the Cultural Revolution Group was established in July. Initially, the group was established to cleanse the arts and literature of China—people who were not carrying out party policy according to Mao.¹⁹ Later, Mao used it to help circumvent the power of the Party.

In the Gulf of Tonkin, an incident occurred on August 2nd which played an important role in triggering a full-scale war between the U.S. and North Vietnam. Still highly debated today, an American ship was fired upon by a North Vietnamese aircraft. This prompted U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson to carry out airstrikes on North Vietnamese naval installations.²⁰ On October 16th, China tested its first nuclear weapon.²¹ Further south, in Vietnam,

¹⁰ Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*. (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 511.

¹¹ Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 495.

¹² Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 475-476.

¹³ Short, *Mao: A Life*, 521.

¹⁴ Mark Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 72.

¹⁵ Short, *Mao: A Life*, 517.

¹⁶ Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 400.

¹⁷ Qiang Zhai. *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 124.

¹⁸ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 131.

¹⁹ Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 447.

²⁰ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, 86.

²¹ Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 484.

events were rapidly deteriorating. President Johnson began to expand the U.S. military role during the month of November. The number of U.S military advisors reached 23,300 by the end of 1964.²²

1965

Mao began the year launching a personal attack on Liu Shaoqi at a central work conference in January. A CIA report described how critical this meeting was by saying, “this party work conference in January 1965 was an important milestone on the road to the ‘great proletarian cultural revolution’”.²³ On February 7th, troops from North Vietnam attacked U.S. bases in South Vietnam around Pleiku, killing eight Americans. Less than a month later, the U.S. initiated Rolling Thunder—a sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam.²⁴ This led to the first U.S. Marines arriving in South Vietnam at the DaNang military base on March 8th.²⁵

Mao sent Jiang Ching to Shanghai in February to prepare attacks on the Party through propaganda channels. Zhang Chunqiao, a top Party official in Shanghai, supported Jiang Ching’s endeavors. Zhang helped Jiang enlist the services of a writer named Yao Wenyuan. Together with Mao, Jiang and Yao planned an article that would be published later in the year to help set off the Cultural Revolution.²⁶ It is important to describe what the Cultural Revolution was. China expert Lance Gore explains it this way:

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that lasted for a decade was a radical movement that shut down schools, slowed production, turned people against one another in civil war-like upheavals, and virtually severed China’s relations with the outside world. It was proletarian because it was a revolution of workers, peasants, and students against party officials. It was cultural because it meant to alter the values of society in line with the communist ideology.²⁷

From September to October, an important Party conference took place. One big issue was strategy regarding the Vietnam War. This meeting also played an important role in shaping the upcoming Cultural Revolution.²⁸ Mao wanted Wu Han criticized. Liu, Deng, Peng Zhen and the rest of the leadership refused, however, knowing what might happen as a result. This proved that Mao did not have complete control over the Party and would have to maneuver carefully to dispose of his opponents. Furthermore, during this conference, Peng Zhen made some defiant remarks that were directed at Mao. Peng said that “‘everyone in the face of truth was equal’ and that even Chairman Mao should be criticized.”²⁹

Simultaneously, events in Vietnam began to further deteriorate. The number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam reached 184,300 by the end of 1965.³⁰ China was pressured to support Hanoi, and at the same time their relationship with the Soviet Union was at an all-time low. Simultaneously, a sense of being encircled because of the growing U.S. military presence in Vietnam was alarming. Additionally, the Chinese economy had still not completely recovered from the GLF. Amidst all this, Mao started to take advantage of the growing turmoil in Vietnam. From now on, everything would be a sideshow to his goal of completely destroying the Party apparatus and removing everyone in his way.

²² Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, 85.

²³ “Factionalism in the Central Committee: Mao’s Opposition Since 1949” *ibid*, 25.

²⁴ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, 89.

²⁵ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, 90.

²⁶ Short, *Mao: A Life*, 527-528.

²⁷ Lance Gore, *Chinese Politics Illustrated: The Cultural, Social and Historical Context* (Hackensack NJ: World Scientific, 2014), 233.

²⁸ introduction to “Mao’s ‘Cultural Revolution’: Its Leadership, Its Strategy, Its Instruments and Its Casualties” *CIA*, Caesar, Polo and Esau documents, (May, 2007): ii, accessed July 6, 2015, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/14/polo-13.pdf.

²⁹ Rice, *Mao’s Way*, 229.

³⁰ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, 102.

1966

Lin Biao suggested additional changes were likely at a PLA political work conference in January.³¹ The change Lin had in mind was removing those who were supportive of Liu. Also in January, Mao called together a handful of trusted individuals, including his wife Jiang Qing, to form a group that would replace the existing Cultural Revolution Group.³² Mao had become greatly angered by Peng Zhen and waited for the right time to oust him. The current Cultural Revolution Group under Peng Zhen remained intact for the time being. Peng released a report titled the “February Outline Report” that claimed playwrights such as Wu Han and others deserve the freedom to write whatever they want to. On February 8th, Peng and the rest of the Cultural Revolution Group flew to Wuhan to talk to Mao about the outline. Mao did not absolutely support it, but he did not object to it either.³³ At the end of March, when Liu Shaoqi left for a state visit to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Burma, Mao decided to strike. After Liu left, Mao decided to condemn the “February Outline” and state that it should be repudiated.³⁴ At this point, either right before or right after Liu left, Peng Zhen and Lu Ting-yi—director of the propaganda department—were arrested.³⁵ This triggered a secretariat meeting from April 9th through the 12th that was presided over by Deng Xiaoping. At the meeting Kang Sheng and Chen Boda criticized Peng Zhen. Deng was pressured into joining Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, and Chen Boda to decide that Peng had wrongly opposed Chairman Mao on some issues and should be removed from the Cultural Revolution Group. Following this, Mao called a meeting of the Standing Committee on April 16th and had the Cultural Revolution Group disbanded.³⁶

In May, at a work conference chaired by Mao, it was officially revealed that Peng Zhen had been purged. Also, the new Cultural Revolution Group was established. It included Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng, and Chen Boda.³⁷ This new group, led by Jiang Qing, grew more powerful than the Party apparatus. With both Peng Zhen and Lo Rui-Ching now gone, Mao had the upper hand. On May 18th, Lin Biao talked to the Politburo in secret and claimed that Peng Zhen and Lo Rui-Ching had collaborated with a small group of people in an attempted coup against Mao.³⁸

By June, Liu Shaoqi was no longer in control of the state run newspaper *The People’s Daily*—which was a powerful weapon, and continues to be today.³⁹ On August 1st, Mao called for a Central Committee Plenum. At this plenum Liu was demoted. Lin Biao replaced him as deputy leader of the Party. Liu slid from 2nd to 8th in the Party hierarchy, but he remained head of state—although at that point it was just a title with no power attached.⁴⁰

To the south in Vietnam, the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam now stood at 385,300—an increase of 200,000 soldiers since the end of 1965.⁴¹

1967

By the end of February, the Politburo stopped functioning. The Standing Committee and Cultural Revolution Group, chaired by Premier Zhou Enlai, took over.⁴² It signaled Mao’s success in defeating the Party apparatus. Liu and Deng were subject to trumped up trials, marking their complete fall from power.⁴³ As part of the Cultural Revolution Group, Jiang Qing was a key player in the purge of Party officials. Jiang relished seeing Liu and Deng humiliated, so humiliated that they would never be able to mount a political comeback. She was right about Liu who would pass away in 1969, but a decade later the iron-willed Deng Xiaoping would have the last laugh when there would be no Mao to protect her.

³¹ “Communist China: The Political Security Apparatus Part 2” CIA, Caesar, Polo and Esau Papers, (May, 2007): 7, accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/14/polo-28.pdf. 7.

³² introduction to “Mao’s ‘Cultural Revolution’: Its Leadership, Its Strategy, Its Instruments and Its Casualties” *ibid.*, iii.

³³ Short, *Mao, A Life*, 531.

³⁴ Short, *Mao: A Life*, 531.

³⁵ “Communist China: The Political Security Apparatus Part 2” 8.

³⁶ Rice, *Mao’s Way*, 239-240.

³⁷ “Communist China: The Political Security Apparatus Part 2” 13.

³⁸ Clare Hollingworth, *Mao and the Men against Him*. (London: J. Cape, 1985), 124.

³⁹ Short, *Mao: A Life*, 536.

⁴⁰ Introduction to “Mao’s ‘Cultural Revolution’: Its Leadership, Its Strategy, Its Instruments and Its Casualties” *ibid.*, ix.

⁴¹ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, 102.

⁴² Short, *Mao: A Life*, 562.

⁴³ Chang and Holliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 532-533.

1968-2011

Liu Shaoqi was officially expelled from the Party at a meeting in 1968. Although Liu was expelled from the party, Deng Xiaoping was allowed to keep his Party membership. Mao gave Deng an opportunity for hope. It was a decision that had a lasting impact, not just for China, but the world. Premier Zhou Enlai passed away on January 8, 1976. Zhou had been one of the most beloved Chinese officials of the twentieth century. Later that year, Mao Zedong died on September 9th. With the top two Chinese officials dying in the same year, the battle for political power began. That battle was won by Deng Xiaoping, who had survived the Cultural Revolution. Mao's wife Jiang Qing and her collaborators were arrested. Charismatic, brilliant, and ruthless, Deng had all the qualities of a strong Chinese leader. Deng officially replaced Mao and took over as the leader of the CCP in December of 1978.

In 1980, Deng started opening up China's economy to the world. Travel in and out of China also started to accelerate; under Mao travel was restricted. Peasants in the countryside were able to do their own private farming and individuals were able to begin their own businesses. These were radical changes for the Chinese people. Other things stayed the same though, specifically politics.

The PRC constitution changed in 1982. Two five-year term limits were established for the president, vice-president, and members of the PBSC. Nobody would be able to rule again indefinitely as Mao had done. Ironically, Deng was not the Party secretary during his time in power, but he was still the Party chairman and the paramount leader until 1992. Jiang Zemin, the former mayor of Shanghai, replaced Deng. This began a shift in the CCP hierarchy from a strong man rule, toward a consolidated leadership with no single individual dominating the Party. The 1990s under Jiang saw incredible economic growth in China, but also turbulent relations with Taiwan.

Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin in 2002. Under Hu, China continued its strong economic growth, and was led by a group of leaders with no strong personalities. China's economy surpassed Japan's as the world's second largest in 2010.⁴⁴ It was a symbolic event for China that highlighted its growing power, especially in East Asia. Just two decades ago, it would have been thought of as inconceivable. The year 2011 ended shrouded in mystery when British businessman Neil Heywood was found dead in a Chongqing hotel on November 11th.

2012

As a fast rising Party official, Bo Xilai expected a position on the PBSC in November. Although Bo and Xi Jinping were both princelings, they were political competitors for power in the CCP.⁴⁵ Some CCP leaders in Beijing, most notably Premier Wen Jiabo, were openly critical though of the political model Bo established in Chongqing.⁴⁶ Bo was a very popular official; his crusade against corruption and revival of Maoism struck a popular nerve among people. Bo's popularity continues to exist among the people of Chongqing, even after his downfall.⁴⁷ The Party removed Bo from all his leadership positions in April, and his wife Gu Kailai was detained on suspicions of killing Mr. Heywood.⁴⁸ The biggest mistake Bo made was embarrassing the CCP. In August, Gu Kailai admitted to murdering Mr. Heywood by poisoning him, and was sentenced to a suspended death sentence.⁴⁹ To understand just how important 2012 was, and specifically, the problems that grew from the murder of Neil Heywood, one should read Xiansheng Tian who sums it up saying:

⁴⁴ David Barbosa, "China Passes Japan as Second-Largest Economy" *New York Times*, August 15, 2010, accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁴⁵ Jeremy Page, "Xi Comes Out on Top After Bo Verdict" *Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 2013, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303983904579090811721854036>. see also John Garnaut, "The Great Irony of Bo Xilai's Downfall" *The Atlantic*, September 23, 2013, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/09/the-great-irony-of-bo-xilais-downfall/279885/>.

⁴⁶ Xiansheng Tian, "When Chongqing Challenges Beijing" in *Evolution of Power: China's Struggle, Survival, and Success* ed. Xiabing Li, (Lanham Md: Lexington Books, 2013), 332, accessed June 26, 2015, <<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1574403>>

⁴⁷ Rachel Lu, "Bo Xilai, The Man Chinese Cyberspace Could Not Forget" *Foreign Policy*, April 2, 2015, accessed July 8, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/02/bo-xilai-protests-chongqing-corruption-reform-china/>

⁴⁸ Jaime A. FlorCruz, "China moves to contain Bo Xilai scandal" *CNN*, April 12, 2012 cited from <http://www.cnn.com/2012/04/12/world/asia/china-florcruz-bo-xilai/>

⁴⁹ William Wan, "China court gives Gu Kailai a suspended death sentence" *Washington Post*, August 20, 2012, accessed June 29, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-court-to-give-verdict-in-gu-kailai-murder-trial/2012/08/19/a11fb1d0-ea2b-11e1-9ddc-340d5efb1e9c_story.html.

The year of 2012 witnessed one of the greatest challenges the Chinese Communist Party had ever experienced in its history. The dramatic escape of a powerful police chief, Wang Lijun, from Chongqing city and his effort in looking for protection by the American Consulate General in Chengdu, China, shocked the whole world as well as the Chinese Communist Party itself.⁵⁰

Currently there are three different groups that dominate Chinese politics; the princeling faction, CYL faction (Communist Youth League) and the Shanghai clique. The princelings are led by current President Xi Jinping, the CYL faction by former President Hu Jintao and current Premier Li Keqiang, and the Shanghai clique by former President Jiang Zemin. There are times when the groups become blurred and members of one group also have ties to a different group. There are scholars who debate that looking at Chinese politics from the perspective of these factions is not accurate;⁵¹ however, it is the easiest way to understand current Chinese politics. Because of the embarrassment caused by Bo, the princeling group took a hit. Xi's position as the next president of China was not as secure as it had been. For a short time, this gave the CYL faction a much needed boost. But then another incident occurred right after the Bo Xilai scandal that dealt a blow to the CYL faction. Ling Gu, the son of then director of the CCP General Office—a powerful position in the CCP—and close advisor to President Hu, Ling Jihua, was killed in a traffic accident. Driving a Ferrari, two of Ling's girlfriends who were also in the car with him managed to come out alive, but both suffered severe injuries.⁵² The affair exposed the enormous wealth of assets by Ling, and his mother Gu Liping. President Hu's enemies launched attacks on him and the CYL faction. Most notably, Jiang Zemin scathingly attacked Hu, blaming him for the failure of looking over his group and keeping them from trouble. Hu's authority and influence took a big hit from this.⁵³ Furthermore, his power at placing his allies in top spots at the upcoming leadership change was affected by this.

Right before Xi was set to become the new president, he went “missing” from September 1st through the 15th. Among the most apocryphal reasons given was the story that Xi had injured his back swimming;⁵⁴ the real reason was quite different. The prominent China scholar Willy Lam mentions that most likely Xi did it to do something unprecedented: “He was using his silence as a protest against what he perceived to be irregularities in preparations for the Eighteenth Party Congress, particularly personnel arrangements that were not to his liking.”⁵⁵ Xi wanted to be chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) immediately. When Hu became president, he had to wait two years until he became chairman of the CMC, taking over for Jiang Zemin. Xi got his wish, however, at the Eighteenth Party Congress in November, thanks in large part to Jiang Zemin. With corruption becoming a major problem in China, Xi began to enforce discipline on Party members immediately. Shortly after the Eighteenth Party Congress, Xi announced the “Eight Point Regulations against Extravaganza” which were guidelines designed to prevent cadres from taking advantage of their status—or in other words, no more openly flaunting their wealth.⁵⁶ More importantly, this began Xi's anti-corruption campaign which was fully implemented the following month.

2013

Xi and President Obama held their first summit together in California in June amidst rising concerns about cybersecurity and conflict in the South China Sea.⁵⁷ A year-long rectification campaign also began in June called the “Campaign on Mass-Line Education and Practice.”⁵⁸ This campaign was aimed to establish better relations with the people and enforce Party discipline.

⁵⁰ Xiansheng Tian, *Ibid.* 323

⁵¹ For example see Kerry Brown, *Power and the Princelings in China*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

⁵² Jonathan Ansfield, “How Crash Cover-Up Altered China's Succession” *New York Times*, December 4, 2012, accessed June 28, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/05/world/asia/how-crash-cover-up-altered-chinas-succession.html?_r=0

⁵³ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 7.

⁵⁴ Gloria Riviera and Karson Yiu, “Where in the World is China's Xi Jinping” *ABC News*, September 11, 2012, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/09/where-in-the-world-is-chinas-xi-jingping/> see also “Party may have asked former HK chief executive to talk to CNN: Report” *China Times*, September 20, 2012, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=&id=20120920000086>.

⁵⁵ Willy Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 8

⁵⁶ Willy Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 105.

⁵⁷ “Xi, Obama meet for first summit” *Xinhua*, June 8, 2013, accessed July 11, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-06/08/c_132440860.htm.

⁵⁸ “About CPC's mass line campaign” *China Daily*, July 9, 2013, accessed February 29, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013massline/2013-07/19/content_16800244.htm.

Xi carried out a considerable power grab in November that enabled him to further consolidate power in himself. At a Party conference, two new superagencies were created. The first was the CNSC (Central National Security Council) which is supposedly modeled like the U.S. national security council. With authority over all the security forces in China, it is a powerful organization. The other organization created was the CLGCDR (Central Leading Group on Comprehensively Deepening Reforms) which is tasked with reforming the economy, and also pertains to the culture. Xi is chairman of both these new agencies.⁵⁹

Zhou Yongkang was the first ‘big tiger’ caught in Xi’s anti-corruption campaign in December when he was placed under investigation.⁶⁰ A retired Chinese official who served on the PBSC under Hu Jintao, Zhou had been in charge of the security forces. His power reached far and wide. Both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao were opposed to this at first because of Zhou’s stature. Xi however, was able to convince Jiang that Zhou should be removed.⁶¹ Zhou had also been a close ally of Bo Xilai; therefore, the arrest of Zhou is seen by many as politically motivated. In 2012, before Xi came to power, there were rumors that Zhou Yongkang and Bo Xilai had planned a coup against Xi before he could assume power. There were also rumors that Zhou personally tried to have Xi killed before and after Xi took over.⁶² This would partially explain why Xi wanted to remove both Bo and Zhou.

2014

General Xu Caihou was expelled from the CCP and handed over to prosecutors in June. Xu had been a member of the 25-man Politburo—the second highest political group after the PBSC. Xu also served as the vice-chairman of the CMC.⁶³ From 1999 until 2012, Xu was in charge of promoting high ranking military officials in the PLA.⁶⁴ This indicated that the anti-corruption campaign was beginning to reach high into the military. The publication of a book filled with Xi Jinping’s quotes titled *The Governance of China* came out in October.⁶⁵ Neither the previous two presidents, nor Deng Xiaoping, had a book published filled with their speeches to promote their personality. From October 20-23, the Fourth Plenum of the 18th Central Committee met. The focus of the meeting was on the rule of law.⁶⁶ Not in a Western sense, but as a way for Xi to control the Party.

2015

The PLA released a list of 14 Generals that were under investigation for corruption in March.⁶⁷ It is further evidence that Xi’s anti-corruption campaign had expanded within the military. It also shows that the PLA is Xi’s main base of support. He would not be going after the PLA if he feared a backlash against his corruption campaign among the military elite. Zhou Yongkang was sentenced to life in prison for corruption in June.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ Zheng Yongnian and Lance Gore, *China Entering the Xi Jinping Era* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 6-8, accessed July 18, 2015, <<http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=1864786>>

⁶⁰ Jonathan Ansfield and Chris Buckley, “China Focusing Graft Inquiry on Ex-Official” *New York Times*, December 15, 2013, accessed June 23, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/16/world/asia/china-presses-corruption-inquiry-of-powerful-former-security-official.html?_r=1.

⁶¹ Wily Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 106.

⁶² Andrew Wedeman, “Xi Jinping and the Politics of Corruption”.

⁶³ Jeremy Page and Brian Spegele, “Chinese Communist Party Ousts a Former Top General” *Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2014, accessed July 2, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/chinese-communist-party-ousts-a-former-top-general-on-bribe-taking-allegations-1404126279>

⁶⁴ Bo Zhiyue, “The Rise and Fall of Xu Caihou, China’s Corrupt General” *The Diplomat*, March 18, 2015, accessed August 1, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/the-rise-and-fall-of-xu-caihou-chinas-corrupt-general/>.

⁶⁵ “Xi Jinping’s book on governance provides window to world about China” *The Economic Times*, October 9, 2014, accessed July 27, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-10-09/news/54827450_1_president-xi-jinping-18th-national-congress-communist-party.

⁶⁶ “Fourth plenary session produces CPC blueprint for rule of law” *Want China Times*, October 25, 2014, accessed August 4, 2015, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20141025000028&cid=1101>.

⁶⁷ Yang Fan and Ho Shan, “Generals probed in Xi’s graft purge” *Asia Times*, March 3, 2015, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/CHIN-01-030315.html>.

⁶⁸ Michael Forsythe, “Zhou Yongkang, Ex-Security Chief in China, Gets Life Sentence for Graft” *New York Times*, June 11, 2015, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/12/world/asia/zhou-yongkang-former-security-chief-in-china-gets-life-sentence-for-corruption.html>

On July 1st, China approved a sweeping new national security law. The law is vague, but it appears to give Xi even more power on national security.⁶⁹ As Ankit Panda writes, “The Party seems to be coalescing national security authority around Xi as an acknowledgement that centralized authority is both in the interest of the Party and the country.”⁷⁰ It is indicative of how complete Xi’s power is in the realm of national security. At the end of July, the anti-corruption campaign took down another high ranking military official—Guo Boxiong. Guo, who served as vice-chairman of the CMC from 2002-2012—with Xu Caihou—was accused of taking bribes.⁷¹ Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou were both high ranking military officials who were promoted by Jiang Zemin. Xi appears to be further strengthening his grip on the military by removing Jiang’s men. The next sections of the article focus on the variables and how Mao and Xi consolidated personal power.

International Crises

The first variable I address to explain power consolidation is international crisis. I use Oran Young’s definition of an international crisis: “An International Crisis is a set of rapidly unfolding events which raises the impact of destabilizing forces in the general system or has any of its subsystems substantially above ‘normal’ (i.e., average) levels and increases the likelihood of violence occurring in the system.”⁷² China’s leaders from 1964-1966 faced an international crisis with the escalation of the Vietnam War. Mao’s comments to a delegation of the Japanese Communist Party in February of 1966 highlights the seriousness of the Vietnam War’s threat to China. Mao elaborated, “A war between China and America is inevitable. This year at the earliest or within two years at the latest such a war will occur. America will attack us from four points, namely the Vietnam frontier, the Korean frontier, and through Japan by way of Taiwan and Okinawa.”⁷³ But, did it help Mao consolidate power in himself? Donald Zagoria claims, “First, it is reasonably clear that American policies in Vietnam served as a catalyst to trigger long-standing political divergencies among the Chinese leadership”⁷⁴ The danger of this time period, and how close the U.S. came to carrying out military strikes against China is lucidly explained by Lyle Goldstein who chillingly sums up the crisis situation at that time, “US-China crisis interaction during this period witnessed several instances when American leaders contemplated the possibility of employing nuclear weapons against China and actively considered preventive strikes against Chinese nuclear facilities in the early 1960s.”⁷⁵ It wasn’t just the Vietnam War though that contributed to the international crisis’s that China faced. On September 30, 1965, Sukarno, President of Indonesia, was overthrown in a coup by an American supported general named Suharto. Sukarno had ties to the countries communist party (PKI) who were supported by Beijing. In addition to a terrible relationship with the Soviet Union and the Vietnam War escalating, this setback for Mao further divided the leadership. Edward Rice explains, “The series of failures, which culminated in the reversal in Indonesia, undoubtedly widened the split between Mao Tse-tung—who had been largely responsible for the direction of external affairs—and his opponents in the leadership.”⁷⁶

During 1965, the widening split in the leadership gave Mao an opening to consolidate personal power. More importantly, it forced Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi to choose sides in the power struggle between Mao and Liu. As Harry Harding and Melvin Gurtov mentioned, Lo Jui-Ching and Peng Chen became politically vulnerable after Zhou joined the Mao alliance.⁷⁷ Foreign policy played a big role for Mao in his consolidation of power. It divided

⁶⁹ Patrick Boehler, “What You Need To Know About China’s New National Security Law” *New York Times*, July 1, 2015, accessed August 24, 2015, <http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/01/what-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-new-national-security-law/>

⁷⁰ Ankit Panda, “The Truth About China’s New National Security Law” *The Diplomat*, July 1, 2015, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/the-truth-about-chinas-new-national-security-law/>.

⁷¹ “Former military leader Guo Boxiong expelled from CPC” *Xinhua*, July 30, 2015, accessed August 11, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-07/30/c_134464777.htm.

⁷² Oran Young, *The Intermediaries; Third Parties in International Crises*. (Princeton, N.J.: Published for the Center of International Studies, Princeton University [by] Princeton University Press, 1967), 10.

⁷³ Ito Kikuzo, and Minoru Shibata, “The Dilemma of Mao Tse-tung,” *Chinese Quarterly* no. 35 (July-September 1968): 159, n.3. accessed June 2, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.boisestate.edu/stable/pdf/652434.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

⁷⁴ Donald Zagoria, *Vietnam triangle; Moscow, Peking, Hanoi*. (New York: Pegasus, 1967), 63.

⁷⁵ Lyle Goldstein, *Meeting China halfway: How to Defuse the Emerging US-China rivalry* (Georgetown University Press, 2015), 39.

⁷⁶ Edward Rice, *Mao’s Way*, 223.

⁷⁷ Harry Harding and Melvin Gurtov, *Purge of Lo Jui-Ch’Ing: the Politics of Chinese Strategic Planning* (California: Rand Corporation), 3.

the leadership to the point that whoever opposed Mao was exposed. Andrew Wedeman writes that, “Because foreign policy became an ideological weapon, it lost its substantive importance and was subsumed under the more general debate on domestic topics.”⁷⁸ It’s also worth examining the timing of when Mao began the Cultural Revolution with what was happening externally. Mao began his attack on the Party center not long after American troops started pouring into South Vietnam. As Byung-joon Ahn cleverly notes, “Why did Mao raise the Wu Han issue at the particular time of September-October 1965, although Wu Han had written his play in 1960 and the play had been staged in 1961? Why did he raise the question of revisionism within the Central Committee at the same time?”⁷⁹ Certainly one reason is because Mao was in retreat from the Great Leap Forward between 1960 and 1962. But, another factor is the Vietnam War which escalated in the spring of 1965. The response on how to respond further divided the leadership and gave Mao an opening to attack the Party. Another important factor is worth considering though. In a crisis, people look to a strong leader to lead them through the stormy waters. Throughout China’s five thousand years of history, people looked to and relied on strong leaders of the long succession of dynasties to protect them. For China, during the mid-1960s the Chinese peasants trusted Mao. Additionally, he had already stood up to America once before—during the Korean War—with success. With that position, he consolidated power in himself, and dusted off his opponents in the process.

Today, China faces growing tensions in the South China Sea. One of the biggest sources of friction that the U.S. and China’s neighbors has with China is the building of islands in the South China Sea. China’s construction of airstrips and facilities has raised concerns. Confrontations have risen between China and Vietnam over China dragging an oil rig close to the coast of Vietnam.⁸⁰ Also, China has clashed with the Philippines in the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal—a group of reefs and rocks. The Philippines has sued China over the rights to explore for oil and gas 200 miles off the Philippines coast, an area that overlaps with Chinese interests.⁸¹ Meanwhile, tensions are rising between China and Japan.⁸² While the chance for conflict, or even war, has increased over the past five years, it still remains unlikely because of the strong economic interdependence between China and Japan, Taiwan, the U.S., and Southeast Asia.⁸³ The geopolitical situation currently is nowhere near as chaotic as it was under Mao in the mid-1960s. Xi Jinping is not facing U.S. bombing raids right on his doorstep. Furthermore, China is militarily stronger today than under Mao. It helps that China’s neighbors—Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, South Korea, and the Philippines—do not have the military capabilities that China does. So while there might be an international crisis in the terms defined by Young, most International Relations scholars would agree what we face today is not a crisis in the sense of what it was during the Vietnam War. Possibly the biggest reason that the international situation is not contributing to Xi’s consolidation of power is because upon becoming president he assumed the title as chairman of the CMC, Party secretary general of the CCP, and head of the CCP Central Leading Group on Foreign Affairs. Basically, he has had complete control of foreign policy decision making since the moment he became the leader of China. During the mid-1960s Liu Shaoqi was head of state, and Premier Zhou Enlai also played a large role in Chinese foreign affairs. There was not a consensus on foreign policy among China’s elites during Mao’s time of consolidating power as there is now with Xi.

Economic Conditions

This research examines economic factors such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and GNI (Gross National Income) when examining the economic conditions in China. Although issues such as pollution and quality of living

⁷⁸ Andrew Wedeman, *The East Wind Subsides: Chinese foreign policy and the origins of the Cultural Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute Press, 1987), 270.

⁷⁹ Byung-joon Ahn, *Chinese Politics and the Cultural Revolution*, 185-186.

⁸⁰ Scott Neuman, “China, Vietnam Spar Over Oil Rig in South China Sea” *NPR*, May 12, 2014, accessed June 18, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/05/07/310488736/china-vietnam-spar-over-oil-rig-in-south-china-sea>

⁸¹ Norman Aquino, “Philippines Sues China To Assert Claim Over Gas Rich Waters” *Bloomberg*, March 30, 2014, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-03-30/philippines-calls-china-threat-to-security-over-isles-squabble>

⁸² Ian Bremmer, “Is the China-Japan relationship ‘at its worst?’” *Reuters*, February 11, 2014, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://blogs.reuters.com/ian-bremmer/2014/02/11/is-the-china-japan-relationship-at-its-worst/>.

⁸³ “The flying factory” *The Economist*, November 15, 2014, accessed July 22, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21631799-asia-has-built-web-economic-interdependence-which-china-would-be-ill-advised-for-u.s.-china-relations-and-the-importance-of-the-economic-factor-see-thomas-fingar-and-fan-jishe>. “Ties that Bind: Strategic Stability in the US–China Relationship.” *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2013): 125-138, accessed June 19, 2015, http://fsi.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/TWQ_13Winter_Fingar-Jishe.pdf.

are hot topics today, my focus is on factors that show an overall view of China's economy. As noted previously, China's economy was in bad condition during the 1960s because of the GLF launched by Mao. By 1965 the economy was doing better due to the efforts of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. But, China continued to lag far behind most other countries. To illustrate the state of the Chinese economy during the 1960s, below is a graph comparing China's GDP per capita with Cambodia—a country that is a small fraction of the size of China. Throughout the 1960s Cambodia had a higher GDP per capita than China until the Vietnam War wreaked havoc on Cambodia. Thus, Mao's consolidation of power from the end of 1965 through 1966 cannot be explained by the economy. The economic conditions of the time period do not suggest Mao used the success or deterioration of the economy to consolidate power in himself. Furthermore, Mao's economic policies were why his credibility was damaged in the first place. Because of the GLF, Mao went into retreat, enabling Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping to take control of the Party apparatus.

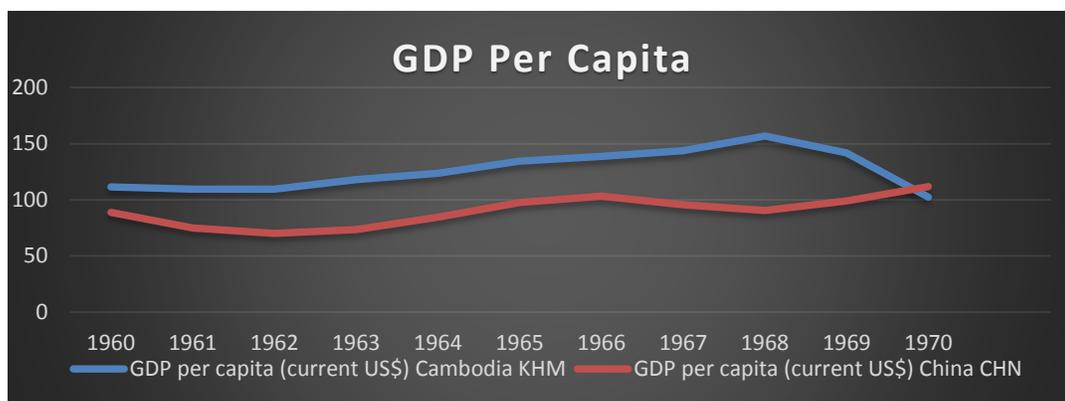


Figure 1. Data from database: World Development Indicators. Source: World Bank

After the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping opened up China's economy. Incorporating market reforms, the Chinese economy took off. In 2014, China overtook the U.S. as the world's largest economy.⁸⁴ In just the space of three and a half decades, China's economy has gone from an embarrassment to being the largest economy in the world. The Chinese economy has become vital to the world. Jonathan Fenby writes, "The PRC lends more than the World Bank to developing nations."⁸⁵ But, China still has a long way to go towards being a prosperous country. In terms of Gross National Income, China still trails the U.S. by a considerable amount even though China has a population that is nearly four times that of the U.S. The chart below demonstrates this discrepancy between the two countries. Despite the problems in China's economy today, Xi had the benefit of taking over at a time when China's economy was performing at a high rate. The challenge for Xi will be to keep the GDP growth at 6% or higher for the next decade. In analyzing CCP policies toward the economy, there are no indications that disagreements about economic policies helped Xi consolidate personal power. China's premier is the one typically in charge of economic affairs.⁸⁶ But, Xi has managed to diminish the role of China's current premier—Li Keqiang—by establishing the CLGCDR and making himself the head of the group. The CLGCDR, in vague language, was established to carry out reforms and direct policy concerning "economic, political, cultural, social and environmental sectors as well as the Party system."⁸⁷ It is now the top decision making body with regards to reforming the economy.⁸⁸ It is unclear if Xi did this because of his disapproval of Li's economic views. Wily Lam notes that there is a difference of opinion between Xi and Li on economic policies saying, "Unlike Xi and his conservative colleagues, Li wants the

⁸⁴ Brett Arends, "Its official: America is now No.2" *MarketWatch*, December 2, 2014, accessed July 21, 2015, <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/its-official-america-is-now-no-2-2014-12-04>

⁸⁵ Fenby. *Tiger Heads Snake Tails*, 4.

⁸⁶ Zachary Keck, "Is Li Keqiang being Marginalized?" *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2014, accessed July 8, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/01/is-li-keqiang-being-marginalized/>

⁸⁷ "President Xi to Lead Overall Reform" *Xinhua*, December 30, 2013, accessed June 7, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-12/30/c_133007740_2.htm

⁸⁸ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping: Renaissance, Reform, or Retrogression?* 278.

government to curtail direct interference in the economy.”⁸⁹ Additionally, Xi has further sidelined Li by putting himself as head of the Central Leading Group of Finance and Economic Affairs, a job usually assigned to the premier.⁹⁰ Some might argue that this could be proof that economic policies did play a role in Xi consolidating power. But, it is important to remember that Li is part of the CYL faction that competes for power against the Gang of princelings. The establishment of the CLDCDR appears to be more about power politics than economics. It has taken away Premier Li’s biggest source of power.



Figure 2. Data from databank: World Development Indicators. Source: World Bank

Leadership Qualities

In exploring whether leadership qualities played a role for both Mao and Xi in consolidating personal power, my research mainly focuses on cult of personality. Many authoritarian countries have leaders who possess and cultivate a cult of personality. Modern day Russia and Vladimir Putin is just one example. But, perhaps no modern leader has ever developed a cult of personality quite like Mao Zedong. During the mid-1960’s Mao’s cult of personality was at its apex. The legend of Mao and “Maoism” didn’t just reside in China, however, but spread globally. This was largely due to the self-promotion that Mao pushed. China gave arms, money and food to countries at a time that millions of Chinese peasants were dying from famine.⁹¹ At home in China, Mao already had the stature as founder of the PRC. Additionally, the term “Mao Zedong Thought” had been coined in 1943 that added to the cult of Mao. During the early 1940s the anthem “The East is Red” was also written:

The East is Red, the sun rises.
 In China a Mao Zedong is born.
 He seeks the people’s happiness.
 He is the people’s Great Savior.⁹²

Mao’s cult of personality really started taking off after 1959, when Lin Biao became Minister of Defense. Lin put together the little red book of Mao’s quotes that became published. Lin also propagated the cult of Mao in the PLA, much to the chagrin of Luo Jui-ching. Mao’s cult of personality had an important role in completely consolidating power in himself. Mao became idolized across the country. Parris Chang writes “The formation of a strong personal cult of Mao gradually turned Mao into an institution” the importance Chang notes is that “Other party leaders were thus disarmed from opposing or attacking Mao publicly, inasmuch as Mao had become the source of authority and correctness and they could not base a claim of legitimacy in opposition to Mao.”⁹³ The mixture of the little red book along with songs that idolized Mao played an important role in Mao’s cult of personality. It was a huge advantage

⁸⁹ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping: Renaissance, Reform, or Retrogression?* 160.

⁹⁰ Cary Huang. “Stand Aside Liconomics...here’s Xiconomics: How President Xi Jinping is taking the reins of China’s economy *South China Morning Post* February 16, 2016, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1913590/stand-aside-likonomics-heres-xiconomics-how-president?page=all>.

⁹¹ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 461.

⁹² Short, *Mao: A Life*, 392.

⁹³ Chang and Holliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 172-173.

for Mao against any opposition that dared to challenge him, or undermine his authority. It also was used as a tool for consolidating power in himself.

Since the death of Mao, China's leaders have been careful to prevent anyone from developing a cult of personality like Mao had done. The horrors of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution continue to haunt the CCP. That is why some people believe that when the CCP decides on who the next leader should be, they look for someone that is intensely loyal to the Party and not very popular. When Xi Jinping became the appointed heir of China, nobody suspected that he would attempt to establish a cult of personality. Xi's background was as someone who always took the middle road, and he had a humble, quiet personality. Additionally, Xi's father had been a liberal reformer. Since Xi has taken over though, there are signs that he has developed a cult of personality not seen since Mao. In China people just don't recognize Xi as their President, but also call him "Papa Xi" or "Big Daddy Xi." An article in the *New York Times* notes, "Not since Mao dominated the nation with his masterly blend of populism, fervor and fear has a Chinese leader commanded so much public awe."⁹⁴ And like Mao, Xi has had some of his speeches published in a book titled *The Governance of China*. The book can even be found at most Barnes and Noble bookstores in the U.S. Songs also have come out praising Xi, including one that has a similar beginning to "The East is Red."⁹⁵ There has also been a children's song praising 'grandpa Xi.'⁹⁶ Further evidence of Xi's growing cult of personality is the creation of Xi's "Little Red App." It contains Xi's quotes and a map of where he made the quotes. Also contained in the app is a story collection about subjects that Xi has an opinion about.⁹⁷ Its name evokes Mao's little red book. Another telling sign of Xi's growing cult of personality is the recent directive by authorities telling officials to include lectures about Xi's speeches at schools.⁹⁸ The growing popularity of Xi makes it difficult for someone to oppose him. China's premier Li Keqiang appears to be fine with everything that Xi has done. And because of Xi's forceful personality, there is not much Li can do.⁹⁹ In an interview, China scholar David Lampton highlights that Xi is popular saying, "One limitation on these 'loser' groups acting on their fears and resentments is that Xi is apparently popular with the public. This presumably makes potential enemies hesitant to confront him."¹⁰⁰ Xi's developing cult of personality and popularity has helped him consolidate power in himself. The long history of strong leaders in China is emphasized by Ross Terrill who wrote, "It was very hard, Mao said, for the Chinese people to get out from under thousands of years of worship of the emperor. Indeed. And hard, perhaps, for even a Marxist Chinese ruler to dispense with it."¹⁰¹ Maybe that still holds true today. The Chinese people want a strong leader, not a government led by a small group of indistinguishable men.

In talking about leadership qualities, it's also worth mentioning something else that both Mao and Xi have in common: a knack for keeping the rest of the CCP leadership off-balance. Mao was notorious for keeping the rest of the leadership guessing as to what he might approve or disapprove. Xi appears to have picked up on that. In an interview with the *New York Times* Christopher Johnson notes, "It strikes me that nobody knows entirely what's on the mind of Xi Jinping. I think he likes it that way." Johnson also goes on to say that, "He likes keeping everyone off balance. You see it in the way he gives a new policy speech practically once a week, and keeps everyone guessing and running to keep up."¹⁰² What this means for China and the world is that events might suddenly occur in a whiplash manner that comes unexpectedly. One area where this is already happening is in the South China Sea and

⁹⁴ Andrew Jacobs and Chris Buckley, "Move over Mao, Beloved 'Papa Xi' Awes China" *New York Times*, March 7, 2015, accessed June 4, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/08/world/move-over-mao-beloved-papa-xi-awes-china.html?_r=0 see also Steven Mosher, "Step Aside Great Helmsman, Big Daddy is here" *Washington Post*, July 15, 2015, accessed September 12, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/2015/jul/15/steven-mosher-xi-jinping-casts-large-shadow-over-c/>

⁹⁵ Jacobs and Buckley, "Move over Mao, Beloved 'Papa Xi' Awes China".

⁹⁶ Bo Zhiyue, "In China, an Ode to 'Grandpa Xi'" *The Diplomat*, June 17, 2015, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/in-china-an-ode-to-grandpa-xi/>.

⁹⁷ Anthony Kuhn, "The World According To Xi Jinping (Or At Least His App)" *NPR*, April 3, 2015 accessed July 27, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/03/397280519/the-world-according-to-xi-jinping-or-at-least-his-app>

⁹⁸ "Officials Required to lecture on Xi Jinping's speeches, socialism in college each semester" *The People's Daily*, August 6, 2015, accessed September 19, 2015 <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0806/c90000-8932221.html>

⁹⁹ Jeremy Page, Bob Davis and LingLing Wei, "Xi Weakens Role of Beijing's No.2" *Wall Street Journal*, December 20, 2013, accessed July 5, 2015 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304477704579252493857611618>

¹⁰⁰ David Lampton cited in Andrew Browne, "Is China's Xi Pushing Too Hard or Just Hard Enough? Q&A With Scholar David Lampton" *Wall Street Journal*, March 17, 2015 June, 12, 2015 <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/03/17/is-chinas-xi-pushing-too-hard-or-just-enough-qa-with-scholar-david-lampton/>

¹⁰¹ Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (New York, Harper & Row, 1980), 286.

¹⁰² Christopher K. Johnson cited in Chris Buckley, "Q&A: Christopher K. Johnson on the Heavy Thumb of Xi Jinping" *New York Times*, July 28, 2015, accessed August 22, 2015, <http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/28/q-and-a-christopher-k-johnson-on-the-heavy-thumb-of-xi-jinping/>

East China Sea. When China announced the establishment of ADIZ (Air Defense Identification Zone) at the end of 2013—which overlapped with Japanese territorial airspace—it came as a surprise. It also looked like a rash decision made by Xi. More of these kind of actions could occur in the future.

People's Liberation Army

Since the founding of the PRC, the PLA has had the most power of any governmental organization in China other than the CCP itself. Defining the role of the PLA in Mao and Xi's consolidation of power can be complicated. My research examines if Mao and Xi had the support of the leading figures in the PLA, and how it helped them. For Mao, support from the PLA was critically important for defeating his rivals. When Lin Biao took over as Minister of Defense in 1959, the PLA went from potentially being Mao's biggest problem to his strongest base of support. Lin became Mao's biggest supporter. By indoctrinating the PLA with "Mao Zedong Thought" Lin proved his loyalty to Mao. The importance of the PLA to Mao is explained by Parris Chang who writes, "Nevertheless, it seems obvious that PLA leaders played a vital role in the victory of Mao and the defeat of his opponents in the Plenum; this can be seen from the fact that three marshals of the PLA, Yeh-Chien-ying, Hsu Hsiang-chien, and Nieh Jung-chen, were awarded by their promotions to the Politburo."¹⁰³ That Mao had more support from the PLA than any other institution is further demonstrated by Ahn who notes, "To begin with, the leadership of the PLA's top machinery proved to be more amenable to Mao's ideas and policies than to the Party's."¹⁰⁴ More importantly, Lin increased the power of the PLA within the structure of the CCP. Ken Lieberthal explains:

Lin Biao then took a series of initiatives to enhance the role of the PLA in CCP affairs. He quickly began to increase the number of Party members in the military, perhaps because that would give him a greater say in national CCP affairs. During 1963-5, moreover, he worked to expand the PLA's organizational responsibilities, blurring at some points the boundaries between Party and military.¹⁰⁵

In 1965, the PLA further expanded its power by taking over complete control of the Public Security forces.¹⁰⁶ Having control of all the security forces tilted the advantage to Mao in his quest to completely consolidate power in himself. Additionally, as noted before, the most vocal opponent to Mao and Lin Biao in the PLA was purged toward the end of 1965, just as the Cultural Revolution was getting started.¹⁰⁷ The purge of Luo eliminated the one high ranking officer in the PLA who did not agree with Mao's war policies. Mao once said that, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun;"¹⁰⁸ there is no question that Mao held the barrel of the gun in his power struggle with Liu and the Party.

The first job Xi Jinping got after graduating college in 1979 was as an aide to Geng Biao, a senior defense official. Geng and Xi's father were very close, and it's how Xi got the job.¹⁰⁹ It allowed Xi to forge ties with the military that he kept even after he left for the countryside in 1982. And before Xi became President, he forged relationships with top military officials. You Ji writes that, "His close ties with PLA generals were both personal and institutional long before he was chosen as China's next leader. His friendship with offspring of PLA elders can be traced back to the 1950s."¹¹⁰ Upon becoming China's leader, Xi has quickly established a command of the PLA that

¹⁰³ Parris Chang, *Power and Policy in China* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 175.

¹⁰⁴ Ahn, *Chinese Politics and the Cultural Revolution*, 123-124, On the importance of the PLA in the early 1960's see also John Gitting's, "The Chinese army's role in the Cultural Revolution," *Pacific Affairs*, 39.3-4 (Fall-Winter 1966-7), 269-89, accessed June 9, 2015 <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.boisestate.edu/stable/pdf/2754273.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

¹⁰⁵ Kenneth Lieberthal, "The Great Leap Forward And The Split In The Yan'An Leadership 1958-65" in *The Politics of China 1949-1989*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar, (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 127.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Lieberthal, "The Great Leap Forward And The Split In The Yan'An Leadership 1958-65" 129.

¹⁰⁷ Karnow, *Mao and China: From Revolution to Revolution*, 148-51. See also Harry Harding and Melvin Gurtov, *The Purge of Lo Jui-Ch'ing: The Politics of Chinese Strategic Planning*. (Santa Monica, Cal: The Rand Corporation, 1971).

¹⁰⁸ Mao Zedong, accessed July 2, 2015 <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch05.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Evan Osnos, "Born Red" *The New Yorker*, April 6, 2015, accessed May 21, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/born-red>

¹¹⁰ You Ji, "China's new supreme command and Xi Jinping's political leadership" in *China Entering the Xi Jinping Era* ed. Zheng Yongnian and Lance L. P. Gore (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 68, accessed June 22, 2015, <<http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=1864786>>.

his two predecessors were not able to do.¹¹¹ Helping Xi is the fact that a large share of princelings are in the PLA, making it Xi's major source of support.¹¹² Of any group or institution, it is the PLA that Xi leans on for advice. Willy Lam has noted that the PLA princeling generals act as Xi's private think tank.¹¹³ Since taking power, Xi has also used his position as CMC chairman to promote generals that support him.¹¹⁴ Xi understands just how imperative it is to have control of the PLA in consolidating power. The establishment of the CNSC, with Xi making himself chairman, is further proof that the security forces in China is under Xi's complete control. At the end of 2014, further evidence of Xi's growing power came with the appearance of the "CMC chairman responsibility system." Although its appearance in Chinese media outlets has not been frequent, it is important to consider that it was not brought up under Jiang Zemin or Hu Jintao. One author describes the importance of it saying:

The current evidence strongly suggests that this concept is another piece of Xi Jinping's ongoing effort to consolidate his leadership power, with specific focus on consolidating his actual control of the PLA during a period of both aggressive modernization and political turmoil caused by the anti-corruption campaign.¹¹⁵

By taking over as chairman of the CMC right away, promoting generals that are close to him, and establishing the CNSC, Xi has demonstrated that the PLA is a main factor for his consolidation of power. Command of the gun oftentimes determines political conflicts and power throughout the world to this day. Both Mao and Xi were able to use it as leverage in consolidating power in themselves.

Corruption

Corruption for this article is defined as "the abuse of public office for private gain."¹¹⁶ Although corruption looks different in every country, I mainly focus on the number of Party officials disciplined for corruption, and also focus on the high ranking officials that are detained. From 1962 until Mao's death, the issue of corruption was not a significant problem in China. The absence of a market economy can partially explain why this was, but also the absolute authority by Mao after 1965 meant that bribes were not as frequent; your status depended on how well you adhered to Mao Zedong thought. Purges under Mao did not occur based on corruption, but whether you were considered a capitalist-roadster like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping had been. Because of this, I consider corruption as a non-factor for the Mao period.

Since the first day upon becoming general secretary of the CCP, Xi has framed corruption as an existential threat to China. Even previous presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have considered corruption as "'a matter of life and death' for the CCP."¹¹⁷ The Heritage Foundation ranks China 144th out of 178 countries in a freedom from corruption index. Corruption has gotten worse in the last few years. As the chart below shows, China has slipped lower in the rankings than countries like Egypt. The day after he was officially introduced as the general secretary, Xi acknowledged the importance of corruption saying, "Under the new conditions, our Party faces many severe challenges, and there are many pressing problems within the Party that need to be resolved, particularly

¹¹¹ You Ji, *Ibid.* 59.

¹¹² Willy Lam, "Xi Jinping's imperfect inner circle" *Asia Times*, February 19, 2013, accessed July, 14, 2015 <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/CHIN-01-190213.html>.

¹¹³ Willy Lam. "The Generals' Growing Clout in Diplomacy" *China Brief*, April 3, 2015, accessed July 24, 2015, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43750&cHash=9f47f10a7531e5f9b9d2428f61c275c5#.VbO6hBG2TIX.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Fenby, "What the West should know about Xi Jinping, China's most powerful leader since Mao" *New Statesman*, June 23, 2015, accessed September 3, 2015 <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/06/what-west-should-know-about-xi-jinping-china-s-most-powerful-leader-mao>, see also Kevin McCauley "President Xi Clears the Way for Military Reform: PLA Corruption, Clique Breaking and Making, and Personnel Shuffle" *China Brief* February 4, 2015, accessed June 21, 2015, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43498&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=789&no_cache=1#.VbPSJBF77IV

¹¹⁵ James Mulvenon, "The Yuan Stops Here: Xi Jinping and the 'CMC Chairman Responsibility System'" *China Leadership Monitor* no. 47 (July 2015), accessed August 9, 2015 <http://www.hoover.org/research/yuan-stops-here-xi-jinping-and-cmc-chairman-responsibility-system>.

¹¹⁶ "Corruption and Economic Development" *World Bank* accessed February 2, 2016 <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/corruptn/cor02.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 105.

corruption.”¹¹⁸ Several weeks later, Xi backed up those words with action. The “eight rules” campaign was introduced on December 4, 2012. This new initiative by Xi was intended to combat corruption and clean up the behavior of CCP officials.¹¹⁹ Openly flaunting one’s wealth would be punished. These new eight rules went into effect in January of 2013.¹²⁰ More importantly, it also signaled the beginning of Xi’s anti-corruption campaign. At the start, nobody expected this anti-corruption campaign to end up being the most far reaching crackdown since the Cultural Revolution. Xi emphasized that the Party should crackdown on both “tigers” and “flies” meaning both high and lower level officials will be investigated.¹²¹ From 1997 to 2012, 550,000 Party officials were indicted for either corruption or dereliction of duties.¹²² But, one report notes that since the end of 2012 until the beginning of 2015, “414,000 officials have been disciplined by the party for corruption, and 201,600 have been prosecuted for the infraction in court.”¹²³ Those numbers are astonishing compared to the fifteen year period from 1997-2012. They also show how far and deep Xi’s anti-corruption campaign has reached. Party officials throughout the country are on edge that they might be next.

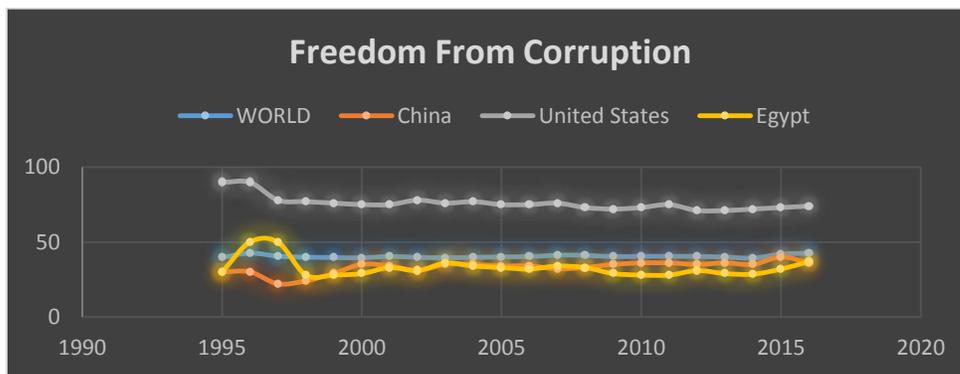


Figure 1. Source: Heritage Foundation

Evidence of Xi’s anti-corruption campaign’s success is its reach into the PLA. Xi understands that he needs the complete support of the PLA to succeed in being the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao. This was no easy task, however, with top military officials still loyal to Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao when Xi assumed power. Removing Zhou Yongkang, who was in charge of the overall security forces, was a first step in this direction. Furthermore, tackling the generals Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong who both pledged loyalty to Jiang Zemin, and were two powerful forces within the PLA, proved to be a major success for Xi. Adding to this, Xi has been able to restructure the PLA to his advantage with the help of the anti-corruption campaign. Xi has been just as resolute as Mao was that the Party have complete authority over the gun. Elevating allies in the PLA, with help of the anti-corruption campaign, to top spots has helped Xi cement his grip on power.

¹¹⁸ “Xi leads top leadership, meets press” *Xinhua*, November 15, 2015, accessed February 10, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/18cpenc/2012-11/15/c_131976383.htm.

¹¹⁹ Keith B. Richburg, “China’s Xi Jinping to Party officials: Simplify” *Washington Post*, December 5, 2012, accessed February 4, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/chinas-xi-jinping-to-party-officials-simplify/2012/12/05/27df9710-3ef2-11e2-8a5c-473797be602c_story.html.

¹²⁰ Shi Jiangtao, “Xi Jinping’s guidelines to cut back extravagance go into effect” *South China Morning Post*, January 4, 2013, accessed February 15, 2016 <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1119384/xi-jinpings-guidelines-cut-back-extravagance-go-effect>

¹²¹ Ding Lin, “Xi Jinping vows ‘power within cage of regulations’” *Xinhua*, January 22, 2013, accessed February 18, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-01/22/c_132120363.htm

¹²² Andrew Wedeman, “Xi Jinping’s Tiger Hunt and the Politics of Corruption” *China Currents* 13 no.2 (2014), accessed January 8, 2016, http://www.chinacenter.net/2014/china_currents/13-2/xi-jinpings-tiger-hunt-and-the-politics-of-corruption/

¹²³ Macabe Keliher and Hsinchao Wu, “How to Discipline 90 Million People” *The Atlantic*, April 7, 2015, accessed October 21, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/xi-jinping-china-corruption-political-culture/389787/>

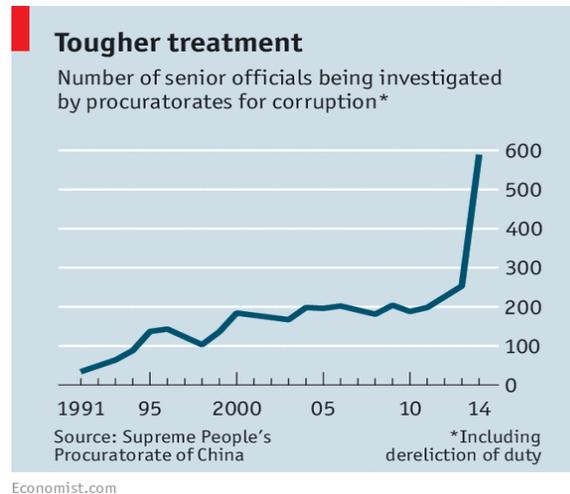


Figure 4. Source: *The Economist*

Wang Qishan is perhaps the most feared name in China today. He is also one of the few people Xi Jinping trusts. As director of the Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection (CCDI), Wang is Xi Jinping's right hand man. What makes Wang so intimidating is his position as head of the CCDI, which is the most feared and powerful department in the CCP. Additionally, Wang knows how to capitalize on his position. An article by *The Economist* noted that, "Fear is Wang Qishan's favoured weapon. As leader of the Communist Party's most sustained and wide-ranging anti-corruption campaign in its history, he often urges his investigators to be "frightening."¹²⁴ Like Xi, Wang is also a senior princeling. This has caused increased suspicion that the anti-corruption campaign is really a political tool to oust political rivals. Wang's loyalty and support of Xi has been important for removing political opponents. Although Xi has said that, "Cases will be investigated completely and no leniency will be meted out no matter who is involved."¹²⁵ So far in the anti-corruption campaign, Xi has taken down five big tigers. All of them are considered political rivals. The removal of these officials has greatly helped Xi further expand his authority. Furthermore, the one faction in the CCP that has not been affected by the anti-corruption campaign is the princeling group that Xi leads. Willy Lam has noted "That Xi and the CCDI are targeting rival factions within the CCP is illustrated by the 'Code on Disciplinary Punishments."¹²⁶ The Code on Disciplinary Punishments are regulations warning officials against establishing factions and cliques.¹²⁷ Doubling down on rival factions enables Xi to further weaken his opponents.

There are immense risks associated with the anti-corruption campaign. If Xi does not take down enough big tigers than people will accuse the Party of not trying hard enough to combat corruption. If too many big tigers are arrested though, people might point to it as evidence that everyone is corrupt, further delegitimizing the CCP. Xi walks a fine line in making the anti-corruption campaign successful without further weakening the CCP. The choice to carry out the campaign however, was an easy decision for Xi considering his goals. Framing corruption as a crisis situation, and the cornerstone of his first three years in office, has allowed Xi to remove political opponents while expanding his personal authority.

Additional Causal Factors

In analyzing the historical timeline I constructed, two additional causal factors appeared for both Mao and Xi in consolidating power. The first is the creation of organizations. The second is the important role of Mao and of

¹²⁴ "the devil, or Mr Wang" *The Economist*, March 28, 2015, accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/china/2164729-5-chinas-second-most-powerful-leader-admired-and-feared-devil-or-mr-wang>

¹²⁵ Ding Lin, "Xi Jinping vows 'power within cage of regulations'".

¹²⁶ Willy Lam, "China's Anti-Graft Campaign in Review" *China Brief* 15 Issue 23 (December 7, 2015) accessed January 4, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=44864&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=789&no_cache=1#.VseZ19B_Y4V](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=44864&tx_ttnews[backPid]=789&no_cache=1#.VseZ19B_Y4V)

¹²⁷ Lam, "China's Anti-Graft Campaign in Review" *ibid.*

Xi's wives. I first explain the importance of the creation of organizations, and later, the importance of their wives. For Mao, the creation of the Cultural Revolution Group was important because it directed the purges of top Chinese officials such as Head of State Liu Shaoqi and General Secretary Deng Xiaoping. As Jung Chang and Jon Halliday point out, "At the end of May 1966, Mao set up a new office, the Cultural Revolution Small Group, to help run the Purge. Mme Mao headed it for him, with Mao's former secretary, Chen Boda, its nominal director, and purge director Kang Sheng its 'adviser.'"¹²⁸ The Cultural Revolution Group eventually became more powerful than the Party apparatus itself. Revolutionary committees were established throughout the country after the complete destruction of the Party apparatus. In addition to the Cultural Revolution Group, Kang Sheng was also important. Philip Short explains how the sly former secret police chief became such a valuable tool for Mao writing:

So did Kang Sheng, who became the Chairman's informant on Deng Xiaoping's Secretariat. He soon showed that he had not forgotten his old tradecraft as secret police chief in Yan'an by setting up a 'Special Case Group' to investigate what he claimed was covert attempt to promote the rehabilitation of Gang Gao. In a chilling foretaste of the tactics Kang would use against Mao's enemies in the great upheavals that lay ahead, thousands of people were interrogated and a senior vice-premier purged on the sole evidence of an unpublished historical novel.¹²⁹

Kang's background as head of the secret police was a crucial advantage for Mao. Control of internal security is critical for complete political control. The reinvention of the PLA under Lin Biao was hugely important for Mao as well. As noted previously, Lin increased the power of the PLA within the structure of the CCP. Although it was not the creation of a new organization, the powers it acquired under Lin—with Mao's approval and encouragement—were new. All these factors were important for Mao in consolidating power.

Xi Jinping has proven to be more skillful than Mao in creating organizations that give him more power. In November of 2013, Xi created two super organizations, the CNSC and CLDCRG, described previously, then placed himself as the chairman of both of them.¹³⁰ China scholar David Lampton describes what Xi Jinping's goals were in establishing the CNSC saying, "In short, Xi is both driving to achieve better policy coordination and greater personal control in the system."¹³¹ The CNSC is responsible for overseeing all the external and internal security affairs in China. Willy Lam notes the reasons for the establishment of the CNSC saying, "The plenum set up a National Security Committee (NSC) to better coordinate the work of functions that range from police and counter-espionage to the media and foreign affairs."¹³² There is some debate about what the CNSC actually does, and is responsible for, but there is little disagreement that it is a very powerful instrument vested in Xi. The other organization, the CLGCDR, greatly diminished the spotlight of Premier Li Keqiang. Just recently, on July 1, 2015, another new national security law came out.¹³³ Xinhua describes it this way "covers a wide spectrum of topics including defense, finance, science and technology, culture and religion."¹³⁴ But the scope of the law still appears vague to many China watchers. Patrick Boehler remarks, "The law addresses purported security threats in areas as varied as cyberspace, food supply and religion."¹³⁵ Behind all the confusion about the law is the constant maneuvering by Xi to completely consolidate power. There is also a possibility that the new law allows Xi a legal

¹²⁸ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 514.

¹²⁹ Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 521-522.

¹³⁰ "Xi Jinping to lead national security commission" *Xinhua*, January 24, 2014 July 1, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/24/c_133071876.htm for Xi's role on the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform see "President Xi to head leading group for overall reform" *Xinhua*, December 30, 2013, accessed July 25, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-12/30/c_133007127.htm

¹³¹ David Lampton, "Xi Jinping and the National Security Commission: Policy Coordination and Political Power" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 24, no. 95 (March 2015): 760, accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.tandfonline.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/10670564.2015.1013366>

¹³² Willy Lam, "Xi's power grab dwarfs market reforms" *Asia Times*, November 21, 2013 accessed October 27, 2015, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/CHIN-01-211113.html>

¹³³ "China adopts new law on national security" *Xinhua*, July 1, 2015, accessed September 4, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-07/01/c_134372198.htm

¹³⁴ Xinhua, *ibid*.

¹³⁵ Patrick Boehler, "What You Need to Know About China's New National Security Law" *New York Times*, July 1, 2015 accessed August 24, 2015, http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/01/what-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-new-national-security-law/?_r=0

cover for his activities.¹³⁶ Xi, through all of these actions, has proven that establishing new organizations is a vital tool for consolidating power.

Mao and Xi's wives are the second additional causal factor that was important in their success. Mao began to retreat from the spotlight from 1960-1962 because of the GLF. Writers began to publicly criticize Mao's policies. Wu Han and Teng To were two writers specifically that lashed out in the cultural sphere. By the end of 1962, it became a growing problem for Mao. In every country, control of the media is considered indispensable for controlling power, and Mao had always used the pen as one of his most powerful weapons. This time, Mao employed the services of his wife Jiang Qing to try and take back control of the propaganda and culture in China. By unleashing Jiang Qing, Mao violated the agreement with the rest of the Party that was put in place when they married which barred Jiang from being active in politics. Jiang served as an important pillar of support Mao needed to purge his rivals. Harry Harding describes her importance this way, "The second element in the nascent Maoist coalition was a group of radical intellectuals who, by mid-1966, would come to serve as the doctrinal arbiters and mass mobilizers of the Cultural Revolution. The key person in assembling these leftist propagandists and writers was Mao's wife, Jiang Qing."¹³⁷ Jiang also became a leading member of the Cultural Revolution Group (CRG) that ran the Cultural Revolution. The CRG eventually became more powerful than the Party apparatus itself. Indeed, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday argue that it was Jiang who ran the CRG.¹³⁸ Li Zhisui summarizes Jiang Qing's importance nicely saying, "But at this turning point in his career, Mao needed Jiang Qing. Even her political ambitions were of use. She was, as she claimed, the most loyal lieutenant he had, because without Mao, Jiang Qing was no one."¹³⁹ How fitting then, that after Mao died, Jiang went on to say that, "I was Chairman Mao's dog. Whoever he told me to bite, I bit."¹⁴⁰

Peng Liyuan surpassed her husband Xi Jinping in popularity for most of their marriage. Peng was a famous folk singer and performer for the PLA. The importance of Peng cannot be overstated in Xi's rise as the leader of China. Because of Peng's connections in the PLA, she was able to introduce Xi to the Shanghai group—a powerful political faction run by former President Jiang Zemin. Willy Lam reports that, "It was Xi's wife, Peng, who first got her husband connected with the Shanghai faction."¹⁴¹ Without this connection Xi probably would not have gotten the job of Party secretary of Zhejiang province that proved to be so important. Later on through his job as Party boss of Zhejiang, Xi spent time with Jiang and made a positive impression. Jiang would make sure at the 2007 Party Congress that Xi would be designated as the next leader, after President Hu Jintao finished his term in 2012.¹⁴² The importance of Peng in Xi's rise is vital to understanding how Xi went from being what Evan Osnos describes as an "unremarkable provincial administrator"¹⁴³ to being the most powerful leader since Mao. Since Xi has become President, Peng has continued to help out her husband in a way that the previous two first ladies of China never did. Peng has made headlines in China and throughout the world with her fashionable public appearances. Naomi Ng and Jun Mai write, "Peng's clothes are always the talk of the town when she is seen in public, just as Britain's Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge."¹⁴⁴ This approach by Peng is seen as a way for Xi to project soft power throughout the world. Whether it has worked, or will work is yet to be determined. Jaime Florcruz remarks that, "Chinese analysts think that Peng can similarly help burnish China's image overseas by projecting a softer touch."¹⁴⁵ Either way, Peng continues to play an important role for her husband, which is the first time since Jiang Qing that the wife of China's leader has attempted to do so.

¹³⁶ Ankit Panda, "The Truth About China's New National Security Law" *The Diplomat*, July 1, 2015 accessed July 20, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/the-truth-about-chinas-new-national-security-law/>

¹³⁷ Harry Harding, *Ibid.* 157.

¹³⁸ Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 514.

¹³⁹ Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 442.

¹⁴⁰ Short, *Mao: A Life*, 521.

¹⁴¹ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 57.

¹⁴² Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, 57-59.

¹⁴³ Evan Osnos, "Born Red" *New Yorker*, April 6, 2015, accessed May 21, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/born-red>

¹⁴⁴ Naomi Ng and Jun Mai, "The Woman in Red: China's first lady Peng Liyuan stands out from crowd at military parade" *South China Morning Post*, September 3, 2015 accessed November 9, 2015, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1854935/woman-red-chinas-first-lady-peng-liyuan-stands-out>

¹⁴⁵ Jaime A. Florcruz, "Charm offensive: Peng Liyuan, China's glamorous new first lady" *CNN*, March 25, 2013 accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/23/world/asia/china-peng-liyuan-profile/>

Implications

I finish by examining the possible outcomes in China due to the recent switch back to a strong man rule after decades of a consolidated leadership. Before I begin my conclusion, it should be noted that making predictions about China is not easy, and the views here are my own. The journalist Rob Gifford spoke of how “China messes with my head on a daily basis.”¹⁴⁶ I believe that is true of anyone who follows China. One day you think China is about to take over the world, and the next day you think it is about to implode. The first possible outcome is that the CCP will collapse. This is a growing view among China scholars today, most notably David Shambaugh.¹⁴⁷ China’s recent economic slowdown might help accelerate the implosion of the CCP. It is widely believed that the legitimacy of the CCP over the past three decades has rested on the strong economic growth that Deng Xiaoping started. But with that growth slowing, satisfaction with the Party could rapidly disintegrate. Bruce Gilley argues that China will eventually democratize. Furthermore, Gilley believes that democratization in China will be led by the political elite rather than a revolution from below.¹⁴⁸ A move to democratization might be inevitable in the future, even if it is from below. As Gifford points out, “but I think that once you allow people to choose their pizza toppings, sooner or later they are going to want to choose their political leaders.”¹⁴⁹ The Chinese people have more choices today than at any point in the past 150 years. Those choices could lead to political changes. The growing gap between rich and poor, increasing job losses from State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), environmental problems and social strains is evidence that frustration with the Party could build to a tipping point where democratization is a possibility in the future. Additionally, Xi’s anti-corruption campaign is not popular among all Party officials. Evan Osnos points out that, “The struggle between an emperor and his bureaucracy follows a classic pattern in Chinese politics, and it rarely ends well for the emperor”.¹⁵⁰ Xi’s goal is to keep the Party unified. Additionally, the collapse of the Soviet Union still haunts the CCP. Xi Jinping is determined that the CCP leadership understand the lessons from it, and why it failed. Naturally, there are those who point to the Soviet Union in explaining that the collapse of the CCP is likely. The problem with this analogy should be obvious though. The Soviet Union had a political leader that was willing to give up political power. Xi Jinping by contrast, is thus far determined to preserve the CCP, whatever it takes.

Another reason for the possible collapse of the CCP is the absence of an ideology. Under Mao, the CCP rested its legitimacy on Marxism. The death of Mao however, sounded the death of Marxism in China. The results of that left a moral vacuum in China. Over the past decade the CCP has tried to fill the vacuum with Confucianism, but the results have not been great. It is this author’s belief that the Chinese people have found for themselves their own ideology: Christianity. The explosion of Christianity over the past three decades is astonishing. Ironically, the CCP can use this to its advantage. Chinese people just want to be able to worship without governmental interference. A Chinese human rights lawyer, talking about Christians in China with the journalist Evan Osnos said, “They don’t care who is in power: Caesar, Mao Zedong, the Communist Party”...“Whoever is in power is in power. But don’t hinder my belief in Jesus.”¹⁵¹ The CCP has been able to stay in power since the death of Mao because it is able to adapt to new situations. This is a situation that the CCP has a chance to adapt to, and help itself stay in power. Part of the reason for the implosion of the CCP however, I believe, is that there is a slight chance Xi Jinping could be assassinated. I don’t intend to sound sensational, but when you make a lot of people mad as Xi has done with his anti-corruption campaign, there is always an outside possibility of this happening. Additionally, there were rumors that Xi was a target of assassination and coup attempts before he took power.

Second, China will continue to muddle along; it will not become super powerful, but will not collapse either. In this scenario China will continue to experience bumps in the economy and in its relationships with foreign countries, but no major changes will occur. China will not challenge the U.S. for global superiority, but relations will remain tense. Among China scholars, Minxin Pei is most closely associated with this stance. In Pei’s book *China’s Trapped Transition*, he notes China’s refusal to install political reforms might lead to prolonged

¹⁴⁶ Rob Gifford, *China Road: a Journey Into the Future of a Rising Power*. (Random House Incorporated, 2008), 17.

¹⁴⁷ See for example David Shambaugh, “The Coming Chinese Crackup” *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015 accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coming-chinese-crack-up-1425659198>.

¹⁴⁸ Bruce Gilley, *China’s Democratic Future: The Coming Great Leap to Freedom*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁴⁹ Gifford. *China Road*, 18.

¹⁵⁰ Osnos, “Born Red”.

¹⁵¹ Evan Osnos, *Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth, and Faith in the New China*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2014), 315.

stagnation.¹⁵² Parts of China today are experiencing slow economic growth, while other areas, specifically the southern coastal cities, have high growth rates. This contrast throughout will likely continue without reforms of China's SOEs. Finally, Xi Jinping will carry out reforms that enable China to become a superpower. There is a possibility that Xi is consolidating power so that he can carry out reforms in the future. Most likely these will be economic, but social and political reform are also a possibility. It appears that Xi Jinping is planning on possibly holding onto power well past his expected retirement in the year 2023. Willy Lam has written that, "Xi appears to be angling to break the 10-year-tenure rule for the country's supreme leader, with the aim of serving longer than any Chinese ruler in decades."¹⁵³ There are no indications that Xi is looking for his successor which usually happens after a few years in office. It appears that rather than finding his replacement, Xi is maneuvering people into positions that will help cement his grip on power which will last for as long as he lives. Xi appears more than up to the challenge. One editor of a Chinese paper described Xi this way, "He's not afraid of Heaven or Earth, and he is, as we say, round on the outside, and square on the inside; he looks flexible, but inside he is very hard."¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Xi Jinping has a fire inside of him that no Chinese leader has had since Deng Xiaoping. Don't expect this fire to be extinguished anytime soon. Kevin Rudd, the former prime minister of Australia and China scholar who has met Xi on several occasions notes that Xi is, "not trying to be something that he's not. He is a born leader." Rudd adds, "He's very comfortable with the exercise of power."¹⁵⁵ Xi's comfort with power is clearly evident throughout his three years in power thus far. That power will likely stay with Xi for the rest of his life. Recently, China's media outlets have referred to Xi as China's 'core leader.' This is evidence that Xi has successfully consolidated personal power. Chris Buckley writes, "Officials have suggested that hailing Mr. Xi as a leader of such stature—one in the footsteps of Deng, who ruled China through its transformation after Mao's death—carries a warning not to question, let alone challenge, his authority as the government navigates turbulent changes."¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, a leading magazine of the CCP "has called for conforming with the country's top leader, Xi Jinping."¹⁵⁷ Going forward, Xi is positioned to establish his power and remain influential well past his expected retirement. Additionally, Xi's aim is not to be a great leader, but to be the greatest leader of recent Chinese history.

Conclusion

Like Mao before him, Xi has demanded complete loyalty to himself. Both men expect the Party to be subservient to their directives; anything less is unacceptable. Both Mao and Xi view themselves as the perfect leaders for China, and only through their leadership will China return to its rightful place as the greatest nation and civilization. For both Mao and Xi, control of the PLA and leadership qualities proved important for consolidating personal power. The PLA in a way, is a separate institution that has always had a considerable amount of power. Any attempt at consolidating power must be accompanied with a control of the PLA. Leadership qualities, mainly cult of personality, are also critical. When a leader develops a cult of personality, any potential political opponent becomes less likely to challenge the authority of a leader. Developing separate instruments of power to circumvent the Party, and the role their wives played were also important additional causal factors for both Mao and Xi. When feeling constrained by the CCP system, Mao and Xi created alternative power sources for themselves. The roles of Mao and Xi's wives are often overlooked. Jiang Qing and Peng Liyuan were critical in different ways so that their husbands could be successful. More importantly, a key attribute for both Mao and Xi in consolidating power is the presence of a crisis situation. For Mao that crisis was the Vietnam War. For Xi Jinping it has been corruption.

¹⁵² Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁵³ Willy Lam, "Xi Jinping Forever" *Foreign Policy*, April 1, 2015 accessed June 7, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/01/xi-jinping-forever-china-president-term-limits/>

¹⁵⁴ Osnos, *Born Red*, Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Kevin Rudd, "Imagining China in 2023-China's Domestic and Foreign Posture under Xi Jinping" Youtube, April 9, 2014, accessed May 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lmpGTGkkos>

¹⁵⁶ Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping Assuming New Status as China's 'Core' Leader" *New York Times*, February 4, 2016 accessed February 20, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/05/world/asia/china-president-xi-jinping-core.html?_r=0

¹⁵⁷ "China must conform with Xi: leading journal" *Xinhua* March 2, 2016 accessed March 6, 2016, http://news.xinhua.net/english/2016-03/02/c_135147992.htm.

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