Trabajo Fin de Grado

Political change from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping

The paradox of change and continuity

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Abstract

Political change in China from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping, the nation's most prominent and influential leaders, is commonly viewed as rampant. This study sets to untangle what the realm of Chinese politics bears within it, arriving to a separation along three levels: conceptual, internal and projected. The tripartite approach utilized reveals that we may have to reconsider our evaluation of change versus continuity, for our findings suggest that rather than having change or continuity, there is a complex, orchestrated interplay between the two. Essentially, we encounter a paradoxical dualism that protrudes the CCPs survival and fundamental objective: power.

Key words: China, politics, change, continuity, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping

Resumen

El cambio político que vivió China entre sus líderes más prominentes e influyentes, Mao Zedong y Deng Xiaoping, es comúnmente visto como uno sin precedentes. Este trabajo busca desgranar la esfera política China, realizando una separación en torno a tres niveles: conceptual, interno y proyectado. El enfoque tripartito revela la necesidad de reconsiderar nuestra evaluación de cambio frente a continuidad. Es decir, en el contexto chino, en vez de cambio o continuidad, nos encontramos ante una compleja y orquestada interacción entre ambos. Esencialmente, un dualismo paradójico que busca la supervivencia del Partido Comunista Chino y su objetivo fundamental: el poder.

Palabras clave: China, política, cambio, continuidad, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE AND AIMS

Freedom has, throughout time, been the unswerving constant that humanity has sought. It has acquired different meanings and forms, but it has always been there, transcending the boundaries of both time and space. From the end of slavery and search for independence, to the more recent promotion of equal rights, democracy and individualism, freedom might well be humanity's grand theme. The freedom theme, thus, bears huge interest, especially in the light of the most recent international phenomenon: the Covid-19 pandemic. One might rightfully question the relationship between historic political change in China, the freedom dialectic, and the Covid-19 pandemic, but this is precisely where the magic lies, in thinking outside the box and viewing the patterns and interconnectedness so characteristic of the field of International Relations.

This thesis sets out to analyze political change between the two twentieth-century Chinese dragons, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, with the main hypothesis being that: in the political sphere, change was so subtle, peripheral and controlled, that in fact, instead of change we have continuity. Many different angles and issues of politics will be subsequently explored along a change-continuity paradigm, with perhaps the most relevant question, both in the light of past and present events being that of freedom. As we will see in this study, the question of freedom was (and still is) at the heart of Chinese politics. Or is it not true that under Mao, politics heavily relied on strict control and a hugely imbalanced relationship between the Party and society? In other words: the freedom of the Chinese was conspicuous by its absence. Conversely, under Deng, politics were determined by the degree of concessions needed in order to maintain control and Party leadership. This is, some degree of freedom was bestowed to quench greater, and more flammable, freedom aspirations. Despite the obvious differences, crucial to both regimes was the tension revolving around the freedom theme. In fact, in a state where the old assumption that prosperity inevitably stirs democratization is being challenged, it is certainly interesting to analyze the characteristics, development and effects of this 'un-freedom', for it is a trait that, as the world moves towards greater democratization, strikes as anomalous, and exceptions are always worthy of study.

Studying China and its condition of exception is therefore undeniably relevant for International Relations. On the one hand, in facing thorny domestic challenges (demographic and environmental problems for example) it provides a peek into international challenges that are to come and acts as a scenario of trial measures and outcomes. This is no different for political demands, freedom debates and the construction of a different state-society relationship. On the other hand, and most crucially, China's inexorable rise in a Western-designed international system but through non-Western axioms provides a vivid example of a differential development path. In an international scenario dominated by a hegemonic tendency, China poses the question of whether we will move towards a bipolar, multipolar o distinctive hegemonic layout. Furthermore, it brings to the fore the imperative issue regarding the efficient or desirable internal characteristics of superpowers: the need to calculate, determine and reach a balance. A balance between political control, legitimacy, efficiency, development and freedom. A balance that is inevitably political because it involves power dynamics between different actors and concepts.

As it might be inferred, behind the motivations of this thesis there is also an element of profound personal interest in the area. Having extensively studied China for my History A level, I came upon a newly-found academic curiosity. I came to appreciate China's singularity from its very beginning, and what is more, its singular politics. I would venture to say that China is, without doubt, the most heavily politicized nation up to date, and that its political machine is the closest to perfection. I mean this in the sense that the Chinese Communist Party (from now on CCP) has managed to adapt to changing circumstances and needs, wittingly regaining legitimization after hardships and maintaining order and unity over a country that traditionally sinks into total chaos. This is not to say that it is a model to be extolled or the optimum one, but I do believe that it provides a hugely intriguing case study: the story of a hybrid mechanism, which drawing on both elements of ancient imperialism and modern capitalism, bears competing and simultaneous notions of a change-continuity paradigm that thrust China onto the world stage and challenge our dialectics of politics and power. We cannot hope to understand the present and discern the future without understanding the past, and it is why, to understand China, we must look closely at political change under the two grand architects of the Chinese dragon: Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

Coming back to our also unique present, one might now question what freedom has to do with the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic itself might not have much to do, but this is certainly not the case for governmental response and state-society relationships around the globe. Governments in almost every corner of the globe have restricted personal freedoms in the name of 'the greater good' and 'security'. Whilst it is not our purpose to delve into the legitimacy and effects of such actions, it is relevant to draw insightful observations and conclusions from this unique phenomenon. It is a fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our freedoms (be it justifiable or not), that it has done so at the hands of our respective political powers, and that the greater good has been emphatically advocated. Moreover, entire nations (and this is especially relevant for Spain) have experienced first-hand issues of transparency and politicization of information, which have in turn resulted in social movements. Does this not bear at least some resemblance with Maoist China? In fact, we could further argue that Xi Jinping's China (regardless of Covid-19), "relies on increased censorship and repression" (Shi-Kupfer et al., 2017, p. 8). One that has Xi launching an anti-corruption campaign that hid a disciplinary purge, eliminating presidential term limits and even prohibiting the use of the concepts of liberal democracies and universal values. These repressive measures, rather unsurprisingly (and intriguing for the present argument) are defined as necessary costs for the maintenance of stability (Shi-Kupfer et al., 2017). This is not to say that the world is starting to look like Maoist China, but rather, to draw other and more complex parallels regarding freedom.

As we continue to move towards greater individualism, our world is one in which freedom bears evermore importance, scope and untouchable status. Yet, the Covid-19 pandemic has created the conditions of a natural experiment: it has forced us to emphasize the collective again, to weigh our individual freedom versus a greater good for society. Just like the Chinese were told that working hard and obeying was necessary for the nation's development, we have been told that staying home and obeying is necessary for saving lives. This brings us onto an inevitable question: to what extent can advocating the greater good trump our precious freedom? Essentially, under which justification can national institutions and leaders dictate what we, as individuals, can or cannot do? According to Sen's (1999) brilliantly holistic approach, development is the process of expanding human freedom, of "enhancing the lives that people are able to lead" (Sen, 1999, p. 9). In enhancing our lives, five types of interrelated freedoms are proposed:

political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency and security. However, as the current pandemic depicts, it would be naïve to out-rule alternative scenarios where freedoms come into conflict. These alternative scenarios occur, and we might even need to conceptualize a 'freedom hierarchy', 'freedom scenarios' or an acceptable modus operandi.

We are currently experiencing a previously unthought-of phenomenon, a total crisis that requires a total response. We should therefore use the opportunity to learn from it, as totally as we possibly can, not only out of pure intellectual curiosity, but also under the reconnaissance that total crises such as this one are likely to become ever more common. In my opinion, China's political developments are an example of adaptation, of a reconfiguration of balances, of a pragmatic prioritization of what is allowed to change and what is not, all owing to a survival logic. Again, I do not mean to say that we should emulate Chinese politics, but rather, that we should understand the reasons, logic and functioning of a system that has successfully coped with total crises, for unfortunately, it is highly likely that we will face such phenomena in the future.

1.2. STATE OF AFFAIRS

1.2.1. LITERATURE REVISION

Change in China from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping, owing to its uniqueness, has repeatedly been a matter of academic intrigue and interest, leading many scholars to conduct studies and develop approaches. However, the assumption that there are thus no further contributions to be made is certainly flawed and far from the truth. The study of change between these two regimes is all too commonly eclipsed by economic. Whereas it is certainly true that economic transformation from Mao to Deng was rampant, it is merely one branch and it would be naïve to equate economic to overall change. This thesis is born out of the realization that change and development cannot be proudly proclaimed just because it occurs in one sphere. Additionally, it also draws on a tremendously important contribution to the field of International Relations that will be appropriately explored in the following section on the theoretical framework: Amartya Sen's stance on development. The idea to highlight here is that economic change by itself does not provide an accurate account of the overall picture, as an analysis of the subsequent translation to society is needed. Thus, this thesis intends to shine light on another, much-

less studied dimension of change that can be both valuable in itself and can serve to accompany and complete the multiple studies of economic focus: Political transformation.

Notwithstanding, before delving into the differential value of this study, we shall endeavor to assess the state of affairs in the area. Due to the nature and focus of the thesis, relevant academic works are included, contested and assessed throughout the whole dissertation. This section might therefore seem comparatively smaller, as the option of imbuing them within the entire scope of analysis and using them accordingly to develop a characteristic approach appeared to be much more enriching than merely outlining their individual contributions here. That being said, we will concisely highlight the major landmarks in the field to set the scene and introduce the knowledge-pool used to develop our approach.

The main authors that study China are widely considered to be Andrew Nathan, Lucian Pye, Ezra Vogel, Frederick Teiwes, Lowell Dittmer and Joseph Fewsmith. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this array of academics leads onto a wide diversity of approaches and views. However, they all have one thing in common: all of them focus on a single topic at a time, with each having their 'own specialty' within the political realm. For instance, Pye (1980) focusses on the concept and importance of legitimacy, as does Teiwes (2001), albeit from a different angle. Pye (1980) draws on the importance of cultural heritage and, in doing so, views legitimacy as a slightly more rigid concept. Teiwes (2001), on the other hand, subconsciously incorporates Deng's pragmatism, acknowledging that the concept of legitimacy is malleable and overtaken differently between Mao and Deng. Regardless, both authors fail to project their investigation deeper into the political realm and to link it to other essential themes such as the role of ideology and the internal functioning of the Party. The link between legitimacy and ideology is crucial in the case of China, a feature picked up on by Zhang (2010) but disregarded by many other scholars who, like Pye (1980), place emphasis on the functioning of politics in administrative terms. The same is true for Nathan (1973), who delves into the causes of China's centralization of power under both leaders and arrives at the importance of the non-institutionalization of Chinese politics. The question of institutions, also contested in our essay, is possibly one of the most studied within the field. Nathan (1973) therefore explores the internal functioning of the CCP through its institutions, proposing a factionalist model which continues to be divisive amongst scholars. Fewsmith (2013), for

example, coincides in the role of institutions and the lack thereof, but remains prudent regarding Nathan's (1973) slightly deterministic model. Conversely, Dittmer (2003) puts forward a different and rather controverted idea by defending that under Deng there is a certain degree of institutionalization that results in the distinction between formal and informal politics. Despite all the insights into the trappings of the CCPs internal system, Cabestan (2004) very rightfully denounces that the rule of law is conspicuous by its absence and deserves much greater attention. This is certainly true and will indeed by picked up in our analysis, which will draw on Cabestan's (2004) call for action regarding the voids in the works of the most notable authors.

As it could not be otherwise, we now arrive to the other most studied concept within Chinese politics: democratization. Quite surprisingly, in viewing the Chinese political landscape, democratization is comparatively given less attention than the internal intricacies of the CCP. This might indeed be owing to the fact that the case for China's democratization seems close to impossible to uphold. However, this should not entail that we should therefore disregard it, missing all the complexities imbued within it along the way. As they say, most of the time it is not about the end destination, but about the journey. Vogel (2011) is the first and only scholar to directly establish a link between the intramurals of the CCP under Deng and the question of democracy. Very significantly, he suggests that Deng is not seeking democracy, but rather, efficiency. Notwithstanding, his argument is fundamentally flawed in his claiming that Deng was moved by unwavering modernization aspirations. Vogel's (2011) such interpretation essentially falls into the risk of generalization pointed out earlier: his perspective on political change seems to be eclipsed by economic change, failing to appreciate the overarching importance of the entire system, a stance that Baum (1998) and Fenby (2013) attempt to take in reaching conclusions about the conceptualization of the political system itself.

Wong (2005), nonetheless, decries the academic poverty in the area. It may be the case that it is simply impossible for any single account to pay heed to the complexities imbued in Chinese politics, however, having a rich combination of them, this should pose no problem. The answer is, theoretically, more simple than it seems. As we have seen, the academics tend to fall into the tendency of specificity. Facing a topic as complex and wide as Chinese political change, they seem to opt for focusing on a single issue in depth. This is not a problem per se, but it does become one when authors attempt to arrive at "universally valid generalizations" (Wong, 2005, p. 17) without conducting a universal

analysis or methods. Simply put, they intend to intellectually isolate different dimension of politics to then elaborate conclusions about the entire political landscape. This is not only essentially flawed, but also fails to appreciate the characteristic complexity of Chinese politics being heavily interrelated across different levels.

Up until now we have sidelined the contributions and work of this particular scholar: Wong (2005). Despite not being in the summit of referential authors, his work draws attention to the fact that "a macro view of the integrated political development is urgently needed" (Wong, 2005, p. 11) and proposes an interesting line of study that has inspired the structure of this thesis: the crisis and sequence approach. He thus identifies five distinct problem-areas: national identity, legitimacy, participation, penetration and distribution (Wong, 2005, p. 21) and argues that these problems and the sequence in which they come determine the development of the Chinese political system. This approach is unique in that it is the only holistic one that views the entirety of the picture of politics. However, it is incomplete in that although it is holistic, it fails to interrelate between the different crises, treating them as separate when they are undeniable linked.

1.2.2. A NEW APPROACH: TRIPARTITE LEVEL APPROACH BASED ON PARADOXICAL DUALISM

Drawing on the differential milestones of the investigations cited above, and paying special attention to the noticeable voids in the field, an attempt has been made to reconcile them and develop a signature approach: *a tripartite level approach that rests on paradoxical dualism.* We shall disentangle how this approach functions. It consists of three levels, all interlinked, that function along the lines of Maslow's basic necessities pyramid. We mean this in the sense that the fulfilling of one level requires stability in the previous level, with the levels being divided into: Conceptual, Internal and Projected. The specificities of each level will be determined further on, for the moment we shall rest on the fact that they are inspired in both Wong's (2005) notion of areas of crisis and careful observations of the areas tackled by the array of academics. The idea is thus to provide a holistic view of Chinese politics, acknowledging that owing to the politicization in China and the totalitarianism of the CCP, politics extend to encompass a huge scope and complexity. This approach attempts to draw attention, in particular, to the importance of analyzing political change in accordance to a definition of what politics essentially is. Although this definition will be detailed in the following section, what will emerge as

crucial in the definition of politics is its undeniable effects for society. That is, at the heart of politics we have the relationship between the Party and society, a relationship that the immense majority of scholars fail to plunge into and that we intend to shine a light on.

However, perhaps where the real, most differential contribution comes into place is in the idea of 'paradoxical dualism.' This idea is wholly inspired by Deng's pragmatism and the will to fully grasp the importance of his political maneuvering. It is based on the challenging of the assumption between the mutual exclusivity between change and continuity. Whereas change and continuity are constantly viewed as opposites in a zero-sum game, that is, the advancement of one entails the automatic retraction of the other, the theory proposed here rather follows the lines of game theory. Under this framework, there is no narrative of change *or* continuity, but rather a joint narrative, one where we have a certain equilibrium and interplay between change and continuity. For this approach to work, there need be a truly holistic approach that simulates Deng's possible level areas. It would then entail Dengsian careful calculations of what was allowed to change in exchange for what would remain the same, thus the utmost reflection of Deng's allegedly "crossing the river by feeling the stones" (Nathan, 2012).

1.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to be able to fully engage with the approach underlined in this thesis, we ought to first tackle the relevant theoretical framework, which will be divided into two parts. The first will address some crucially contested concepts that, evidently, need to be defined to set a common ground for understanding the ensuing analysis, namely those of politics, power and change. The second part will include an overview of International Relations Theory, which is inherently present in our understanding of the state, the forces at work in the system, and essentially, the world around us.

1.3.1. CONTESTED CONCEPTS

Politics, in its narrowest definition is taken to be that which concerns the state. There is no room for disagreement in this claim, as politics does concern the state and will indeed do so in our study, however, it is widely accepted that this definition falls too short and leaves out other more crucial dimensions of the term. Most importantly, this

definition of politics falls into what Cabestan (2004) criticizes about many of the relevant academic works in the field: that society generally occupies a second place in their analyses. Defining politics as the state fails to view the importance of the relationship between the state and society, one which is indeed especially fundamental in the case of China. Thus, this conceptualization can only serve as a very vague starting point. Following the time-frame of the development of the concept of politics, a second definition emerges, one that intends to shift the focus away from the state and make it about a process, and particularly a conflict-resolution process. Among the most well-known proponents of this understanding we find Crick and his definition of politics as "the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power" (Crick, 1964, p. 21). This notion introduces the fundamental relationship (and problem) between state-society along with the power dialectic. Here, therefore, the definition of politics starts to get both more interesting and more relevant, as both elements highlighted within it will be crucial for our thesis. There is, however, an important distinction to be made. Crick (1964) views this conflict from a somewhat negative stance, that is, he argues that politics is the need for a *resolution* to this conflict, a perspective that would most certainly be shared by Deng Xiaoping in his striving for balance along the change-continuity paradigm. In fact, in the case of Chinese politics, it may even be reasonable to argue that this definition of politics is the premium one, with the CCP viewing its relationship with society and the ensuing conflict of interest as negative. We shall properly explain what is meant here. It may seem logical to view a conflict as negative. However, conflict, in this sense, is not taken to be violence or coercion, which is precisely why Crick's (1964) above definition includes the word 'conciliation.' Bearing in mind this stance on conflict, conflict itself can be positively valued, which leads us onto the next definition of politics: one that recognizes politics as conflict. Under this definition, however, conflict is not something to be resolved, but rather something positive and desirable. For this group of theorists, politics is the process through which we coexist though respect that there are inevitably going to be conflicting interests and differences that should *not* be reconciled, but rather allowed to be expressed and acknowledged. One of the main scholars in this field, Chantal Mouffe, argues that "if we want people to be free we must always allow for the possibility that conflict may appear and provide an arena where differences can be confronted" (Castle, 1998), expressing that politics is then the process through which conflict is organized and made productive rather than erased. This last definition of politics is tremendously relevant in

the light of our thesis. It seems only logical to acknowledge the inevitability of conflicting interests and view them as necessary conditions for freedom, yet this is precisely the problem with Chinese politics: the CCP leaves no room for freedom, be it in the public or private sphere, if this entails conflict with its monopoly over power.

How then, with such a variety of definitions, should we and do we envision politics? In tandem with our holistic approach, our understanding of politics is also holistic, combining all of the above and converging them into an underlying commonality that all bear imbued: *Politics is quite simply, the exercise of power.* Whether concerning the state or extending far beyond it, whether denouncing or cradling the conflict, and whether in the public or private sphere, politics is the exercise of power.

This then leads us onto the next contested concept: that of power. Dahl (1957), one of the main, if not the main, academics regarding power, conceptualizes power as having influence over others' actions, stating that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl, 1957, p. 202-3). This dimension of power is certainly true, concerning direct, overt power that influences decision-making. However, as Lukes (1974) points out, it essentially fails to capture the true extension of power, as it is merely one dimension out of three. Actually, here it will be argued that there in fact is a fourth dimension of power, but let us not plunge into this yet. Luke's (1974) second face of power concerns agenda setting. Or in other words, this face is about controlling the content of agendas and the context in which decisions are made, which in turn influences decisions themselves. Finally, the third face entails preference shaping, that is, the ability to control what people consider as being 'correct' and important. This last face bears interesting parallels with the Marxist concept of ideology, through which the CCP legitimizes its rule. Of course, as we advance along the spectrum of faces, the exertion of power becomes both more indirect and effective. All the faces and conceptualizations of power are present in the exercise of politics in China, the notion of power in China is ubiquitous. In fact, there is yet another definition of power that eloquently depicts the absolute depth and protrusion of both power and politics: "[power] is about who gets what, when and how" (Laswell, 1936, p. 5). However, returning to the idea of faces, in studying China's political landscape we encounter a possible fourth face to add to Luke's contribution: hegemonic discourse. The idea behind such claim is based on the theoretical framework of constructivism (to be explored shortly) and Deng's political maneuvering along the lines of the illusion of change.

Hence, what we are hereby terming a fourth face would entail the importance of discourse, of the way we understand concepts and construct meanings. To present an appropriate example, this would be the face of power at work in Deng's defining the fundamental tenets of the Chinese state and his very own version of socialism, 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics.'

The final contested concept which we shall endeavor to analyze is change. The notion of change is devoid of positive or negative connotations, however, under our framework, change will be inherently tinged with connotations of moving forwards, of advancement. This owes to two main issues. The first, that change from Mao to Deng is overwhelmingly seen as being positive, therefore it is this that we take as the basis to question and analyze. The second draws on the extremely influential works of Amartya Sen on development as freedom. Sen (1999) shines light on the fact that development is not an end in itself, but rather a means. The question brought up is that, why long for development if it is not translated into greater freedom and well-being? Similarly, political change should not be an end in itself, but a means that ought to be translated into the expansion of freedom and capabilities for society. The intrinsic argument here is that separating change from its ensuing effects is futile.

1.3.2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS' THEORIES

International Relations Theories (IRT) provide frameworks to understand how states function in the international arena and essentially, how the system works. Our study focusses entirely on the internal politics of one state, disaggregating it from the international. Hence, in this section we will briefly outline the relevant features of IRT for our thesis, focusing on what they have to say regarding the functioning and nature of states, but most importantly, how they view politics. Tangentially, this section also intends to shine light on the fact that academia is Western-centric, with this having two fundamental consequences. On the one hand, that it is governed by Western concepts and analyses that may not be fitting for very distinct scenarios (such as the one we study) and on the other, that it fails to extrapolate analyses on the opposite direction. That is to say: understanding, approaches and theories regarding China are not applied to Western contexts, and, China as a place *of* the world, may have much to say for IRT.

It is certainly interesting how elements of the very different frameworks come into both conflict and co-existence in the scenario of Chinese politics. It need not be said that for our study, the theory of liberalism is relegated to a secondary plane, as its fundamental core of the necessity of freedom and democracy (Doyle, 1986) is conspicuous by its absence in China. Thus, this very relevant conflict with liberalism's center piece will be explored further on in the analysis. The rest of the framework will not be viewed, however, as liberalism's focus on international cooperation, albeit interesting, is not applicable for our study.

What is certainly applicable, however, is the marked notions of the state highlighted by realism. Realism decidedly advocates that states are the fundamental actors in the international arena, with survival and pursuit of interests being their main goal and power being the instrument through which to achieve them (Hobbes, 1651). With such a prominent role for the state and power discourse, Chinese politics are undeniably construed around a realist framework, especially in the angle taken here, where there is a whole-hearted focus around the functioning of the state and its hold on power. Notwithstanding, like the realist school of thought itself, this thesis also incorporates subsequent blocks added in the realist framework. This is to say, far from remaining strictly adjacent to realism per se, there is a fundamental tinge of neo-realism in separating the state from society and therefore acknowledging that in viewing the state, one necessarily needs to consider society (Waltz, 1979). This notion is crucial, and, in the ensuing relationship between state and society, we encounter a further question. If we should envision state and society as separate entities (as in neo-realism), or if we need to move beyond this separation and, owing to their extreme inter-relation, talk about a 'state-society' complex (Leysens, 2008, p. 39). This idea leads us to tackle the next relevant framework: Critical Theory.

What we hereby draw on of critical theory is in its premise that both society and culture are imperative forces that shape states and history (Cox, 1987). The notion of state-society complex, however, we believe is best encapsulated within the totality of a political system, with the distinction between state and society being both necessary and conducted in the present study. Unsurprisingly, critical theory stems from Marxism, a framework that may appear as essential owing to the focus of our study. Marxism is indeed directly imbued in the definition of the communist state that China is since Mao's rise to power, however, this is not the same as the Marxist theoretical current being useful

in our analysis. In fact, rejecting the idea of economic determinism[1] it has so present, the aspect of Marxist thought to be relevant for our study is that of historical materialism, whereby material conditions and history itself can be changed by the actions of individuals and ideas (Marx & Engels, 1976) As we shall see throughout the thesis, China's political path (in the form of change or continuity) was undeniably "shaped by the role that Deng personally played" (Vogel, 2011, p. 693). This leads us onto the role of ideas.

This then leads us onto what, albeit arguably, is the imperative theoretical framework at hand in Chinese politics: Constructivism. Constructivism is primarily focused on ideas and identities, and their role in transforming our understanding of social reality (Wendt, 1992). This is crucial within the Chinese nation itself, where the ideas of tradition, heritage, and Confucianism are irremediably present. Moreover, it is also crucial in Chinese politics, especially under Deng Xiaoping. Just as constructivist Alexander Wendt claimed that "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992, p. 391), similarly, "socialism is what the Chinese say it is" (Chang, 1988, p. 10). Deng, being a committed pragmatist, exploited the constructivist framework, shaping notions of ideology, right-wrong and change-continuity in order to further the CCPs (and his) hold onto power. Essentially, what we find is that Chinese politics are riddled in some sort of realist constructivism, whereby notions of politics are viewed through a realist lens, but also bear the importance of ideas in molding society's relationship with the state.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze political change between the regimes of the two most influential figures of twentieth-century China: Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. The differential milestones between the mandates of both leaders have been extensively studied, however, the angle taken here will be somewhat different. The available literature focusses on the revolutionary economic change brought on by Deng, with the political realm being relegated to a secondary plane. Furthermore, when viewing the political aspect, despite acknowledging that change was evidently less substantial than in the economic, change nonetheless, is the observed phenomenon.

This thesis, however, responds to the realization that "the question of political reform is of course complex, deserving far more empirical research than has yet been conducted" (Unger, 2015, p. 42), and in doing so, it diverges from the conventional view,

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[1] Economic determinism is the Marxist conceptualization of politics, which is considered to be a struggle for distribution for economic resources.

with the main hypothesis being that: in the political sphere, change was so subtle, peripheral and controlled, that in fact, instead of change we have continuity. The hypothesis intends to shine a light on the complexity imbued in Chinese politics at the time, analyzing the crucial differentiation between the aspects of politics that were allowed to change, and those which remained strictly 'unchanged' at the hands of Deng and his Politburo minions. In investigating the matter in question, a series of contiguous questions will naturally emerge, and will subsequently be explored. These include: the characteristics of this change and the fundamental motives driving the differentiation between allowed and un-allowed change. Also arising as an interesting tangent is the issue of hindsight. Was Deng's ability to impose change dependent on Mao's previous legacy? And thus, do we interpret change differently than it would have been interpreted at the time? Notwithstanding, these secondary questions, albeit intriguing, will be explored in as much as they are relevant and from the perspective of the main issue to be analyzed: whether under the facet of seeming political change, the elements of political continuity between the regimes of both comrades are in fact more present and relevant.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to develop and analyze the matter in question will be, of course, coherent with the nature of the investigation. Being fundamentally qualitative and political in nature, this study will draw on sources of different time frames, backgrounds and mindsets in order to encompass the widest possible scope. The sources will be critically assessed and juxtaposed to develop the thesis around the dichotomy between political change-continuation and determine where historical emphasis should be placed. Bearing in mind the complexity of the issue at hand, and attempting not to fall into the all-too simplistic design of shifting from Mao to Deng constantly, the one suggested here is divided along 3 different observed levels:

- Conceptual
- Internal
- Projected

The focus will be placed on Deng's major political landmarks across the three levels, which will inevitably invite steady comparisons with Mao in order to explore the

degree of change-continuity between the two. Regarding the levels, a brief overview of their confinement, *raison d'etre* and relationship is deemed necessary.

The levels should be effectively envisioned as a pyramid. This first one constitutes its base (conceptual), the stable ground that enables the justification, building and development of the above levels. The second level (internal), is a transition level, the executive responsible for making things possible, the political machinery. The third and last level, therefore, is the result and ultimate projection of the other two: the highest manifestation of politics, national politics. It determines how the Chinese society is structured, its relationship with the Party and how the nation functions.

1.4.1. CONCEPTUAL

This level, albeit being the most subjective, is undeniably crucial. It is also the most difficult to analyze and encapsulate, and this is squarely as a result of its very nature. At the center of this level is the importance of ideology, or rather, the "theoretical validation" (Teiwes, 2001, p. 6) behind the power base and legitimacy of Deng's leadership. The level therefore aims to tackle the question of how Deng managed to justify his leadership and political actions, providing a fundamental base and framework to understand how the actions overtaken in the other two realms (internal and projected), in the palpable politics, were possible.

1.4.2. INTERNAL

This level refers to the measures taken in relation to the Party itself and its functioning, being purely intra-party. As Deng stated in his speech prior to becoming leader, there were many issues to be addressed within the Party. Indeed, a differentiation between internal and national (projected) politics seems both crucial and logical for a

number of reasons. Firstly, how Deng dealt with the internal Party mayhem inherited owing to late Maoist whims is very relevant, especially considering his conviction that China needed a united and strong party to get things done. Secondly, this level is the enabling one, or in other words, the executive mechanism in charge of the grander politics of the country. Finally, the differentiation will enable to grasp nuances, shining light on the process, logic and possible motivations behind the change-continuity path.

1.4.3. PROJECTED

The projected politics are the most relevant when analyzing effective political change, also responding to what we intuitively consider politics, and subsequently, will bear the core of the thesis. This level refers to the measures and policies that Deng effectively installed in China, the actions undertaken in relation to the masses and the public arena, thus corresponding to the ultimate level and expression of the political realm.

It is worth noting that some distinctions, namely that between the internal and projected are not the obvious, but subtle, and must be viewed from the perspective of Deng's mastermind political maneuvering. In this framework, the internal refers to the inner, organizational and structural aspects of the party, whereas the projected refers to the Party as an entire system and entity at the head of the nation. Note the deliberate use of upper and lower case letters. The internal dimension treats the party from the inside, as disaggregate, focusing on the bureaucratic functional side, whereas the projected dimension views the Party from the outside in, as a monolithic entity and entire governing system responsible for the running of the nation. This distinction is crucial. As is the fact that the leadership role, held by Deng, will be primarily included in the projected dimension, the grander politics, following, as stated before, his strategic line of thought. This corresponds to Deng's seeing a clear differentiation between the 'top of the system' and the party system below (Fewsmith, 2013). The very top, what he modestly termed 'the core' and what we refer to as the 'Supreme Leader', operated at an entirely different level than the rest, remaining separate and unwavering to the internal dimension (Torigian, 2017).

Evidently, the three levels are directly interlinked, and the general strategy innate to Deng's political essence is observable across all. However, precisely owing to his

unequivocal pragmatism, there are crucial nuances between the different levels that respond to the peculiarities and necessities of each one. This is why an analysis along these lines proves to be most ravishing: it is both coherent and enables to grasp details that we could otherwise miss. Additionally, it helps in the understanding of the functioning of Deng's political mindset and maneuvering, as the theses is essentially divided along the lines that, presumably, Deng would have divided in his extremely pragmatic mind. The structure thus enables a direct understanding of the different political 'themes' Deng tackled, how he did this and why he did this, helping to determine whether his predisposition for change was consistent or context-driven. And what's more, allowing us to pick on his fundamental logic and to envision the grand picture in China's "political boss'" (Teiwes, 2001, p. 26) mind.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. CONCEPTUAL

Jettisoning key components of Mao's previously seeming untouchable legacy, Deng challenged the conventional strata of power and authority. Indeed, he was the architect of unparalleled conceptual political change in China, managing to overhaul and re-interpret ideology to impose his personal vision. What then emerges as a fundamental question is how Deng was able to justify such a rampant ideological change, especially when this change meant unraveling the Chairman's doctrine.

"Much of post-Mao development has close relevance to what happened in the Maoist era and before" (Zhang, 2010, p. 10). The Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), and especially, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), left a havoc riveted China not only in the economic and social, but also, and most importantly, in the political. The political crisis China faced played out on two different levels. On the one hand, there was factionalism within the CCP, on the other, "the official doctrine was discredited and the legitimacy of the party and the government was weakened in the eyes of the people" (Zhang, 2010, p. 20), and common to both spheres was a fundamental ideological chord. It is thus under these conditions that Deng ushered, using the favorable momentum to impose a new ideology. However, despite the conditions of the time being an important factor in enabling a change of direction, Deng's pragmatism was also essential in his quest, especially in justifying the 'ideological turn' within the Party.

Teiwes (2001) in fact claims that Deng's abilities as a "political boss" were paramount from the very beginning. Being one of the successors considered by Mao (and arguably his favorite), Deng understood the need to be subordinate to the all-powerful Mao, or rather, he understood the respect for elders and relationships along teacher-student lines that were centric to Confucianism and therefore Chinese culture. Consequently, albeit distancing himself from Mao in the latter years, Deng always understood and respected a Chinese characteristic that transcended party and ideology. Even in his condemning of the Cultural Revolution, late Maoist whims and the party system in his speech at the third session of the Fifth National People's Congress, Deng was careful not to blame Mao himself personally, and not to discredit China's ideological base in the eyes of the people.

He claimed that that "there is no infallible man" (Goldman, 1994, p. 37), and in his reappearance after the Cultural Revolution, he used a slogan that drew on Maoism, "Seek truth from fact" (Goldman, 1994, p. 37) and that anticipated the pragmatism with which would characterize Deng's leadership. The slogan was in fact direct criticism to Mao's policies, yet it bore respect. Far from undermining the almost-sacred tenets of Mao Zedong thought, Deng emphasized that these had been "tested and proved correct" and most importantly, that they would "remain our guiding ideology in the years of the struggle ahead" (Xiaoping, 1980). In this way, Deng sought to implement his well-known pragmatism by reinterpreting and re-conceptualizing the party's ideology.

For China's 'political boss', ideology was not to guide the country's objectives and principles, but rather it served as a boundary to what was acceptable (Teiwes, 2001, p. 33). The importance of this political move in allowing economic reform and opening in the immediate post-Mao era is acknowledged by many academics, however, none highlight the extent to which this was a point of inflection for the entire future of the CCP. It is this vision of Deng that truly makes him a political boss that transcends his time. Deng did not only champion over the most radical ideological change in the CCPs history up-to-date, but he was the founding father, the ideologue, behind making the content and goals of socialism adaptable. In this way, he was the unintentional architect of what would turn out to be the CCPs most important control tool: ideological and political adaptability.

For Mao, a heartfelt communist and Leninist, ideology was important per se. For Deng and his successors, having witnessed the power of ideology within the masses, a comprehensive ideology shared by the Chinese people provided normative power and thus, an abiding source of legitimacy that was deemed to be much stronger than mere economic achievement or crude national sentiment (Shi-Kupfer, Ohlberg, Lang & Lang, 2017). This is especially relevant in the light of Chinese history and wants. Looking back at political developments during the 20th century, ranging from the warlord period (1916-1928) to the civil war (1945-1949), China was fragmented, it did not have a united national sentiment. Even during the imperial period, which can be considered the apex of its unity, there was no such unifying element that came near as close as the ideological one introduced by Mao (Mitter, 2008). In the realms of the economic, China fell behind in the development spectrum, and was in fact worse off than ever before by late Mao's delusion. However, with both possibilities of creating a Chinese identity clearly lacking,

Mao had unleashed an ever-more powerful apparatus: ideological unity. One that Deng Xiaoping would not doubt to use and improve.

How then, did Deng manage to perpetrate an ideology that seemed to be pending on a thread on the eyes of the Chinese population but on which rested the entire survival and legitimacy of the Party and by default, the political system? Essentially what Deng managed was to maintain a dual strategy that fed in on itself. On one level, he seduced the CCP into incorporating the 'sub-ideology' of reform into the ideological central chord of the Party (Su, 2011). The underlying justification was fundamentally one of 'adapt or die', where reform was not an option, but an absolute necessity if the CCP was to remain the all-powerful entity and the country wasn't to change 'political colour'. Deng highlighted that to regain legitimacy they needed to realize that the "Party's central task was different from what it was in the past" (Xiaoping, 1980), addressing the problems facing the population and appearing as their solution and not their cause. If they failed to do so, "people would ask why it [the socialist system] couldn't solve problems which the capitalist system can" (Xiaoping, 1980). Thus, change, in the eyes of the Party, was not only deemed as imperative, but Deng also created the illusion that it was minor, as if it were solely the bare minimum to maintain a loyal and pleased population. Furthermore, Deng understood that the complex circumstances required an effort to build support "less for himself as the core figure, than for the various policies which added up to reform and openness" (Teiwes, 2001, p. 34). Emerging from a tumultuous episode in the Party's history, Deng understood the elite's heartfelt desire for consensus and that it would be much more effective for power to gravitate towards him rather than for him to seize it (at least for the moment).

On another parallel level, Deng dealt with external validity, creating an ideological change illusion that was completely the opposite to that faced by the Party. Borrowing from what he considered suitable from Western ideas, Deng liberalized and introduced economic reforms that would quench the reformist thirst. Modernization came in the form of an entrepreneurial ethos under the label of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Baum, 1994), which had the main objective of improving the socio-economic conditions of the masses to gain popular support (Moak & Lee, 2015) whilst maintaining a consistent base of socialist viewpoints. Deng therefore successfully justified and transformed the whole ideological basis of political authority, with a dual strategy that at both party and population level was very much in line with Chen Yun's

beautifully eloquent bird metaphor: "The bird should be allowed to fly, but only in the cage. If there is no cage, the bird will escape" (Lubman, 1999, p. 173).

2.2 INTERNAL

"*For our ideological and political work to be successful, it is necessary to improve the leadership provided by the Party and to improve its leadership*" (Xiaoping, 1980).

The very first thing Deng addressed in becoming China's utmost leader was the reform required within the Party and its organizational systems: purely 'internal' dimension of politics. He firmly believed in the importance of having a strong and united Party in order to achieve the interests of the country (or achieve anything for that matter). According to Deng, a sound political system provided political stability, national unity, better living standards and the continuous development of the productive forces (Vogel, 2011, p. 1734). Truth be told, the political system inherited by Deng provided none of the above, and, as also stated in the previous section, he was well aware of the dangers this entailed.

Amongst the plagues Deng believed were infecting the system and halting the optimum functioning of socialism, he highlighted the following (Vogel, 2011; Xiaoping, 1980):

- Organizational overlapping & overstaffing
- Sluggishness
- Bureaucratism
- Privileges of various kinds
- Over-concentration of power

Initially, they all seem to follow a crucial common thread, converging around administrative aspects, except for one, the last one. Over-concentration of power appears to be the odd one out, perhaps dealing with administrative issues but of a much higher level, those that directly influence the leadership role. This would indeed be so in anyone's right mind, where thinking about over-concentration of power inevitable entails scrutiny in the highest spheres of power, and in the Chinese context, this implies Deng's position. However, let us not forget that, as stated previously in the section on methodology, in this thesis we are attempting to move away from our 'right mind', instead

becoming immersed in Deng Xiaoping's mind. In criticizing the over-concentration of power, we ought to consider if he could possibly refer to the roles and power he personally held. This question shall and will be answered, however, in order to do so most decidedly, the other 'plagues' identified and their 'raison d'etre' will be dealt with first.

It is no coincidence that the intramural reforms of the Party were administration-centered. As Deng himself proclaimed, "the main goal of our reform is to guarantee the efficiency of the executive organs" (Vogel, 2011, p. 1735). This is exactly what he set out to do: there was a decrease in the number of personnel, a skilling up of the staff (Kobayashi, Baobo, & Sano, 1999) and reductions in the number of ministries and commissions (Nathan, 2012). A much-needed retirement system for veterans was instituted, as was a system based on meritocracy, where Central Committee membership came to be determined through gradual rises in political positions rather than ideological motives or personal connections (Fewsmith, 2012). The following tables provide visual comparatives for the consequences of these last two measures, with Table 1 highlighting the age reduction and Table 2 educational change[2].

Table 1: Average age change in the CCP

Average Age of the CCP Leadership Core

Level	12th	13th
SC of The Politburo	73.75	63.6
Politburo	71.8	64
Secretariat	63.7	56.2

Table 2: Educational Level change in the CCPs Politburo

Change in Educational Level of Poliburo Member

Level	11th	12th	13th
None	4(15.4%)	3(10.7%)	0(0%)
Pri.school	5(19.2%)	10(35.7%)	0(0%)
Middle school	6(23.0%)	3(10.7%)	5(27.7%)
Military school	5(19.2%)	3(10.7%)	1(5.6%)
College	6(23.0%)	9(32.1%)	12(66.6%)
Total	26(100%)	28(100%)	18(100%)

Source: Wong (2005, p. 93-4).

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[2] The 11th Party Congress took place in 1977, following Mao's death, and thus shows the situation immediately preceding Deng.
The 12th and 13th Party Congress were both under Deng's mandate, in 1982 and 1987 respectively.

Indeed, these measures marked real change in the "routinization of political life" (Fewsmith, 2012), a routinization that even protruded into the provision of its rules, with the norm of holding party congresses at regular intervals being respected and maintained from Deng's leadership onwards. This angle of political change was real, Deng did indeed regularize and organize the party system below, and this ought to be particularly noteworthy in comparison to the radical lack of organization and the tremendous upheavals characteristic of Mao's mandate. How then, does the last 'plague' come into play?

Deng repeatedly emphasized the importance of collective leadership and democratic centralism, both very much in line with the problem posed by over-concentration of power. What these terms refer to, essentially, is to the "rough equality consonant" (Unger, 2002), (equality amongst Politburo members), which indeed is slightly more than rough, as it bears an interesting paradox. Whereas collective leadership was a motto that Deng seemed to extol, it was only present in the rhetorical sense and at the beginning of the 'Deng period', where, as part of his pragmatic strategy, he understood what the Party needed in order for him to gain leadership legitimacy. In this way, he created the illusion of power gravitating towards him in a system of collective leadership and consensus, as analyzed in the 'conceptual' section. However, Deng's norm of collective leadership was in constant tension with the need and reality of hierarchy. Hierarchy is a concept with deep cultural roots engrained in Confucian values, which created a powerful cultural imperative that identified "political authority with unchallenged moral and doctrinal correctness" (Unger, 2002). Thus, owing to ancient cultural motives present in both Deng's and other Chinese politicians' minds, collective leadership did not only seem highly unlikely, but rather, it was not happening at relevant levels. Solely with the observance of protocol, for instance; who appears on ceremonial occasions, who speaks, in what order, and so on and so forth, we can observe how the normal and intuitive relationship among the Party elite is undeniably hierarchical. In fact, protocol is only an insightful example. Rightfully according to Pye (2009), there is ample evidence indicating that Deng's power was unparalleled, having greater access than anyone to both spheres of Chinese politics: we hereby term the internal (intramural level of bureaucratic and administrative powers) and the projected (managing the masses in the public arena). This essentially sounds as familiar as repetitive in Chinese politics, and it thus leaves us to view Deng's seeming preoccupation for over-concentration of power. It

seems that Deng's reference to over-concentration of power was part of a political mastermind leadership technique. On the one hand, he created an illusion that was crucial for his rise to power in the struggle of leadership succession. At the same time, he politely condemned Mao's dictatorial modus operandi, distancing himself from his predecessor, and yet again strengthening his own support within the Party. But finally, he inaugurated a crucial distinction in inner Party dynamics: between formal and informal politics.

The formal politics of an organization refer to its explicit and official arrangements. That is, what has essentially been discussed up until now: administrative organization, the formal norms, the outspoken (and supposed) functioning within the Party. The informal politics, on the other hand, are implicit and covert, being flexible and irregular rather than institutionalized (Dittmer, 2003). The informal, thus, are the 'politics' of an organization, however tongue-twisting this might seem. Relevant about this point is that Deng changed the style of the power base of the leadership role. Whereas Mao relied on the formal politics, drawing on the explicit and official arrangements within the Party so as to leave no doubt of his unchallengeable authority and supremacy, Deng used the formal politics to create the illusion that he is no Supreme Leader, but then establishes his more-than-stable power base using the informal politics in a covert and un-official manner. This change should not only be acknowledged in comparison to Mao, but more in depth, as it marked a key transition in the means to conduct power politics in China.

Yet again, let us place this relevance in context and return to 'the plagues'. Perhaps surprisingly, the links could not be greater. Deng's de facto inner political changes were purely administrative, focusing on making the administration more efficient and organized. Regarding the over-concentration of power, we have determined that under the facet of collective leadership, Deng was the undeniable Supreme Leader, albeit an informal one. The question of over-concentration of power did not have to do with him therefore, as the system needed, in his own words, a "core" (Torigian, 2017) which could remain untouched by the Party checks. What then strikes as a feasible possibility is that, like the rest of the reforms, they were intended for the Party system *below* him, that is, excluding him, the almighty core. In this framework, it is his political comrades that cannot concentrate too much power in their hands, not him.

There is a fundamental reason for Deng striving to make the intramurals of the Party more efficient and organized, it discerns the link between all the plagues and has to

do with his informal politics play: it enabled him to channel opposition within the institutional constraints that he himself had drawn out (Miller, 2016), which essentially made his power system more efficient and controllable. In fact, there is a relevant point to be made here about institutions. Institutions "represent power arrangements as well as the ways in which power can prevent their emergence" (Fewsmith, 2012). Needless to say, Deng's politics are a clear example of how power can prevent their emergence. Fewsmith (2012) goes as far as claiming that political reform is inevitably tied to the question of institution building, in this framework, only new institutions can potentially constrain the behavior of cadres and leaders. Indeed, if Deng really wanted to constrain party power and install political reform, why not push for the emergence of formal institutions that would do so? Rather, instead of promoting such changes, he actively rejected Hu Yaobang's attempts to create a true system of collective leadership, removing Hu in 1987 in a process that was more than clearly against Party rules[3] (Torigian, 2017). This event corresponds to a wide list of figures he subtly removed from the Party because they challenged his authority (Vogel, 2011). Deng restrained from being vindictive like Mao, his purging methods were different, but purges nonetheless.

We have therefore left to answer the fundamental question of this section: whether Deng pioneered political change in the internal realms of the Party or not. It is certainly true that he achieved administrative political change, and this should be recognized, however, we intend for our analysis to be much deeper, delving into the transcendence of this change. These were merely administrative tweaks, in themselves they lack any further relevance. Notwithstanding, in what these little tweaks enabled and their underlying motivation, we find the real gist and the problem. The motivation behind the subtle and peripheral change was, on the one hand, to facilitate the economic change on which Deng was centered (this will be analyzed in depth in the following section) and on the other, to maintain a rigid and fundamentally unchanged grand structure in the exact same game of politics. It is no coincide that change within the workings of the Party left out any relevant spheres (Unger, 2002), essentially turning out to be "nothing more than displays of authoritarian consultation" (Fewsmith, 2012, p. 3). Change was intended to avoid real conflicts of interest (Cabestan, 2017), whereas it could have been the first step towards

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[3] Hu Yaobang was Hua Gofeng's replacement as general Party secretary. Hu attempted to continue with Hua's efforts at true collective leadership, defending a system "in which every individual was considered equal, had a single vote, and each would take turns in running meetings" (Torigian, 2017). Hu was consequently purged.

eventual fruitful and relevant political change. Those who believe that "Deng is a confrontationist willing to pay any political price in order to reform the system and serve the country" (Chang, 1988, p. 23) are missing the crucial grand picture. Rather than a confrontationist, we could argue that in a way, Deng was a constructivist, capable of pragmatically molding concepts, understanding and reality according to his very personal needs. We thus venture to say that the minor changes we see in internal Party dynamics were intended to maintain a fundamental current of political system un-changeability in a disguised manner. The style of leadership between Mao and Deng was conceptually different, but not effectively different. Deng inaugurated the workings of informal politics, blurring the lines between administration and politics (Tsou, 2000), whilst Mao was more of an upfront dictator. However, Deng's inner political reform was neither grand nor a revolution by peaceful methods (Chang, 1988) but an attempt to improve the machinery with which the rules of the exact same system and same game of politics were played. China continued to be governed by a *Fuehrerprinzip*, albeit an informal one (Unger, 2002).

2.3   PROJECTED

It would be futile to talk about politics and remain within the conceptual legitimization and the functioning of the Party. Whereas these realms are indeed important and conform the first tide of reform, we have yet to analyze the grand picture: how political reform was effectively translated into changes (or not) for the Chinese society as a whole. Inevitably, politics concern power relationships, "who gets what, when and how" (Laswell, 1936, p.13). This section therefore analyzes the relationship between the political elite and society, bearing a focus on the society-side of the equation, and it does so along two separate lines.

The first is the organization of society, materializing in the form of policies, measures and even mottos. Imbued in this societal organization is an economic dimension to politics that has relevance with the "who gets what" (Laswell, 1936, p.13) and the realization that in China, economic and structural reforms are very intimately linked, being not only difficult to intellectually separate, but also essentially senseless (Wong, 2005). Thus, the first part of the projected politics will be economics-related (marketization), whereas the second part will address the questions of liberalization and

essentially, democratization. It is, of course, more than worthwhile to examine the interrelationship between all these aspects in the light of our hypothesis, as the differences we observe in the change-continuity paradigm unveil the motivations behind.

2.3.1. THE ECONOMIC

2.3.1.1. MAO'S 'NOT VERY' GREAT LEAP FORWARD

To be able to fully grasp the change pioneered by Deng in this first part of the projected level, we must briefly look back to Mao's societal organization through the economics (the politicization imbued in the economics), and what better way to do this than with the Chairman's most noticeable and microcosmic Great Leap Forward. Despite it being tremendously interesting to delve deeper into the effects and dynamics of the Leap, this could be an entire thesis on itself and it diverges from our purpose and area of study. Thus, the analysis will be limited to a purely utilitarian perspective, solely drawing on its relevant features in the light of our purpose and hypothesis: the politicization of society through the economic. For instance, crucial aspects such as the ensuing suffering, famine and death toll will not be touched upon. This does not mean that they did not occur, nor that they need not be paid attention, rather, that they are impossible to address in our present study. Notwithstanding, in order to effectively and accurately draw on what does concern our present study (and to avoid falling into the trap of overgeneralization) a prior extensive analysis of the phenomenon has been conducted[4].

Mao's Great Leap Forward of 1958 was an effort to rapidly industrialize the nation through the massive collectivization of agriculture. Economically, it was a shambles, socially, possibly "the most severe catastrophe of the twentieth century" (Chan, 2001, p. 4), with an estimated 45 million people dying. But most interesting for our analysis is the societal organization, which was radically altered to materialize Mao's view of the communist utopia (Tamames, 2007). This organization refers primarily to rural China (the majority of China), where the entirety of the population became integrated into

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[4] To fulfill the interest of curious readers, the references to several primary sources that provide a wholescale view of the campaign are hereby provided. Prior to the reference, the name of the person responsible for the account is signaled.
Liu Binyan: In Binyan, L. (1990). A Higher Kind of Loyalty. (pp. 137-8).
No name: In Becker, J. (1988). Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine. (pp. 135-6).
Yang Jisheng: In Jisheng, Y. (2013). Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962. (pp. 54).
Han Suyin: In Suyin, H. (1982). My House has Two Doors. (pp. 304-5, 308-10).
Mao Zedong: In Lawrance, A. (2004). China Since 1919: Revolution and Reform: A Source-book. (pp. 165-166).

'People's Communes'. In these communes, every asset was placed under governmental control, thereby eradicating the mere concept of private property (Jisheng, 2013). Not only were properties, in the form of houses, plots and even animals, handed over, but so was agricultural produce. This is to say, what the peasants produced was taken by state officials to be subsequently distributed however Mao accordingly considered. Members were treated along military lines, "with a three-tier regimentation system: commune, brigade, production team" (Chang, 2005, p. 426). The commune system, nevertheless, went even further. Every aspect of its members' lives was to be controlled by the commune, and when we say every aspect, it means *every* aspect; property, work, eating, elders and childcare. Essentially, the new family unit became the commune, with the "government's organizational structure replacing family, religion and all other forms of social organization" (Jisheng, 2013, p. 97). Jung Chang (2005) in fact goes as far as saying that "the communes were de facto camps for slave-laborers" (p. 426). We must acknowledge that Jung Chang is an outspoken critic of the CCP due to her suffering at the hands of the regime (as is the case of Liu Binyan), which could pose questions regarding the reliability of her strident claims. However, many more primary sources account for the same. These range from anonymous accounts ratified by secondary sources, to those of 'CCP converts' such as Yang Jisheng, and even convinced Maoists such as Han Suyin. They all convey one common theme: the Chinese society was heavily politicized. It was not only agriculture that was collectivized, but most importantly, so were the people, being stripped off their individualism, rights and interests. Thus, the economy was a means to an end, with the end being strict political control and totalitarian authority. This is precisely why it is so important to analyze the economic realm, because it does not only have politics imbued within it, but rather, under Mao, it is perpetrated politics. We have yet to see if this is also the case under Deng, and if so, if the ensuing political organization of society was different.

2.3.1.2.   DENG'S MARKETIZATION

It is widely acknowledged that Deng's top priority was the modernization of China (Zhang, 2010) which he inextricably linked to economic reform. The China inherited from Mao Zedong was not only brittle, but rather devastated at many different levels, especially in the socio-economic plane, as we have seen in the above section.

Consequently, Deng concluded that economic modernization was the only theme which could rebuild society and regain Party legitimacy. What becomes crucial is that, as we might expect by now, the economic and political realms are inseparable. Intertwined with this economic reform we find certain political developments that inevitably followed, because of course let us remember that in this first part of the projected analysis the focus is in the economic, thus we shall here continue to view the politics imbued therein. Deng's economic reforms did not only radically change societal organization and politicization, but in doing so, there was also a change in the relationship between society and political elites (Cabestan, 2004).

Among the array of economic reforms, Deng's first blow was in the agricultural sector. Directly setting to set back the wheel of time, he decollectivized The Chairman's much-beloved agrarian reform. By 1980 the communes had been dismantled and a responsibility system had been introduced (Wong, 2005). The system allowed peasants to manage their own land at the household level (Nathan, 2012) and to keep surplus produce. Additionally, they could now enjoy a previously unthought-of freedom to move (Wong, 2005). Vogel (2011) in fact ventures to claim that the open mobility under Deng had a "far more revolutionary influence on the structure of society" (p. 2109) than Mao's so-called revolution which resulted on stringent social barriers.

Moreover, what supplanted the collectivism of the Maoist era was far from having a rural, Leninist or even revolutionary focus, it was instead an entrepreneurial ethos under the label of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Baum, 1994). Socialism with Chinese characteristics was, albeit arguably, the utmost policy materialization of Deng's pragmatism. It was "a theory of incorporating capitalism into central planning" (Moak & Lee, 2015, p. 91). Deng was convinced that to achieve socialism (and he emphasized that 'poverty is not socialism' (Vogel, 2011)) China must embrace capitalism, but only with its usage being controlled by the state. This might initially seem contradictory, bearing in mind that Deng continuously extolled the superiority of the socialist system (Vogel, 2011), however, in the context of his acutely pragmatic thinking, it makes perfect sense, for let's remember that "it does not matter if the cat is black or white. So long as it catches mice it is a good cat" (Gucheng, 1995, p. 13).

In tandem with the capitalist-style entrepreneurial frenzy, Deng inaugurated an 'open door' economic policy that eagerly promoted foreign direct investment (Fenby, 2013) through the concept of 'special economic zones'. These zones were granted more

free market-oriented policies and lax government measures to entice foreign businesses. Following this new urban preeminence that run completely counter to Mao's legacy, the emergence of a bourgeoisie class was not only allowed, but rather incentivized; and Mao's eradication of "the four olds" was directly jeopardized. Deng instead promoted his "four modernizations", whereby modernization became envisioned along the areas of agriculture, industry, defense and science and technology. All in all, it seems fair to say that in the realms of the economic Deng Xiaoping bordered being a hero, undoubtedly pioneering unprecedented change. However, it is not the purely economic we are concerned with, but rather its overlapping with the political.

Cabestan (2004) rightfully claims that the profound economic transformation could not but change the relationship of political elites with society. This indeed is the case under Deng's marketization, where his economic ambitions led to the altering of "who gets what" and standards of living, which entailed political consequences for society. Deng reduced the degree of control of the authorities over the economy and warranted freedom to move. He thus enabled "greater freedom on economic matters" (Moise, 2008, p. 223). Inevitably, this led to greater individual freedom, the Chinese were no longer told what to do and how to live their life: political change, albeit limited to the personal level. Change was therefore subtle but revolutionary in comparison to Mao's "pitchforking the entire population" (Chang & Halliday, 2005, p. 426). However, let us not be overwhelmed by comparisons. The fact that societal organization was different and there was greater freedom in comparison to Mao does not mean that there was rampant freedom, or even freedom per se. Attention must be paid to the words – there was *greater* freedom *in comparison to* Mao, and this greater freedom was in relative terms, revolutionary. In absolute terms, nonetheless, Deng's mechanism still relied on stringent control. For instance, quite a visual example would be the residence permit regarding freedom to move, which still limited where people lived and, especially, controlled their movement. Thus, what we find is that yet again, the economic realm was perpetrated politics, but with a different principle. This time, under Deng, the economic realm was to provide breathing space for society, to enable some degree of change and modernization in order to maintain the legitimacy and hold of the Party. The motivations behind are certainly relevant, but this does not mean that we should therefore disregard the economic change unleashed by Deng and its political consequences. Instead, we should draw attention to the crucial interplay between the paradoxes of change and

continuity in the projected realm. As anticipated in the theoretical framework, to fully understand Deng's political plane, a dualistic approach that contemplates paradoxes is needed. By focusing on marketization in itself, we would fail to grasp the motivations behind, the delicate interplay. We cannot hope to understand Deng's movements in the economic without regarding the political, namely the questions of liberalization and democratization, as they are irrevocably interlinked. Deng thus seemed to be a true visionary, preceding Sen's (1999) categorization of freedoms. He granted one freedom: economic facilities, at the expense of other more important and flammable ones: political freedom and social opportunities.

2.3.2. THE POLITICAL

This is, perhaps, the part of analysis we have been most anxiously waiting for: the pure politics, where we find the relationship of the Party with society, the definition of the political system and the grand themes of liberalization and democratization. Whereas it is certainly true that Deng realized the success of economic reform required a further opening of the political process, Chang's (1988) bold claim that "Deng is a confrontationist willing to pay any political price in order to reform the system" (p. 23) is at least misguided. Rather, Deng was a monistic pragmatist. He had a clear goal, a single governing principle that acted as his primary determinant of behavior: for the CCP (with him as the core figure) to remain in power. He was then pragmatic regarding the means to achieve this, but of course, fundamental systemic change in the form of democratization or liberalization was incompatible with his ultimate objective. It is in this part of the projected where we find the maximum materialization of Deng's careful calculus, the crucial piece to understand the entirety of the puzzle that China's politics is. In contrast with all the other sections of analysis of the tripartite approach, this one leaves no room for true change, but rather bears only the illusion of it under the reality of a stark continuity. It is now, therefore, more important than ever to bear in mind the interlinks between the different levels of our paradoxical paradigm.

2.3.2.1.   DEMOCRATIZATION

Democratization: Liberalism's greatest treasure and possibly also that for the Chinese society, who continues its vain search. In a state where the sole "quasi-free" (Fenby, 2015) national elections were held in 1912 (and culminated in a tragedy) it seems inconceivable that one might prescribe to the notion of a democratic China. And yet, we find academics such as Gray (2008) who extol Deng as the "champion of the democratization of socialism" (p. 401). It therefore becomes unavoidable to plunge into the conceptualization of democracy to effectively evaluate the legitimacy of Chinese exceptionalism claims. We are dealing with one of the most central, complex and value-riddled concepts of International Relations. Thus, it should be done gingerly and refraining from any preconceived assumptions, for we can assure that sadly but surely, the great majority of us apply a subconscious Western lens in our definition of democracy.

There seems to be widespread consensus regarding the definition of democracy, which Elbadawi and Makdisi (2011) define as a political system "in which the members regard themselves as political equals, as collectively sovereign, and possess all capacities, resources and institutions they need in order to govern themselves" (p. 4). Notwithstanding, this definition all too-easily taken for granted that defines the essential elements requires for democracy, corresponds to a modern conceptualization of democracy. Democracy, at its very raw core, the term itself, means 'rule by the people'. Whereas it is not our purpose to draw on linguistic nuances or contest the basic democratic principles, it is important to strip the term to its very basics to understand the difference between the term itself and the Western values attached to it. Inherent to the modern (and Western) idea of democracy is liberalism. Being essentially distinct concepts, "democracy and liberalism have become inseparable" (Elbadawi & Makdisi, 2011, p. 14). However, does democracy have to be liberal in order to be democratic? We would be very 'undemocratic' ourselves if we were to make such an assertion.

As overviewed in the theoretical framework, we hereby focus on a specific and key contribution made by liberalism: the centricity of individual freedom. Consequently, despite seeming parallel, whether China can have democracy or whether this form of democracy is compatible with liberalism – in a communist state – are not the same matter. To subjectively and neutrally evaluate Chinese democratization, we must discern whether there's *rule by the people*, regardless of what then people decide and want through this rule. If the rule by the people results in them stating illiberal preferences (restraints on individual freedom for instance, but it's a decision made by the Chinese society) it would,

in effect, be democratic, although not our Western version of democracy. What we are dealing with here is immensely complex and has profound implications on the entire international arena, thus, an illustrative example can be very handy: Arab exceptionalism.

The notion of Arab exceptionalism, as one might expect, refers to the lack of democratic bliss in the Arab world. In making this claim, surely, most readers will be unsurprised, for Arab countries indeed seem devoid of democracy. To be accurate, we should rather say "devoid of democracy as we know it". It is a fact that many Arab countries have entered the parliamentary melee and have parties or presidents that come to power through popular elections: Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran and Palestine are just some examples. These examples bear procedural democracy, and, whilst we must not confuse procedural trappings for profound democratic changes, they do account for an important step in a long process. This essentially means that Arab countries might be ready for democracy, but one of a different type and nature: illiberal democracy. The obvious question of whether democracy can be illiberal then strikes into place. It seems to crash the very essence of democracy, but what if the popular majorities working through the democratic process, would rather reject gender equality, religious freedoms and other norms that Western democracies take for granted? (Hamid, 2015, p. 7) In this case, countries and leaders introducing democracy would be paying heed to popular sentiment. The Arab exceptionalism, then, might be most accurately seen not in that they do not have it, but in how they conceptualize it. The same may be true in the case of China.

The Arab example shines light on a crucial feature imbued in the concept of democracy, one that Wong's (2005) crisis and sequence puts forth as imperative in analysing the Chinese political landscape: participation. Participation is subsequently defined as the "involvement of ordinary people in the major governmental decision-making process" (Wong, 2005, p. 30). Indeed, it seemed that Deng tackled the participation crisis heads on, introducing direct and multicandidate elections for the Party's central committee as well as encouraging the resurfacing of the eight democratic parties formed in the 1940s by intellectuals (Goldman, 1994). Such rhetoric, however, did not translate into hard facts. Regarding the elections within the Party, there were pre-election approvals of candidates and total control over the nomination list (Wong, 2005), which essentially means that candidates disapproved of by the Party could not take seat (Teiwes, 2001). Moving onto the other parties, they could not participate in policy

making, being restricted to trivial advisory functions and with every single one of their activities placed under the CCP's supervision (Goldman, 1994). Whereas Deng's system most possibly had a greater process of interaction, consultation and networking compared to that of Mao, Vogel (2001) draws attention to a very interesting and relevant issue: the fact that authoritarian processes can be as complex and interactive as democratic systems. We can therefore decidedly assert that Deng did not further China's democratization (be it in the form of participation or not) leading to undeniable continuity in this part of the political realm. His faint 'democratic experiments' were illusions of democracy, limited to the lowest levels of the system and steering the attention away from where they posed a threat for Party stronghold. Their aim: rather than promote democracy, to avoid it. It is no coincidence that real examples of democratic procedures only occurred far from the domain of the Party's leadership. For instance, in 1978, the Theoretical Physics Institute of CAS oversaw democratic practices in its electing of director and deputy director (Goldman, 1994). It seems unlikely that the same democratic means became much more complex to implement within the Party, the key lies in the concept of threat, power and essentially politics. In the realm of science, technology and the economy, there was no reluctance to enable democratic means, for they did not pose a threat to the power of the CCP. Contrastingly, for organizations or mechanisms with political orientations and the capability to influence Party leadership, Deng and his comrades were "unwilling to tolerate not hav[ing] some control" (Goldman, 1994, p. 20).

Despite encountering a clear narrative of continuity regarding the question of China's democratization (or rather lack thereof) there is a clear nuance to be made. Whereas Mao had little to no time to waste with constructivism, Deng was a convinced pragmatist that relied on the appearance and illusion of change. Thus, his style in conducting and sailing through a democracy lack was completely different to that of Mao. Deng conducted an unfaltering search for game-like theory equilibrium between the change-continuity paradox, and this is certainly why we find instances that may seem to contradict our line of argument in appearing like fundamental change. Notwithstanding, in believing this change is fundamental, we would become victims of Deng's brilliant political maneuvering, for this is precisely the effect that Deng sought: to make people believe that change was happening, that democratization was happening.

There are two key, interrelated instances that we should revisit in order to fully grasp the scope of democratization, Deng's functioning and the underlying 'un-change'.

The first is the Democracy Wall movement of 1978-79 (possibly the instance that bore the greatest hopes for change under Deng Xiaoping), the second, the student-led pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen of 1989. On both occasions, *minzhu (*the Chinese word for democracy) was the centerpiece (Guang, 1996), however, Deng's response was seemingly different, which could even lead us to consider successive Deng's with different preferences developing over time[5] (Salisbury, 1993). Regardless, this is highly unlikely, for there were not two different Deng's, but rather one Deng with a deep pragmatism. In 1978, Deng enabled the Democracy Wall. In fact, Wong (2005) believes that Deng would have agreed with what the activists criticized about the CCP, which seems to paint a beautiful picture of Deng as a democratizer. Nonetheless, we need to place this in context. The political and social criticism unleashed in the Democracy Wall was directed towards Mao following the catharsis of the Cultural Revolution. Hence, when Deng enabled the Democracy Wall, it was owing to his personal political gain, being part of "a political ploy" (Goldman, 1994, p. 43) to rid the Party of his Maoist opponents. Democratic intentions were nowhere to be seen. In fact, Deng proceeded to dissolve the movement and jailed or exiled most of the dissenters (Jingsheng, 1999) when he considered that they had failed to conduct the movement "outside the official-sanctioned channels" (Wong, 2005, p. 56), that is, extending the criticism beyond a Mao-focus, and therefore posing a threat to the CCPs monopoly of power. The Tiananmen protesters, 10 years later, were not as lucky. This pro-democracy movement was met with martial law and a subsequent massacre. And yes, it was Deng Xiaoping, chief economic reformer, but above all dualistic pragmatic, with the PLA under his personal command, who gave the order to ruthlessly crush despite the opposition of the majority of the politburo (Ferguson, 1994). This seems certainly Mao-tinged. Essentially, under the façade of seeming democratization, what we have is a stark continuity with Mao's lack of democracy. Participation, like criticism, was allowed as long as the what, when and how was dictated and controlled by Deng. The extent to which we can consider this democratic change and freedom seems rather limited. As said, change is merely an illusion.

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[5] Salisbury (1993) argues for 'changing Deng interpretations', this meaning that he identifies crucial changes in his thinking and behavior to the extent that there appear to be different Deng's as time proceeds.

2.3.2.2. LIBERALIZATION

There is an undeniable link between the phenomena of democratization and liberalization, however, academics tend to place the focus of the projected political problem in democratization. Whereas this most certainly bears a problem-area, it is more accurate to view democratization as the manifestation of a greater underlying problem: one of liberalization. First and foremost, a clarification need be made. Liberalization is often assumed to be synonymous of *economic* liberalization. This will not be the case. We have already dealt with the relationship between the economic and the political in a previous section and the focus here is very different. Thus, liberalization, is taken in its crude form: the condition of being liberated, the condition of being free.

Wong (2005) conveys a better definition of the concept and problem-area related to liberalization, putting forth the junction between it and a penetration crisis. He therefore claims that both problems result from "the social psychological control over the Chinese society" (p. 30). Indeed, it is here that we find the epicenter of the matter. The 'un-democratization' of China negates people's right to participate in decision-making, to state what it is they want. The 'un-liberalization', however, extends their negation of freedom, attempting to rub them off their individualism and even wanting. Unsurprisingly, yet again we find Deng's strategy of equilibrium along the change-continuity paradigm, this time protruding into different levels. On the surface, Deng granted some degree of calculated economic liberalization (which again, is not synonymous for liberalization itself, but helps in creating the illusion that one is free, nonetheless) and combined it with the seeming backing of the law. The constitution included reconnaissance of different freedoms, for instance freedom of speech or freedom of demonstration (Goldman, 1994). Additionally, the Party openly recognized people's freedoms and rights. It seemed that Deng had developed the rule of law, that safeguarded the freedoms and rights of the Chinese. This would have, indeed, been a matter of praise, were it not simply untrue.

Despite the constitution stipulating freedoms, "these rights were infringed upon precisely because they were only principles" (Goldman, 1944, p. 31). Essentially, rights were bestowed by the state, a state that lacked any separation between executive,

legislative and judicial powers and that was unwilling to succumb to any legal restraints, as these would directly challenge its monopoly of power, a state whose only restraint was its self-imposed limits (Goldman, 1944). Hence, as these rights were bestowed by the state, they could also be snatched away by the state. Far from embracing the rule of law, Deng's China (like Mao's had done) "embraced the creed of legalism" (Fenby, 2015), where law was not a device for the protection of the Chinese society, but a device of power. This device did not have in mind the development of liberalization, but quite the contrary, as it sought to extend the extremely rigid social-psychological grip of the Party over the society. Just as Deng enabled participation along the lines of what, when and how however he established, he also recognized people's freedom and rights given that they were conducted along the accepted channels, that is, one had rights and freedoms within the delineated bounds of the CCPs orders, within the single life-style dictated by Deng (Goldman, 1994).

It is therefore unveiled that Deng's tampering with institutions and laws did not seek to achieve 'liberating' change, but rather to create this impression under the reality of a continuity that negated liberalization. Where we do find unique change, however, is in how Deng brilliantly creates this illusion. Fewsmith's (2013) notion of "self-sustaining innovation" (p. 15) comes particularly in handy here, by arguing that under Deng's leadership, the Party developed a distinct mechanism to resist pressures to innovate and maintain its power. Deng's political maneuvering in the realms of liberalization had to do with the blurring between the spheres of the public and private: "where the state stops and where society starts" (Shklar, 1989, p. 24). Here we can clearly appreciate the relevance of our multi-level approach, as this blurring is subtly conducted across all levels as the Party moves from an "exclusionary orientation" to a seemingly "inclusionary" one (Jowitt, 1992, p. 88-120). This is to say, under Mao, the Party blatantly imposed its structure and norms over the society, however, under Deng, despite doing the exact same thing, it includes society in certain elements and in a particular manner so as to create the illusion that they are much more included than they really are. Or in other words, Deng fed the notion that liberalization was occurring whilst he perpetrated the lack of freedom.

It might seem striking to claim that there was no change in political liberalization from Mao to Deng, yet this claim is widely supported by the evidence and leads scholars such as Kristof and Wudun (1994) to even assert (in the 1980s) that "the most distinctive feature of China today is the social control that it employs" (p. 49). There was no

liberalization to be seen in Deng's supposedly-liberalizing China. Rather, the system that was born out of Mao's banner of "liberating mankind", continued to enslave humanity (Jisheng, 2013). Although through more modern and indeed subtle methods, drawing on the delicate line of separation between Party and society, the state seemed to never stop and the society to never start.

2.3.2.3. THE SYSTEM

Let's go on, then finally, to a matter of great interest in the framework of International Relations: the overview and characteristics of the actual political system. This part of the analysis has been left for the very end due to its being progressively unveiled throughout our levels of analysis, which enables the reader to already have quite an accurate picture and therefore engage much more thoroughly in a wrapping-up analysis.

China's political system is, undoubtedly, of a unique nature that rests on the paradoxical dualism fruit of Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism. In other words, it combines an inclination for economic reform with a stark dose of political authoritarianism (Baum, 1994). This is, in itself, a unique characteristic, however, as we now know, there is a more profound dualistic paradox at interplay in Chinese politics: that between change and continuity. It should therefore come as no surprise by now, that the political system also played along in this balance, with there being the appearance of a system crucially diverging from Mao's dictatorship, but in reality, having sweeping elements of continuity. However, we must play heed to the added complexity in this matter. Evidently, when there is a change of leadership, whichever the state may be, there are elements of change and elements of continuity. It would be naïve to think that successive leaders maintain everything exactly the same or conversely, change absolutely everything. Thus, reaching paramount conclusions regarding whether a state oversees change or continuity is usually subjective, for the stance taken will largely depend on where our personal human eye places the bulk of importance. This is why, in the case of the Chinese political system, there is dissent amongst scholars, with some viewing Deng as a reformer that utterly changed China's political realm (but recognizing that Deng couldn't invoke miracles form one day to the next) and others acclaiming that the Chinese political system "remained fundamentally true to its central political chord" (Fenby, 2013,

p. 84). Having said this, we must make the attempt to establish acceptable bounds of analysis in order to advance our research. Thus, it appears both suitable and reasonable to focus on Mao's very overt political system, which leaves no room for interpretation, and draw parallels to the political system over which Deng presided.

There is certainly no doubt regarding the type of system under Mao's rule: A totalitarian one. Wong (2005, p.38) defines totalitarianism as:

> "A commitment to the total mobilization of a society's resources to accomplish the goals and programs decided by the totalitarian leadership or by the dictator himself… It and it alone determines what the correct party line is and decides who is anti-party or unMarxist. Absolute power and control over the population is its first concern"

Arendt delves in further to make two especially relevant contributions for our analysis of China. Firstly, that the notion of terror and reliance on coercion is the very essence of totalitarianism and secondly, that totalitarian regimes strive to obliterate the human capacity to act (Arendt, 1954).

Mao's system complies with every single one of the conditions above. Furthermore, it even complies with Arendt's distinction of "perfect totalitarianism, where all men have become 'One Man' and terror is suffice to sustain totalitarian rule" (Court, 2008). Deng's system, however, is not perfectly totalitarian, but rather disguised totalitarianism, skimmed totalitarianism or even "subtotalitarianism" (Redner, 2017, p. 16), but totalitarian nonetheless. Many academics, nonetheless, confuse the system under Deng for authoritarianism. [6] The differences are subtle but important. Under authoritarianism, people have a limited degree of political freedom (as would be the case with Deng) and under totalitarianism, control extends over all aspects of public and private life (as would be the case with Mao). Regardless, we ought to see if this truly the case. We have seen throughout the tripartite level analysis that Deng *seemingly* enabled greater freedom and change, but in reality, did so at the expense of a different more efficient protrusion of Party control and continuity. *Politically*, this change was not only minor, but for the most part irrelevant and an illusion. Thus, in terms of *political* freedom

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[6] Hereafter, when quoting academics that advocate authoritarianism under Deng, the aim is to draw on other observations they are making or the overall sense they convey, but we would rather substitute the concept of authoritarianism with one of totalitarianism.

(the term political is crucial in differentiating totalitarianism from authoritarianism), the system under Deng resembled totalitarianism, not authoritarianism. In claiming that Deng's system was authoritarian, we would be precisely falling into his carefully calculated pragmatism and system of equilibrium between change-continuity, for we would be letting the actual change (that related to the economic) cloud our separate political focus. Again, politically, we have seen throughout the thesis how Deng's system did not advance in the extension of freedom.

In case the above argument leaves room for skepticism, we shall endeavor to comment on another angle. Court (2008) brings forth a most crucial distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism based on the role of law. He argues that authoritarian regimes have limitations on their power owing to the rule of law. Conversely, totalitarian regimes imply a "nihilistic principle of 'lawfulness' that inhibits the stabilization of any law and institution" (Court, 2008). Hence, under totalitarianism, the leader is the only one unbound by his own legality. This fits in perfectly with what has been recently analyzed regarding Deng's rule of law, which could more accurately be termed, rule *by* law. In fact, the problem for China in this area is double: it is not a matter of the CCP not having laws or institutions, but rather, that they were conceived with the objective of asserting its own power (and not defending society's interests). In blurring the lines between the public and private and introducing laws, Deng indeed sought to camouflage his totalitarianism under the illusion of greater freedom.

Instead of greater freedom, the ensuing Dengsian system was one that, like Mao's, fits into the given conditions for totalitarianism underlined in the definitions above. "Deng never weaned the Chinese system from its reliance on repression" (Nathan, 2012). Whenever one-party control was threatened, he resorted to the use of force. In fact, Deng very significantly refused to relinquish command over the PLA, placing it under the jurisdiction of the central government (Baum, 1994). Despite him attempting to firstly resort to consensus and dialogue, he was by no means jubilant in using force when it was deemed necessary, take for instance the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989. Ultimately, as under Mao, coercive force persisted as the ultimate arbiter of power (Nathan, 2012) and Deng cloaked himself in a personality cult entirely of his own (Baum, 1994). Following the rationale of eluding an abyss of political disorder (and using Arendt's words) Deng limited the human capacity to act. That is, he maintained democratization and liberalization static, distancing the Chinese from political action and freedom. In fact,

through making the administration of the Party more effective and re-conceptualizing ideology[7], paradoxically, "he left the paramount leadership role, whose prerogatives he originally decried, stronger and more autonomous than it was when he found it" (Unger, 2015, p. 175). All in all, it seems safe to say that under the facet of a changing political system, we find "subtotalitarianism with Chinese characteristics" (Redner, 2017, p. 17).

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[7] Ideology is another important pillar of totalitarianism according to Arendt (1954).

3.   CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

The tale of Chinese political change, rather than a tale, appears to be a fascinating saga. This study set out to assess the all-too commonly taken for granted political change between the two most influential figures of Chinese politics: Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Essentially questioning if, as Tamames (2007) claims, these two leaders appeared to be the political Yin and Yang. In doing so, a unique, complex and personal approach was developed, one that attempts to acknowledge the complexities and depth imbued in Chinese politics; and that indeed believes in the existence of two opposing yet complementary fundamental forces in the form of Yin and Yang, although not on part of the leaders themselves. Rather than Mao and Deng being like the Yin and Yang, it is the question of change that appears to show interdependent dualism, or as we have termed it: paradoxical dualism. This idea is wholly inspired by Deng's pragmatism and political maneuvering; but its contribution goes further, challenging the fundamental assumption behind the change-continuity paradigm. Every single one of the academics regarding change in China (as the wider scope of academics regarding change in any other circumstance) view change and continuity as mutually exclusive, as opposites in a zero-sum game. This is to say, the existence of one entails the automatic retraction of the other. However, as we have seen, this is neither an accurate nor a holistic approach to events in China's political realm. Hence the proposed different approach, whereby the exclusionary narrative of change *or* continuity is rejected, in turn favoring a joint narrative where we find a game like theory equilibrium and interplay between change and continuity. Ultimately, in the transition from Mao to Deng, we find *both* change and continuity in and across different levels.

The approach presented does not only intend to shine light on the complex interplay at work in Chinese politics, but to also highlight the fundamental logic and functioning behind it. It seeks to be a truly holistic approach, consequently, it must have a truly holistic overview. This is where the simulation of Deng's possible level areas come into play. The interplay between change and continuity was all but arbitrary. Quite the contrary, it was the result of Dengsian careful calculations which stipulated different areas of action. Presumably, and after close observation, Deng would have viewed three different levels within Chinese politics, coherent with the three levels of analysis reflected herein: Conceptual, Internal and Projected. Each of these levels required elements of

change and elements of continuity at different degrees, with the degree being entirely determined by Deng's categorization of what was considered crucial or expendable and how the overall tripartite picture looked. Thus, what we encounter is a tripartite level approach resting on paradoxical dualism. However, we shall hereby distill our findings in order to cement the usefulness of the approach and concisely overview the conclusions drawn from it.

The conceptual level, as seen in the analysis, concerned the legitimacy and power base of the CCP, therefore dealing with the hugely important issue that ideology is for the Chinese state. At this level, Deng played with the paradox of change-continuity differently internally and externally. This is to say, externally, the Chinese people viewed rampant change, whereas internally, the Party, viewed 'un-change.' This was the start (and arguably the most important landmark) of Deng's career as a political boss that transcended his time and would mark the entire future of the Chinese nation. Deng was the ideologue responsible for making the contents and goals of socialism adaptable. According to our paradoxical dualism, what Deng essentially did at this conceptual level was to nurture an aura of ideological consistency (this would be the continuity) and at the same time incorporate the 'sub-ideology' of reform that sought to accommodate societal demands for change (this would of course be the change). In viewing the subsequent levels of analysis we encounter that this change was effectively so subtle, that it was merely an illusion.

In the internal, we again find an interplay between change and continuity. However, at this level, change was real and substantial, coming in the form of administrative reforms aimed at the system below Deng. This change was indeed imperative, but more imperative is the fact that it certainly did not affect him or his very personal Supreme leadership role and the CCPs monopoly over power. Change in the internal level was enabled and promoted precisely because it did not entail a threat to Deng's authority, power and position, but rather, had the ultimate objective of making his power system more efficient and controllable. Thus, this level of change in fact habilitated the continuity of the political system and its power play games.

Where we plunge into the political system itself and the purely political is amidst the projected level, where we find the greatest interplay between change and continuity. There was fundamental change along the lines of the political economy, which had the

effect of creating the illusion of rampant change and greater freedom, thus provided the opportunity for Deng to seamlessly clamp down on the purely political: the issues of democratization, liberalization and the political system. Ultimately, Deng seemed to be a true visionary preceding Sen's (1999) categorization of freedoms. He granted one freedom: economic facilities, at the expense of other more important and flammable ones: political freedom and social opportunities, which retained a stark continuity with Mao's era. Notwithstanding, there is a fundamental change to be acknowledged, one in the style between the two leaders. Under Mao, the Party blatantly imposed its structure and norms over society, however, under Deng, despite doing the exact same thing, it included society in a particular controlled manner and granted 'un-risky' economic change so as to create the illusion that there is change and freedom. Or in other words, Deng fed the notion that liberalization was occurring whilst he perpetrated the continuous lack of freedom.

This then brings us to the crucial questioning of the entire Chinese political process. If China persists to deny people's rights and the articulation of diverse interests (as we have seen it does), it could be argued that "China never developed a genuine political process" (Unger, 2015, p. 42). Whereas it is true that the very essence of politics entails the contending of clashing interests, this is our Western filtered essence of politics. As we have seen, politics, in its very raw core, is the exercise of power. Just as politics is subject to our interpretation of the concept, so is the notion of democracy, which is decidedly different from the Chinese concept of 'minzhu'[8] (Guang, 1996). These are all very intriguing ideas, however, we cannot delve into them in the present investigation, reason for which they are put forward as possible areas for further study.

Owing to both space and time constrictions, this study is not as all-encompassing as we would have wished and there are issues necessarily left out that can serve as future areas of study. It seems only logical that these future study proposals draw on the centric idea of change-continuity paradoxical dualism, extending this line of analysis both into the past and the future. The conclusions depict that, essentially, Deng held unparalleled control and authority at every level of politics, in the conceptual, internal and projected, single-handedly deciding what followed a continuity path and what diverged to a subtle change path. The decision was entirely his. This sounds as familiar as repetitive in

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[8] Minzhu is the closest Chinese translation of democracy, and that should not be taken as synonymous of democracy.

Chinese politics. In fact, it is indeed more familiar and repetitive that one may dare to think, dating much before Chairman Mao. Having analyzed the ample array of political continuity between the two leaders, this brings us onto what perhaps emerges as the most striking continuity and fruitful area for further study: that at in their conducting of politics, paramount leadership positions (Teiwes, 2001) and monopoly over power, they both resembled an Imperial China that they (theoretically) fervently rejected. Along these lines, notwithstanding, it seems that the fundamental difference lay in that "if Mao were an Emperor above the clouds, Deng was more like a commanding general" (Vogel, 2011, p. 687). Thus, although neither his style or means, let alone his dualistic pragmatism, were alike those of the Chairman, Deng was also fundamentally another Emperor in the never-ending cycle of Chinese dynasties. Not as red, not as radical and not as obvious, but essentially, the last Chinese Emperor of the 20th century. Furthermore, we hereby venture to claim that another interesting area for further analysis is that Deng may indeed not be the last camouflaged Chinese Emperor. With Xi Jinping being declared 'core leader', 'Xi Jinping Thought' being added to the constitution and him eradicating presidential term limits, it seems that yet again, we face the revival of the Chinese imperial system. Chang (1988) shines light on the fact that "all large nations with a long cultural heritage, such as India and China, do not change much in the short run" (p. 13). If this claim were true, the implications for China's political sphere would be immense. It would entail that relatively recent transformations are unable to significantly alter Chinese traditional culture, values and a civilization that "originates in an antiquity so remote that we vainly endeavor to discover its commencement (Kissinger, 2011, p. 17). This would therefore be the proposed area for further study: an analysis that, encompassing a wider time frame, investigates if China has (and can) indeed embark on substantial change within the context of its seemingly eternal historical perspective. In essence, we cannot but help question if, considering the deeply engraved historical constellations of the Chinese Empire (Noesselt, 2018), is China's fate, then, inevitably riddled with Imperialism? We apparently have only left to say that the saga of Chinese political change has yet to find its happy ending, for *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"* (Karr, 1862, p. 278).

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