

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Competing for Legitimacy: Agrarian Policy Legitimation in the People's Republic of China from 1956 to 1983

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**Abstract:** Agrarian policy trends from 1956 to 1983 emerged from a legitimation process amplified by both the revolutionary background and factional politics of the People's Republic of China. However, the process is not clear-cut but is characterized by an interweaving of various factors, specifically, factional politics, legitimacy, and the results and thrusts of agrarian policies. Thus, this paper asks the question, "what are the dimensions of policy legitimation that framed the publicized struggle of competing elites for policy content and consistency?" To shed light on this issue, this paper would make more specific inquiries on the nature of the relationship between publicized factional elite competition at the national level and the struggle for policy consistency via policy legitimation. This study's primary theoretical objective is to develop a bridge between the literatures on elite competition and regime legitimacy through a processual analysis of policy legitimation. Hence, this study's primary objective is not to establish causality but to illustrate that it is in policy legitimation that elite competition collides with public sentiments emanating from the impact of objective conditions.

**Keywords:** Chinese politics, elite competition, factionalism, legitimacy, legitimation

Produced out of a reform program launched after the debacle of destructive elite contention spanning more than two decades, the Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China (2004)<sup>1</sup> and Law of the People's Republic of China on Land Contract in Rural Areas (2009)<sup>2</sup> are results of the intense struggle for policy legitimacy that paved the way for the 1980 reform program. In understanding the nature of these two pieces of legislation one must look back at the history of agrarian policy in the PRC, or to be specific, at the issues of land socialization and management. As this study will illustrate, agrarian policy trends from 1956 to 1983

is not merely a product of elite politics but its interaction with policy legitimation as a necessary process amplified by the revolutionary background of the PRC. Specifically, the content and consistency of policies in the PRC is not solely based on the results of elite contention but also upon the internal relations (interdependence) between the publicized dimension of competition (i.e. official declarations made by the party, the state, and by factional heads) and policy legitimation, with the latter as based on recurring themes and questions emanating from the need to derive legitimacy from both ideology and practice.

In line with the current status of the literature on this matter, this study asks, “what are the dimensions of policy legitimation that framed the publicized struggle of competing elites for policy content and consistency?” To shed light on this issue, I will delve into more specific inquiries on the nature of the relationship between factional elite competition at the national level and the struggle for policy consistency via policy legitimation. Moreover, for the sake of focus, this paper will look into the major agrarian policies of the PRC from 1956 – 1966 then from 1976 – 1983, concentrating on the contest between socialization and the persistence of private plots. The former’s transition into the incumbent responsibility system will be analyzed under the following key historical events in the PRC’s factional elite politics: (1) the Great Leap Forward (GLF), (2) the 1960-1961 Economic Reforms, (3) the Socialist Education Movement (SEM) that led to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), and (4) Post-Mao reform. Due to the availability of already processed data on this time periods, I decided to utilize secondary qualitative data analysis, including a content analysis of relevant party and government documents. Specifically, this study analyzed a total of 66 Party and Government documents (1958-1967 and 1973-1983) extracted from a published anthology, and from various issues of the *Beijing* (formerly *Peking*) *Review*. This study’s primary theoretical objective is to develop a bridge between the literatures on elite competition and regime legitimacy through a processual analysis of policy legitimation. Hence, this study’s primary objective is not to establish causality but to illustrate that it is in policy legitimation that elite competition collides with public sentiments emanating from the impact of objective conditions.

## Review of Related Literature

### On Legitimacy and Legitimation

In an examination of legitimacy, Stillman (1974) defined it as “the compatibility of the results of governmental output with the value patterns of the relevant systems” (p. 45), or a government could

be considered as “legitimate when it protects and enhances the values and norms of its citizens, when it preserves and expands their culture, and when it behaves itself in foreign affairs” (p. 48). He elaborated his proposal by dissecting the vital parts of his argument and the first one is the value pattern of the society or relevant systems which he defined as the generalized criteria of desirability. In a later work, Beetham (1991) argued that first, legitimacy must be assessed in relation to the conventions of a particular society. Second, in arguing that legitimacy is multi-dimensional, he cited three dimensions for legitimacy: (1) it conforms to established informal and/or formal rules; (2) these rules could be justified by reference to beliefs shared by the dominant with their subordinates; and (3) consent is expressed by the subordinate. From this it could be said that in legitimation, a regime (i.e. the system and the ruling elites) gains popular support through policies that are aligned with the values and beliefs held by its targets. Thus, a regime creates and implements policies to achieve such an alignment. However, what I note is that policies, as manifestations of a regime’s activity, must also be legitimated.

Focusing on policy legitimacy, Mondak (1994), in his analysis of the legitimating power of the United States Supreme Court, conceptualized policy legitimacy as being both *symbolic* and *persuasive* dimension, with the former directed at affecting public opinion with the ideal of gaining acceptance while the latter provides support to the latter by highlighting the perceived credibility of a legitimating entity. To elaborate on the symbolic dimension of policy legitimacy, Obradovic (1996) noted that legitimacy, in order to successfully gain the consent and obedience of its targets, must go beyond legality and into the realm of political culture (i.e. legitimation as a process of establishing a common identity by invoking and propagating symbolic values). Simply put, policy legitimation is concerned with propagating value patterns that could link a distinct set of values expected and espoused by societal forces with the interests and policies of the government. Furthermore, legitimation should be viewed as standing in a continuum instead of a dichotomy between what is legitimate or illegitimate because

“systems need not have the same characteristics as their components, because societies are diverse, the results of governmental outputs may be compatible with the value pattern of one system but incompatible with the value patterns of other systems” (Stillman, 1974, p. 42).

Regarding the mechanisms of legitimation, one is the formation of collective meanings/representations that could direct the loyalty of those within a sphere of influence towards a certain economic system. Simply put via the activities of elites (formation and propagation), specific policies could be weaved into a cultural web of narratives together with values that could appeal to a target sector of a populace, hence forming collective allegiance and action (Trentmann, 1998). From this, and the fact that elites have a necessary measure of heterogeneity that could cause conflict, it could be deduced that hegemony and legitimacy is a product of conflict between contrasting collective meanings; that is, of competition between different elites fighting for different value patterns and the policies that will go with its realization (Borja, 2014). Another mechanism focusing on the act of presenting a dominant value pattern in policy legitimation is associational incorporation which refers to “the role played by bodies such as trade unions, people’s control committees, and police auxiliaries in linking the population with the regime, channeling political energies within established institutions, and absorbing demands that might otherwise assume an antisystemic form” (White, 1986, p. 477).<sup>3</sup> Simply put, legitimacy, when viewed more as a socio-psychological condition than concrete institutions can be construed as something that can decrease the costs of transactions between the government and specific sectors of the society, thus allowing the government to acquire a fluid policy-making process that will not disrupt the sense of security of societal actors in relation to their value patterns (i.e. the primacy of change as a value in revolution being aligned with massive reform programs).

Focusing on the PRC, this study notes that the elites of a single party state must take into account that since the ruling party is inseparable from the system itself, legitimation becomes a necessary struggle to

maintain the popular basis of both the system and the ruling party (Ding, 1994; Weatherley, 2006). In a nutshell, underlying elite politics in the PRC are regular struggles for legitimation targeting the socio-psychological dimension of the citizenry through means that shifted from mass mobilization founded on strong ideological tendencies (Yu, 1964) to more result-oriented publicity anchored on government performance (Weatherley, 2006) and market reform tied to sustaining an autocratic political system that was reformed to cater to the former (Ding, 1994).

To elaborate, Weatherley (2006) argued that legitimacy in the PRC must be understood beyond the Weberian categories and for this reason, he proposed two additional categories, namely, ideological and performance based legitimacy. For the former on one hand, ideology provides party members a language and a set of values that can enable them to believe what it says and does in relation to the masses and public administration. The latter on the other hand is anchored on delivering results in accordance with set expectation and promises. What must be noted from Weatherley’s historical study is that these two bases of legitimacy are not mutually exclusive, but are two basic themes underlying the shift of emphasis from mass mobilization and Maoism to economic performance and nationalism. However, he still portrayed legitimacy primarily as an end to be achieved, and the relationship between elite contention and legitimacy remained implicit in his work. From the perspective of political stability during the post-Mao, Ding (1994) illustrated that the legitimacy crisis faced by the Dengist regime (i.e. balancing economic reform with sustaining an autocratic system) was realized in the contention between the ruling elite and a counter-elite that the former allowed to express themselves within state-sponsored structures. What facilitated this relationship is what he cited as institutional parasitism wherein institutions are meshed with other institutions that provides it with resources, and can be used for contradictory functions. Simply put, for Ding (1994) counter-elites were able to aggravate the legitimacy crisis by being allowed within the halls of state authority (i.e. a result of Deng’s policy to gain their support), but was unable to delegitimize the regime

since from a practical perspective, they are still vulnerable to repression.

Thus, in extending discussions on legitimacy crises and elite contention in the PRC, this paper will dissect how legitimacy can serve as a link between the policy process and elite politics through a processual analysis of legitimation. Specifically, this study will disentangle legitimacy with elite competition by illustrating that it is neither a mere prize to be won, nor is it a mere mechanism used by contenders, but a factor that can facilitate how the policy process is conducted in accordance with the publicized dimension of elite politics, and vice versa with how the latter is conducted with the results of the former. In other words, it has an objective existence that is distinct from the individual will of elites, albeit not separate from it, and is constituted by the legacies of the PRC's political history (i.e. the legacies of revolution and reform).

### **Factional Elite Competition and the Policy Process in China**

Regarding elite competition in general, this study notes Levitsky and Way's (2010) discussion of hybrid or competitive authoritarian regimes during the post-Cold War period as instructive. For them a competitive authoritarian regime contains formal democratic institutions and can be considered "competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents" (ibid., p. 5), thus making competition real but unfair. Their conceptualization is instructive though inapplicable to the case of the PRC on the following accounts. First is that ideology was given marginal consideration and understandably so since the cases discussed were from a post-Cold War era following the fall of ideologically oriented regimes. Second is that legitimacy was not considered as a factor and this is what separates the cases discussed from socialist countries in transition wherein legitimacy is a conspicuous issue.

Now, focusing on the PRC, Goldstein (1994) called for further analysis of factional elite politics in the PRC<sup>4</sup> and for this reason this paper chose to utilize

a more recent theoretical advancement in this subject-matter. Huang (2000), in arguing for the utilization of factionalism as an independent variable, contested the common notion<sup>5</sup> that this aspect of Chinese elite politics is but a product of other underlying factors behind conflict, namely, policy disputes, power struggles, and competing institutional interests. For him, factionalism was inadequately explained and conceptualized by earlier models of elite politics in the PRC<sup>6</sup> that considered it as a mere dependent variable. Instead, Huang (2000) defined factionalism as built on informal groups linked through personal ties within an overarching organization and defined by the dominance of informal personal influences over formal decision-making processes. Moreover, distinct from patron-client relations, factions in the PRC are bound by *guanxi* ties that are based on more personal, coercive, and abiding ties of loyalty, trust, responsibility, obligation, and indebtedness between partners who, though placed in a hierarchical structure, could enjoy a relatively equal standing in relation to each other, thus enabling an inferior to victimize a superior.

For this study, several points should be noted and first is that the elite of the PRC cannot be construed as a monolith. However, since the PRC is single party-state, elite contention over policy cannot break through set limits on legitimacy, that is, the public manifestations of competition, as well as the content of their policy proposals must still appeal to a set of shared ideas and principles. Second, albeit factions are bound within a certain framework, contention itself tied with an evaluation of policy results can allow a redefinition of some aspects of this framework as was exemplified by the transition period during the immediate post-Mao period. Lastly, contending factions, with their own policy preferences within a single-party state, must necessarily deal with the publicized dimension of their engagements to strive for policy legitimacy. Thus, the succeeding section will try to bring legitimacy back into the picture by splitting factional politics into two dimensions, namely, publicized and concealed factional politics, with the former as this study's focus.

To conclude this review, this paper observed that legitimacy was perceived merely, either as a necessary

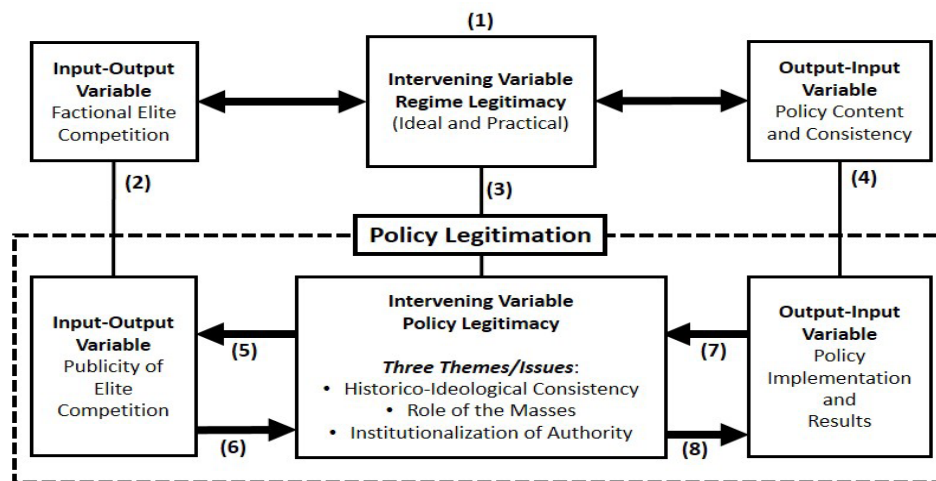
prize to be won or lost, or a black box mechanism at the behest of contending elites. Moreover, studies on regime legitimacy (Ding, 1994; Heberer & Schubert, 2006; Weatherley, 2006; White, 1986) failed to dissect the role of policy legitimacy as a building block for regime legitimacy (the former as the distinct realization of the latter as a more general category), while those focusing on policy legitimacy (Mondak, 1994; Obradovic, 1996; Smoke, 1994) gave marginal consideration to its relationship to elite conflict despite recognizing the existence of conflict in ideas within the process. Hence, as this paper will illustrate, legitimacy and legitimation must be viewed as factors that can help shape the public manifestations of elite competition when viewed from a historical perspective. Thus, this paper will try to illustrate that legitimacy is produced out of a constant process interrelated with elite competition than something merely based on the crystallization or institutionalization of ideological convictions. In other words, this paper would focus on the process of legitimation and not on instances wherein legitimacy is achieved.

**Policy Legitimation in the PRC:  
Main Argument and Framework**

First, this study’s focus is on the publicized aspect of elite contention, and for this reason the public activities of prominent figures (i.e. factional heads)

will be the primary material for this work. Second, the goal of this paper is to achieve a processual analysis of legitimation. For this reason, the cases chosen can illustrate two rounds of the process, thus allowing the study to measure the variables under examination. From the review above, and in adapting the frameworks found in Mondak’s (1994) and Obradovic’s (1996) examinations of legitimation in the United States and European Union, respectively, this paper defines policy legitimation as a process of attaining ideal and practical cohesion for a proposed policy, and it argues that it is constituted by three sustained dimensions or issues to be addressed, namely, historico-ideological consistency, the role of the masses, and the institutionalization of authority. Moreover, it could be operationalized as part of a two-level process.<sup>7</sup> The first level refers to an elaboration of what was already established in the literature, specifically, the interdependence between factional elite competition and policy content and consistency facilitated by policy legitimacy.

Focusing on (1) from Figure 1, this paper observed that previous works implied that elite competition not only determines the course of a policy process through regime legitimacy, but in turn affects the latter when the results reverberates as a realization of a policy formed in accordance with the standards of legitimacy (e.g. ideological consistency). To begin this study’s dissection of the policy legitimation process, the following are the hypotheses that this study employs regarding the second level:



**Fig. 1** *Theoretical framework: Policy legitimation.*

- For **(1)**, regime legitimacy as an intervening variable is constituted by *practical* and *theoretical* dimensions that in turn are realized through policy legitimation. Specifically, while the practical dimension refers to the implementation and results of a policy, the theoretical dimension on the other hand refers to both the justifications behind policies and the evaluation of its execution and results. Regime legitimacy is concretized through policy legitimation, and these two dimensions are broken down into three more specific themes/issues and the linkages between legitimacy and the results of a policy, and the publicity of elite competition.
- For **(3)**, policy legitimation is a process driven by three main interrelated questions, namely, *historico-ideological consistency*, *the role of the masses*, and the *institutionalization of authority*. The first one refers to the ideological foundations of the PRC's elites in the context of changes in political dynamics. An example of this is the issue of succession that defined the late-Mao and post-Mao periods. Second, underlying elite competition in the PRC is a regime legitimacy based upon the mass mobilizational legacies of the Chinese revolution of 1949. For this reason, elite competition and policy legitimation in the PRC during the Maoist and post-Mao periods have taken into account the presence of a mass of people that could be empowered, mobilized, and shaped into a political mechanism. Specifically, these two periods, as would be elaborated later on, were marked by constant attempts at defining and re-defining the role of the masses in the policy process. Lastly, the institutionalization of authority refers to the standards of leadership (i.e. limits, potentials, rules of conduct) in the context of elite competition and policy implementation. Regarding its role as an intervening variable, one must understand that policies are always attached to specific entities (i.e. to its proponents and opponents), and how these entities interact (e.g. factional politics) under the public eye must first address the three aforementioned themes. Moreover, regime legitimacy is realized through policy legitimacy as a more concrete manifestation that places proponents and opponents to the scrutiny of both their colleagues and the public eye, hence, policy legitimacy should be construed as a building block for regime legitimacy.
- Regarding factional elite competition, **(2)** refers to the fact that even if there are concealed moments in elite competition, legitimacy is necessarily based on what is publicized, and for this reason this paper construes the relationship between factional politics and legitimacy as facilitated by the publicized dimension of the former. Simply, if legitimation is viewed as a set of questions that provides a frame for publicized contention, then the latter should be viewed as an input variable that passes through the former as its bridge towards the results and implementation of a policy.
- For **(4)**, this study simply argues that the content and consistency of a policy is realized and becomes subject to legitimation through how a policy was implemented, and the results it produced.
- Moving on to policy legitimation as a process, **(5)** on one hand refers to how elites either attack or support their colleagues in public; an activity that, in the context of specific policies, must address the three basic themes of legitimacy. On the other hand, **(6)** refers to how factions frame the publicity and content of their policy proposals by addressing the three issues on legitimacy.
- Lastly, **(7)** refers to how the implementation and results of a policy can open opportunities to either undermine or support the incumbent values placed on each theme (opportunities in terms of making arguments more persuasive by giving it a measure of concrete substance), however, this can only be understood properly through **(8)** wherein the very results themselves are interpreted in accordance with the incumbent values.

### **China's Troubled Path out of Underdevelopment: A Reconstruction of Two Rounds of Policy Legitimation**

To begin with, the structure of this paper's discussion will try to reconstruct the history of agrarian policy reform and counter-reform in the PRC while highlighting the variables under scrutiny. However, at this point this study notes that legitimation during the GLF period can only be understood in the context of its failure. Also, the ideal dimension of regime legitimation in the PRC should be understood in the context of Mao Zedong Thought (MZT) being reinterpreted after Mao's death. As will be elaborated in the latter part of this study, the struggle for succession tied with the question of economic reform was framed within and manifested itself through a re-interpretation of MZT, a re-assessment of the role of the masses, and a re-thinking of the need to institutionalize authority. Simply put, the three interrelated questions constituting policy legitimation served as both start and end points in the process, specifically, the socialist basis of the regime provided these questions as a given, while the different rounds of elite engagements over a policy provided answers to these questions that in turn will serve as inputs to succeeding rounds.

#### **Mass Mobilization, Elite Politics, and the Great Leap Forward**

This period, starting with Mao's paramount leadership via the establishment of ideological cohesion and the domination of his faction, and concluding with the disastrous results of the GLF, resulted in a practical misalignment (i.e. the failure of the GLF as a policy) that allowed the emergence of the Liu-Deng faction out of Mao's subsequent retreat. This study will now discuss the basic characteristics of agrarian policy during the GLF, and how the struggle for policy legitimation led to the victory of socialization over the private ownership and a decentralized management of land. For the former, the agrarian sector of the PRC during the PRC was subjected to two policy thrusts, namely direct planning and the socialization of land via

the formation of large-scale communes driven by political mobilization. Concerning direct planning, higher-level and central authorities would impose output targets and specific productive techniques upon production units, and this is performed through the usage of political mechanisms rather than material incentives (Lardy, 1983). Planning entailed the abandonment of market mechanisms as a means of resource allocation, and the concentration of power on the hands of both central authorities who laid down objectives and local cadres who in turn imposed their will upon the members of their respective production units, driven more by political frenzy—the drive to socialism established at the national level—than economic practicality. Moreover, the GLF is the high-water mark of the agrarian socialization campaign that started with the establishment of mutual aid teams during the early to mid-1950s.<sup>8</sup>

The highlight of the GLF was the establishment of people's communes and its imposition as an organizational form upon the local cadres and the peasantry. The people's commune was defined by four basic characteristics: (1) the centralization of the ownership of the means of production, and decision-making; (2) the structural and functional integration of politics, society, and economy (i.e. industry, agriculture, education, commerce, culture, and the military were placed under the commune); (3) the promotion of mass mobilization and a "collective spirit" that led to the collectivization of previously private affairs; and (4) the conspicuous domination of politics over economics with issues on production (Ahn, 1975; Blecher, 1986; Chan, 2001; Walker, 1965; Wu, 1968). This paper highlights the last one because this is the factor that allowed the struggle for policy legitimation to determine, not only the pursuit of socialization itself but also the other characteristics of this policy thrust. It is a bridge towards an understanding of how the people's commune emerged out of the elite competition for policy legitimation (i.e. the winning political actor determines the political stand that will determine economic policies).

Regarding publicized elite competition, the character and primary result of engagements before and during the GLF can be summed up as the establishment of Mao's mobilizational leadership

**Table 1** *Government and Party Documents (1958-62, 1965-67)*

Abbreviations: Communist Party of China (CPC); Central Committee (CC); State Council (SC); State Planning Commission (SPC); National People's Congress (NPC)

Year	Title	#
1958	The Present Situation, the Party's General Line for Socialist Construction and Its Future Tasks by Liu Shaoqi, May 5, 1958 †	1
	Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes (Wuhan Resolution) adopted by the 8 <sup>th</sup> CC of the CPC on December 10, 1958 †	2
1959	Resolution on Developing the Campaign for Increasing Production and Practising Economy adopted by the 8 <sup>th</sup> CC of the CPC on August 16, 1959 †	3
	Report on the 1959 Economic Plan by Zhou Enlai Premier of the PRC ‡	4
1960	Report on the Draft 1960 National Economic Plan by Li Fuchun Vice Premier of the SC and Chairman of the SPC ‡	5
	Strive for the Fulfilment, Ahead of Schedule, of the National Programme for Agricultural Development by Tan Zhenlin Vice Premier of the State Council ‡	6
1961	Communique of the 9th Plenary Session of the 8th CC of the CPC ‡	7
1962	Communique of the 10th Plenary Session of the 8th CC of the CPC ‡	8
	Press Communique on the NPC ‡	9
1965	Report on the Work of the Government by Zhou Enlai Premier of the PRC ‡	10
1966	Decision of the CC of the CPC Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Adopted August 8, 1966) ‡	11
	Circular of the CC of the CPC: May 16, 1966 ‡	12
1967	Resolution of 8 <sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of 8 <sup>th</sup> CC of the CPC Concerning the Anti-Party Clique Headed by Peng Dehuai (Excerpts) August 16, 1959 ‡	13

**Sources:**

†Harvard University Center for International Affairs, & Harvard University East Asian Research Center (1962);

‡ Extracted From *Beijing Review* (1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1965, 1966, 1967) (See Reference List for more details)

through MZT as the basis of ideological consistency. To elaborate, it was a contest between planning and institutionalization, and Maoist mobilizational politics with the latter anchored upon the theoretical primacy of MZT and the practical mobilization of the masses via local leaders and politico-ideological means (Bernstein, 2006; Huang, 2000; Solomon, 1969; Uhalley, 1988; Weatherley, 2006).

Mao as an active entity utilized his ideological preeminence to legitimize basic agrarian policies during the GLF through his mobilizational interpretation of

socialism and his interpretation of pre-GLF success as an opportunity for drastic measures. Specifically, from the party and government documents analyzed by this paper (See Table 1, documents # 1-4), policy legitimacy for the GLF was theoretically anchored upon the following: (1) the general line of "Going all out, aiming high and getting greater, quicker, better and more economical results to build socialism" (Harvard University Center for International Affairs, & Harvard University East Asian Research Center, 1962, p. 429); and (2) the economic application of the mass line and mobilization in economics.



**Table 2** *Annual Growth Rate and Total Product (in 1,000 Tons) Grain Production (1952-1967)*

Year	Total Product	Growth Rate
1952	160,649	14.03%
1953	163,498	1.77%
1954	166,119	1.60%
1955	180,155	8.45%
1956	188,375	4.56%
1957	190,661	1.21%
1958	193,454	1.46%
1959	165,236	-14.59%
1960	139,430	-15.62%
1961	143,154	2.67%
1962	155,310	8.49%
1963	165,722	6.70%
1964	187,500	13.14%
1965	194,525	3.75%
1966	214,000	10.01%
1967	217,820	1.79%

Source: Colby, Crook, & Webb (1992)

Specifically, the GLF in agriculture was legitimized through the following: (1) espousing the economic role of the masses that is founded more upon the political value of mass mobilization (buttressed by the supposed advantages of collectivization) than technical expertise, (2) highlighting the supposed advantages of empowering local units at the expense of central authorities, and (3) the ideological prominence of Mao and MZT. Furthermore, the GLF's legitimacy was further buttressed by its proponents (i.e. Mao's faction) when they interpreted the growth rates of agricultural production from 1952 to 1957 (See Table 2) as an opportunity to take a "leap" to industrialization with agriculture as a foundation and through further collectivization. Furthermore, attributing the success to collectivization, this key means of implementation the GLF was pushed further by relying on mass mobilization and decentralized cadre competition to compensate for lack of technical capacity in the context of rigid state quotas. In summary, in line with the concealed factional politics underlying Mao's paramount position, the public

manifestation of the latter in the policy process was the legitimization of the GLF. However, upon the GLF's implementation and subsequent failure, the process is renewed and can be examined when the implications of the GLF's failure became the practical input for the next series of elite confrontations that culminated with the public but anonymous condemnation of Marshal Peng Dehuai (See Table 1, document #5), and the ascension of Liu Shaoqi tied with Mao's practical retreat but sustained ideological dominance.

### **Reform, Counter-reform, Elite Competition, and the failure of the GLF**

From 1959 to 1966, agrarian policy experienced a brief shift towards moderation juxtaposed with the re-emergence of political radicalism that will culminate with the Cultural Revolution. This renewed struggle for legitimacy was prompted by the adverse effects of the excesses of the GLF. This section will focus on how the failure of the GLF caused the legitimacy crisis that underlie not only the 1960 rectification of the GLF but also the elite competition that culminated with the launching of the GPCR. In a nutshell, with the persistence of Mao's mobilizational and charismatic leadership as the core of regime legitimacy, the 1960 reform and its supporters were placed in a lopsided political arena that eventually favored Mao's camp and the launching of the SEM. Publicly, elite contention did not lead to a criticism of Mao while the 1960 reform was packaged as a re-interpretation of the general line albeit an explicit stance was made re-emphasizing the need to develop the agrarian sector. In other words, the reversal of the GLF was incomplete in the realm of legitimacy.

To elaborate, with the effects of the GLFs failure (observable in the steep drop in grain production from 1958-1960), a reform program was initiated to curb if not reverse the excesses of the GLF. The 1960-1961 reform<sup>9</sup> on the issue of land management was constituted by the following components: (1) the restoration of private plots and rural markets (Chen, 1968); (2) retreat from collectivization (i.e. pushing for a transition to communes) with the production team as the operational unit (Chen, 1968; Wu, 1968); (3) re-establishment of indirect planning (Lardy,

1983); and (4) abandoning mass mobilization in policy implementation (Lieberthal, 1997). Regarding its legitimation, its ideological consistency remained anchored on the previously established General Line, and the Maoist principles of “seeking truth from facts” and putting “politics at the helm” of economic affairs, while the role of the masses as politically mobilized producers was tied to the institutionalization of authority via the leadership standard of being both “red and expert”, realized through the cooperation between the masses, cadres, and technicians (See Table 1, document #6-9).

Concerning elite contention and policy legitimation underlying the aforementioned reforms, the reversal of the GLF under Liu Shaoqi (albeit partially since the political ideas behind it were not abandoned) was a product of concealed confrontations that prompted Mao to temporarily retreat to the second front only to return to the front line successfully through the SEM. To begin with, it was during the 1959 Lushan Conference that Mao’s authority was indirectly offended by Peng via the latter’s attack against the GLF (Huang, 2000; Uhalley, 1988). Simply, this study notes that Peng’s confrontation with Mao prompted a legitimacy crisis that led to a renewed process of policy legitimation. However, the crisis remained partially concealed from the public. To elaborate, two factors persisted, namely, Mao’s dominance over regime legitimation, and the adverse implications of the GLF with former preventing Liu’s faction (including at this point, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai with the latter as Liu’s bridge to Mao) from achieving policy legitimation that is autonomous from Mao’s ideological leadership. The latter was addressed via the reforms stated above tied to an anonymous and public criticism of Peng that on one hand, marked the defeat of the latter and on the other, prevented the publicity of this serious intra-party conflict while recognizing the excesses of the GLF without abandoning it entirely.

Regarding the de-legitimation and subsequent reversal of the 1960-61 reforms, the SEM was launched and legitimized through Mao’s continued ideological dominance in direct contradiction with the former. Specifically, the role of the masses and ideological consistency remained anchored with

Mao’s mobilizational authoritarianism and is in accordance with the basic principles he espoused, especially the dominance of politics over economics and the resulting emphasis on class struggle (Solomon, 1969); these principles underlie the intensification of publicized factional politics into explicit and harsh condemnations of leading figures like Peng and Liu tied with persecutory mass mobilizations during the GPCR (Dittmer, 1973). In summary, the persistence of Mao’s ideological dominance paved the way for the launching of the SEM and the GPCR whose legitimacy ironically, through Mao’s radical interpretation of objective conditions<sup>10</sup>, was practically anchored upon the economic recovery facilitated by the 1960-61 reforms (Blecher, Meisner, & Tsou, 1982; Wu, 1968) (See Table 1, documents #10-13).

### **Out of the Debacle of the Cultural Revolution**

During the immediate post-Mao period that led to the fall of the “Gang of Four” (the radical faction that spearheaded the GPCR and led by Jiang Qing<sup>11</sup>, Zhang Chunqiao<sup>12</sup>, Yao Wenyuan<sup>13</sup>, and Wang Hongwen<sup>14</sup>), succession became central to a new legitimacy crisis, and two primary actors stood in the political arena of the PRC. On one hand was Hua Guofeng who pushed for a revival of his patron’s thrust to economic development, while on the other was Deng Xiaoping who, as a reaction to the debacle of the GLF and the GPCR pursued a path towards market-oriented reforms and the institutionalization of power. In other words, publicized elite contention was a contest, not only between two successors but also between two contradictory policy agendas.

It is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1978 that a synthetic approach to reform was adopted by the national elite of the PRC, and whatever was decided on this event was shaped, not only by concealed elite contention but a new round of policy legitimation in the context of the post-Mao period’s reassessment of the “Great Helmsman’s” legacy. This event was marked by an ideological realignment towards economic reform<sup>15</sup> and away from the

**Table 3** *Government and Party Documents (1975, 1977-78, 1980-83)*

Abbreviations: Communist Party of China (CPC); Central Committee (CC); State Council (SC); State Planning Commission (SPC); National People's Congress (NPC)

Year	Title	#
1975	Mobilize the Whole Party, Make Greater Efforts to Develop Agriculture and Strive to Build Dazhai-Type Counties Throughout the Country by Hua Guofeng at the National Conference on Learning from Dazhai in Agriculture	1
	Speech at the Second National Conference on Learning from Dazhai in Agriculture by Hua Guofeng Chairman of the CC of the CPC	2
	Report: At the Second National Conference on Learning from Tachai in Agriculture by Comrade Chen Yonggui a member of the Politburo of the C.C. of the C.P.C. and Vice Premier of the SC	3
	Mobilize the Whole Party and the Nation's Working Class and Strive to Build Daqing-Type Enterprises Throughout the Country (Report at National Conference on Learning from Daqing in Industry on May 4, 1977) by Yu Qiuli Vice Premier of the SC	4
1977	Communique of the Third Plenary Session of the Tenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Adopted in July 21, 1977)	5
	Press Communique of the 11 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China August 18, 1977	6
	Political Report to the 11 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Delivered on August 12 and adopted on August 18, 1977) by Hua Guofeng Chairman of the CC of the CPC	7
	Resolution of the 11 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China on the Political Report (Adopted by the 11th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on August 18, 1977)	8
1978	Report on the Revision of the Party Constitution by Ye Jianying	9
	Communique of the Second Plenary Session of the 11 <sup>th</sup> CC of the CPC (Adopted February 23, 1978)	10
	Chairman Hua's Speech at All-Army Political Work Conference	11
1980	Guiding Principles for Inner-Party Political Life (Adopted at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 11 <sup>th</sup> C.P.C. Central Committee)	12
1981	On Questions of Party History: Resolutions on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (Adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11 <sup>th</sup> CC of the CPC on June 27, 1981)	13
	The Present Economic Situation and the Principles for Future Economic Construction by Zhao Ziyang Premier of the SC	14
1982	Explanations on the Draft of the revised Constitution of the People's Republic of China: At the 23rd session of the Fifth National People's Congress Standing Committee on April 22, 1982 by Peng Zhen Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the Revision of the Constitution	15
	Report on the Draft 1982 Economic and Social Development Plan (Excerpts) Yao Yilin Vice-Premier of the SC and Minister in Charge of the SPC	16
	Create a New Situation in All Fields of Socialist Modernization – report to the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of China September 1, 1982 by Hu Yaobang	17
1983	Report on the Work of the Government (Delivered at the First Session of the Sixth National People's Congress on June 6, 1983) by Zhao Ziyang Premier of the SC	18
	On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership (August 18, 1980) by Deng Xiaoping	19
	The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Party Consolidation – (Adopted by the Second Plenary Session of the 12th Party Central Committee on October 11, 1983)	20

Sources: Extracted *Beijing Review* (1975, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983) (See Reference List for more details)

destabilizing legacies of the GPCR. However, it must be noted that since this was still done within the boundaries of Mao's legacy, a reappraisal of Mao's practical and theoretical contributions was made, first at the expense of the "Gang of Four", and second to enable a reinterpretation of MZT in favor of economic reform. Simply put, in the post-Mao period history became a crucial issue that Deng and Hua dealt with in relation to ideological consistency and the legitimacy of their respective policy thrusts. There were two policy thrusts during this period, namely, a planned re-launching of the GLF pushed for by Hua (See Table 3, documents #2-11) and market oriented reforms espoused by Deng (See Table 3, documents #14-20) with the latter eventually preventing and supplanting the former.

**Table 4** *Annual Growth Rate and Total Product (in 1,000 Tons) Grain Production (1973-1983)*

Year	Total Product	Growth Rate
1973	264,935	10.17%
1974	275,270	3.90%
1975	284,515	3.36%
1976	286,305	0.63%
1977	282,725	-1.25%
1978	304,765	7.80%
1979	332,115	8.97%
1980	320,560	-3.48%
1981	325,020	1.39%
1982	354,500	9.07%
1983	387,275	9.25%

Source: Colby, Crook, & Webb (1992)

To elaborate, this section will answer the following questions: (1) what are the practical inputs to legitimation that must be dealt with during the immediate post-Mao period?; (2) what are the differences between the agrarian policies and sources of legitimacy of Hua and Deng?; (3) how did the latter displace the former in the legitimation process?; and (4) in what ways did the policy legitimation process and factional politics in this period differ from the Maoist period. For the first one, there was a gradual decline in grain production on one hand (See Table

4), while on the other, both the government and the Party suffered from the adverse implications of the Cultural Revolution. To be specific, there was massive de-institutionalization (leading to a volatile political arena) tied with the failure and adverse effects of mobilizational politics (Ahn, 1974; Bridgham, 1967; Huang, 2000; Lieberthal, 1997; Neuhauser, 1968; Weatherley, 2006). For the latter, the GPCR showed that mobilizational politics is an unwieldy political mechanism that can easily spin out of control; that is, once initiated in the context of factionalism, weakened government institutions, and crystallized ideological dichotomies (i.e. left-right, capitalist-socialist), mass mobilization during this period led to abuses and excesses that necessitated counter-repression (i.e. the demobilization of the Red Guard through military intervention). Simply put, the post-Mao period was marked by persistent economic problems and political instability that provided reformists with an opportunity to raise the need to re-think the incumbent values on legitimacy (i.e. Mao's mobilizational political economy).

Concerning the divergences between Hua and Deng, from the documents analyzed by this study (See Table 3, documents #1-3) the former's policy thrust was anchored on the Dazhai Emulation campaign that revived the GLF's emphasis on the economic potential of mass mobilization and land collectivization (i.e. highlighting the need to establish peoples' communes). Deng on the other hand revived the reforms of 1960-1961 and deepened de-collectivization by promoting the household responsibility system in the context of maintaining the socialist three-level ownership (ownership at the levels of production teams, production brigade, and communes), and separating government from commune management (functional de-integration) (Blecher et al., 1982; Lardy, 1983; Thaxton, 2008). These two thrusts in agriculture are parts of more general and contradictory attempts to legitimize either a revival of mobilizational MZT or an interpretation of socialism that highlights political stability and institutionalized authority (e.g. socialist legal system).

The legitimation of Deng's proposals at the expense of Hua occurred when the three dimensions of policy legitimation underwent changes on two

accounts revolving around handling Mao's legacies from the GLF to the GPCR and the Gang of Four. First, regarding historico-ideological consistence, Mao's charismatic leadership was institutionalized via a re-assessment of his role and contributions to the PRC, and the establishment of an interpretation of MZT that ran in contradiction to the radicalism of Mao himself (see Table 3, Document #13). In relation to this changes were made with the ideological dichotomies underlying legitimacy in the PRC as a socialist state. Specifically, class struggle as the link between the role of the masses and the institutionalization of authority was theoretically re-assessed and redirected towards supposedly more practical (i.e. economic) goals. Simply, the masses were reduced to more economic roles and with the declaration of the end to class struggle, their political roles shifted as a component part of the institutionalization of authority (e.g. uphold the socialist legal system); the masses were politically demobilized. Moreover, this re-alignment was founded upon the new historico-ideological consistency established through a re-assessment of Mao, the condemnation of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, and the rehabilitation of reformist figures like Liu Shaoqi (Dittmer, 1981).

To elaborate on the aforementioned shifts, the divergence in the policy legitimation approaches of Hua and Deng was reflective of the factional politics between them.<sup>16</sup> Focusing on publicized elite contention, this study notes that the process of policy legitimation underwent several stages that gradually diluted Hua's attempt to legitimize the Dazhai Emulation campaign. Hua's struggle, that can be summed up with the notion of the "Two Whatevers" (i.e. uphold and follow *whatever policy decisions* and *whatever instructions* Chairman Mao made), started from 1973 to 1975 when his position as heir-apparent was established via the condemnation of Leftist and Rightist deviations by Lin Biao and Liu Shaoqi, respectively, tied with the trumpeting of the Dazhai emulation campaign. By 1976, with the chain of events starting from the deaths of Mao and Zhou, the subsequent purge and return of Deng, and the fall of the Gang of Four, Hua's policy legitimation was based on an encompassing critique of Liu, Lin, Deng, and the Gang, and on asserting his position

as heir to Mao. At this point Mao's legacy emerged as the conspicuous issue and upon Deng's return by 1977, incompatible approaches of legitimation would meet head on by 1979 with the issue of class struggle.

To be specific, Hua bore the burden of separating his patron from the discredited Gang of Four and the highly criticized GPCR while trying to establish the association of his policy thrust with the framework of the GLF in the context of recognizing the GLFs excesses (i.e. highlighting mass mobilization, the value of collectivization while recognizing the need for gradual transition, economic efficiency, and effective management). Simply put, Lin and the Gang of Four served as his "whipping boy" for the limits of the GLF's policy framework (e.g. that the performance of people's communes was hindered by the excesses of the Gang and their local cronies) and the excesses of the GPCR.

Deng on the other hand tackled the process differently by re-emphasizing MZT's principle of "seeking truth from facts" which was abandoned during the GPCR and would soon be the basic justification, not only for the gradual rehabilitation of leaders persecuted by Mao's faction but also the eventual re-assessment of Mao, the Party's history, and the policy shift towards market oriented reforms and the institutionalization of power and collective leadership. From 1978 to 1979, socialist modernization became the primary policy concern (i.e. the contradiction between economic backwardness caused by a chain of faulty policies, and the necessary material basis of socialism) while class struggle was downplayed, re-assessed, though not removed for the time being. Specifically, in addressing the issue of socialist modernization the role of the masses was reduced to the economic, while institutionalization and a strong legal system pointed to the restoration of party-state authority.

The final changes in the values underlying legitimacy, especially the role of the masses and the institutionalization of authority, took place from 1980 to 1983, first when a general retreat of Party elders to the second-front of leadership occurred with the entry of new leaders to the frontlines under the patronage of elders, especially Chen Yun and

Deng Xiaoping, and the forced retirement, criticism but non-persecution of Hua. For the latter I note that with Hua's failure to legitimize his problematic policy thrust in the face of the more persuasive and concretely substantiated proposals of Deng, the Dazhai Emulation campaign was soon criticized in public, thus, marking Hua's fall from power. However, I note that this redistribution of power, different from previous transitions during the Maoist period, was facilitated by a transition in legitimation from the cult of personality and mobilizational authoritarianism towards institutionalizing collective leadership (See Table 3, documents #18-20). Second, with the abandonment of the left-right and socialist-capitalist dichotomies, inner-party class struggle was declared over while class struggle, in line with a re-emphasis on socialist modernization and the strengthening of the legal system was redefined as a practice targeting economic crimes (e.g. corruption, smuggling).

Furthermore, Deng's divergence from Hua did not result in the persecution of the latter for the simple reason that Hua was discredited, not in accordance with the notion of class struggle (as was in the cases of Peng, Liu, and other victims of the Leftist-Rightist dichotomy) but in line with his proposed shift in historico-ideological consistency. In other words, Deng undercut the legitimacy of Hua and his policy thrust by successfully exposing and directly confronting both the positive and negative dimensions of Mao's legacy and by arguing for the folly of re-launching another Leap. Specifically, as exemplified by documents #12-13, reform was justified by an overhauling of the three dimensions of policy legitimation without dismantling the encompassing ML-MZT framework; the latter being coopted to justify both economic reform and the re-emphasis on the necessity of order and political stability through stronger party-state institutions (i.e. inner-party democratic centralism and the legal system).

In summary, this period shows how policy legitimation can serve to qualify or frame the publicity of factional politics. Specifically on one hand, with class struggle and mass mobilization as the basis for determining the role of the masses and state institutions, Mao, along with his monopoly on historico-ideological consistency, was enabled to

reverse the 1960-61 reforms via the persecution of his opponents as either "Right-wing Opportunists" or "Left-wing adventurists." On the other hand, Deng implemented changes in the incumbent values for the three basic themes of legitimation and in the process, qualified or at least changed how elite contention are settled, thus, sparing Hua and other hard-liners from public persecution while successfully legitimizing reform and delegitimizing Hua's policy proposals.

## Conclusion

This study tried to sketch a theoretical framework that is admittedly too big for the limits set earlier. Hence, this final analysis will focus on three things, namely, addressing this paper's primary question (i.e. what are the dimensions of policy legitimation that framed the publicized struggle of competing elites for policy content and consistency?), summarizing the process of policy legitimation, and paving the way for future inquiries that will take the concealed dimension of factional politics into account. From the reconstruction presented above, policy legitimation framed the publicity of factional politics within three basic themes (i.e. historico-ideological consistency, the role of the masses, and the institutionalization of authority) that provided, not only questions that competing elites must address in promoting policies and engaging their opponents, but also ways on how to compete within the public eye (i.e. the mobilizational and non-mobilizational means of Mao and Deng, respectively). Moreover, illustrated by the immediate post-Mao period, this process is facilitated by the historico-ideological dimension of legitimacy (i.e. ensuring historical and ideological consistency) with the two other themes serving subsidiary and complementary roles. To elaborate, historico-ideological consistency during the immediate post-Mao period experienced the following changes in these areas: (1) history, (2) the proper interpretation of Marxism-Leninism-MZT (ML-MZT), and (3) ideological dichotomies (e.g. left-right deviations and the struggle between the capitalist and socialist roads).

Mao's ideological dominance ensured that these three tightly knit factors will favor his interpretation

of ML and the radical interpretation of the MZT espoused by the members of his faction. The 1960-1961 reform came under such a condition to the extent that the recovery facilitated by the reform was used as an input, not for the extensions of change but for a planned re-launching of the GLF through the SEM and the GPCR. Moreover, during the SEM and the post-GPCR period, and in the context of the GLF's failure and its adverse implications on regime legitimacy, the ideal presented is a balance between Leftist and Rightist deviations with the MZT as the supposed anchor. However, during the post-Mao period and the fall of the Gang, what Hua's attempt to legitimize the Dazhai Emulation campaign through the "Two Whatever's" was strained by the legacies of the GLF and the GPCR tied with an alternative set of values embodied by Deng. Specifically, with the chain of events that led to the fall of the Gang, history became a prominent concern that was addressed through a re-assessment of Mao by taking the GLF and the GPCR into account, and Deng's victory being veiled by an emphasis on collective leadership and the non-persecution of Hua; the latter solidifying the image that the Dengist regime is different from its predecessor. Simply, historic-ideological consistency experienced the following changes in value: (1) the gradual rehabilitation of persecuted reformists, (2) the evaluation of GLF and GPCR outside Mao's radical and mobilizational framework, but still within the MZT (i.e. a more moderate interpretation of Mao's ideas), and (3) a re-assessment of Mao's practical and ideological legacy. Now regarding the changes in the ideological dichotomies underlying policy legitimation, class struggle (i.e. intra-party and social) as the persistent legacy of revolutionary struggle in China, was re-defined to set the role of masses and the direction of institutionalizing authority.

Now, regarding the process of legitimation, I would like to conclude that the idea is an alignment between practice and the ideas being publicized, with the latter being subject to changes facilitated by the former. Specifically, the practical manifestations of a policy serves as an input for another round of contention-legitimation. To elaborate, I note that first, the results of one cycle of policy legitimation tied to a policy process determines the framework

of succeeding rounds, specifically, the values for the three themes of policy legitimation tied with the interpretation of a policy's results, and the publicity of power distribution and elite contention. Second, interpreting the results of a policy is part of the struggle to determine, not only its future direction but also how the values of policy legitimacy are evaluated (i.e. a policy is legitimized if it is deemed successful by its proponents and their target audience). Third, policy results are evaluated through set values, and with the publicity of contention between its proponents and opponents (e.g. policies and their proponents are criticized or supported together). Lastly, how contention is publicized depends upon the set values of legitimacy as was exemplified by the difference between the publicized fall of Liu and Hua during the Maoist and post-Maoist regimes, respectively.

To conclude and returning to the limits of this study, further inquiries must be made on how legitimation resonates with public opinion. Like previous works, this paper is at fault by keeping legitimation within the realm of elite contention, albeit citing the role of the masses as a theme/issue underlying legitimation in the PRC. Moreover, inquiries must now include the concealed dimension of factional politics that remained implicit in this work. To be specific, inquiries must be made on how policy legitimation is practically conducted in terms of control over the means of publicity in the age of new media in the PRC.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This study takes note of the following provisions: (1) Article 1: This Law is enacted in accordance with the Constitution for the purpose of strengthening land administration, maintaining the socialist public ownership of land, protecting and developing land resources, making rational use of land, effectively protecting cultivated land and promoting sustainable development of the society and the economy; (2) Article 10: Land owned by peasant collectives that belongs lawfully to peasant collectives of a village shall be operated and managed by collective economic organizations of the village or by villagers' committees; land already owned by different peasant

collectives that belong to two or more different collective economic organizations in the village shall be operated and managed by the rural collective economic organizations in the village or by villagers' groups; land already owned by a peasant collective of a township (town) shall be operated and managed by the rural collective economic organization of the township (town).

- <sup>2</sup> This study takes note of the following provisions: (1) Article 1: In accordance with the Constitution, this Law is enacted for the purposes of stabilizing and improving the two-tier management system that combines centralized and decentralized management on the basis of household contractual management, granting to the peasants long-term and guaranteed land-use right, safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the parties to land contracts in rural areas, and promoting the development of agriculture and rural economy and social stability in the countryside; (2) Article 12: Where the land owned collectively by the peasants belongs, in accordance with law, to collective ownership by the peasants in a village, contracts shall be given out by the collective economic organization of the village or the villagers committee; where the land is already owned collectively by the peasants of more than two rural collective economic organizations in a village, contracts shall be given out respectively by the said organizations or villagers groups in the village. Where contracts are issued by the rural collective economic organizations or villagers committees in a village, the ownership of the land owned collectively by the peasants of the collective economic organizations in the village shall remain unchanged.
- <sup>3</sup> According to White (1986) in the context of economic crises, mechanisms of adaptation enabled communist regimes "to shift some of the burden of legitimation from purely economic performance to these other political or procedural bases" (p. 471). He enumerated four mechanisms, namely electoral linkage, political incorporation, associational incorporation, and lastly, letters to the party, state, and to the press.
- <sup>4</sup> In his brief sketch of studies on political elite and institutions in the PRC, especially during the post-Mao period, Goldstein (1994) argued that three main themes have emerged from the literature, namely, (1) an emphasis on the relationship between reform and the attributes of the ruling elite specifically educational background and age, (2) the growing prominence of provincial and sub-provincial leaders, (3) and the emergence of a counter-elites within and outside the system.

- <sup>5</sup> Specifically, Huang (2000) engaged three models explaining elite conflict in the PRC. First, the policy choice model focuses on how relations are determined by policy disputes emerging from differing solutions extracted by leaders from their own diagnosis of an existing problem. Hence, works based on this model see elite conflict as caused by a competition between leaders with differing policy preferences. Second, works utilizing the power struggle model, though differing on their arguments regarding the source of conflict, agree on the inevitable victimization of the losing party. Lastly, the structure model argues that in the context of policy disputes and/or power struggles, concerned "leaders act as representatives of the institutions over which they preside; and their behavior and policy choices are subject to the constraints imposed by this structure" (p. 32).
- <sup>6</sup> For Huang (2000), models on elite conflict that tried to explain factionalism were handicapped by a shared flawed and fundamental assumption and that is they saw factionalism as a product of policy disputes, power struggles, or conflicts in institutional interests, hence, portraying factionalism in the PRC as an unstable and temporary condition.
- <sup>7</sup> Since this study is not arguing for causality, it finds the independent-dependent variable dichotomy as inappropriate in analyzing legitimation as a process.
- <sup>8</sup> Socialization of agriculture in the PRC went through five phases from 1952-1960. Reflective of the Maoist regime's drive to socialism that eventually reached its peak during the GLF, the first three stages from 1952 to late 1958 saw the rise of large collectives wherein private plots that existed in the earlier co-operative form was collectivized. This unit paved the way for the establishment of People's Communes. See Walker (1965) for more details.
- <sup>9</sup> According to Walker (1965), the reintroduction of private plots and rural markets "was a sure indication of the low level of food production and incentives prevailing in the countryside. It represented a major retreat for the Government; an admission of the political and economic failure of the communes and a return to the 1957 level of socialism in agriculture at most" (p. 87).
- <sup>10</sup> A condition that can account for the fact that economic policies during the SEM-GPCR period were not seriously affected relative to the adverse effects of this movement on the PRC's political structures (Blecher et al., 1982; Wu, 1968).
- <sup>11</sup> Mao's widow who as member of the Politburo was directly involved with the cultural activities and propaganda.



- <sup>12</sup> Member of the Politburo who along with Yao Wenyuan was involved with the establishment of the Shanghai People's Commune as one of the centers of the Cultural revolution.
- <sup>13</sup> Member of the Politburo involved in cultural activities and propaganda.
- <sup>14</sup> Member of the Politburo and as Vice-Chairman of the CPC, was dubbed as Mao's heir apparent after the fall of Lin Biao.
- <sup>15</sup> In its communique in the Beijing Review 1978 No. 52 issue, the third plenary session agreed to distribute and set for trial implementation two important documents concerning agriculture, namely the drafts of the *Decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Questions Concerning the Acceleration of Agricultural Development*, and the *Regulations on the Work in the Rural People's Communes*.
- <sup>16</sup> For Huang (2000), Hua's fragile position as Mao's last successor was due to the following: (1) the strength and persistence of Deng's network within both the armed forces and the bureaucracy with the latter expanding due to support from Zhou, and (2) Hua's decision to destroy the factional network of the Gang of Four; a network that would have thrown their weight behind Hua.

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