

The Role of the Mishu (Staff) Institution in  
Chinese Politics

by

Wei Li

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Signature of Author. ....

Certified by.....  
Professor Lucian W. Pye  
Thesis Advisor

Accepted by.....  
Professor Donald L.M. Blackmer  
Chairman, Graduate Program Committee

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies the role of the mishu (staff) institution in contemporary Chinese politics. The findings of this research reveal that there are about one million mishu personnel in the Chinese political arena, who either serve individual leaders privately or work in general offices to provide staff support collectively to leadership squads at various levels. Significantly, the mishu institution constitutes a separate sub-system that runs vertically from top to bottom and cuts horizontally across various bureaucratic hierarchies across the country. Functioning as a type of "counter-bureaucracy," the mishu provides the political leadership with a countervailing base of expertise and an extra channel of information and authority flow, helping keep political leaders well informed and strengthen their capacity to closely monitor and supervise the process of policy implementation by regular bureaucracies. Moreover, the mishu also works as a major cushioning mechanism in Chinese politics, absorbing personality conflicts, reconciling policy disagreements, and softening power struggles among political principals.

For a deeper understanding of the mishu phenomenon, comparisons are made with its historical roots in ancient China and with the practice of the US staff system of today.

This research concludes that in spite of the apparent structural fragmentation associated with the post-Mao reforms, the controlling and cushioning roles of the mishu institution help to maintain, to a remarkable degree, the integration of the Chinese authority structure, thus providing a balance to the currently dominant view among China scholars that in the post-Mao era the Chinese political leadership has largely lost control over the bureaucracy and that the Chinese authority structure is on the verge of disintegration.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Lucian W. Pye

Title: Henry Ford Professor of Political Science  
(emeritus)



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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

Politicians everywhere experience difficulties of varying degrees in controlling state bureaucracies. Instances abound of their helplessness before the power and autonomy of a bureaucracy. For a rather extreme example:

In 1923 Rudolf Hilferding, the famous socialist economist and a left-wing Social Democrat, became the German Weimar Republic's sixth finance minister. His own civil servants were highly suspicious of him and decided that they would run the ministry without him. Nothing of any significance passed across his desk. Their action led directly to his nervous breakdown. After he returned to work the collaboration of his officials was only guaranteed once he had agreed not to make any radical policy initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

In the United States, President Nixon was once similarly frustrated over bureaucratic obstinacy. As H.R. Haldeman, his chief-of-staff, recalled,

... by 1971 Nixon had realized he was virtually powerless to deal with the bureaucracy in every department of the government. It was no contest. Nixon could rave and rant. Civil servants, almost all liberal Democrats, would thumb their noses at him.<sup>2</sup>

Even in China where political leaders may appear to be able to exercise absolute power over the bureaucracy, the

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1. Edward C. Page, Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power: A Comparative Analysis, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985, p. 1.

2. Larry Berman, The New American Presidency, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987, p. 108.

existing literature contains plenty of evidence to suggest that the Chinese bureaucracies are quite capable of thwarting the control from above. Indeed, even Mao Zedong himself frequently complained about unreliability of the Party bureaucracy, whose heads, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, treated him like a "dead parent" "whose funeral was taking place," meaning that although he was shown formal deference, Mao "was never even consulted" on many important decisions.<sup>3</sup> (Mao's frustration over being isolated and kept in the dark by the bureaucracy will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.)

Deng Xiaoping harbors comparable bitterness over the various obstacles and sabotages presented by the Chinese bureaucracy to his reform efforts, as is reflected in his statement below:

Bureaucracy remains a major widespread problem in the political life of our Party and state. Its harmful manifestations include the following: standing high above the masses; abusing power; divorcing oneself from reality and the masses; spending a lot of time and effort to put up an impressive front; indulging in empty talk; sticking to a rigid way of thinking; being hidebound by convention; overstaffing administrative organs; being dilatory; inefficient and irresponsible; failing to keep one's word; circulating documents endlessly without solving problems; shifting responsibilities to others; and even assuming the airs of a mandarin, reprimanding other people at every turn, vindictively attacking others, suppressing democracy, deceiving superiors and subordinates, being arbitrary and despotic, practicing favoritism, offering bribes, participating in corrupt practices in violation of the law, and so on. Such things have reached intolerable dimensions

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<sup>3</sup>. Lucian W. Pye, Mao Tse-tung: The Man in the Leader, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1976, p. 57.

both in our domestic affairs and in our contacts with other countries.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, the above familiar image of bureaucratic obstinacy should not lead to the conclusion that political leaders are helpless and powerless. As a matter of fact, politicians have at their disposal a variety of mechanisms to strengthen their control over bureaucracies, such as budgetary controls, congressional hearings, and political appointments in the Western case, and political campaigns, massive purges, ideological indoctrination, etc., in the case of China under Mao.

This dissertation examines in detail another control mechanism -- personal staffs. It is commonplace for political leaders everywhere to use their personal staffs to help amplify their power over state bureaucracies. Chinese political principals are no exception, though the staff role in this regard has so far been generally neglected in the existing studies of Chinese politics, resulting in exaggeration of political leadership's loss of power over bureaucracies in the post-Mao era. As the findings of this research will demonstrate, Chinese political leaders depend heavily upon the assistance of staff personnel in their service, who play a highly significant role in helping political leadership at various levels to control

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4. "Speech to the Enlarged Meeting of the Political Bureau," in Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1984, p. 310.

bureaucracies and thus sustain the integrity of China's authority structure.

The Chinese staff system is the focus of this research, and the basic research issues that this dissertation addresses are as follows.

- What are the structures, functions, and dynamics of the Chinese staff institution in the leadership-bureaucracy interaction?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Chinese staff institution of today and those in the Western political systems and in ancient China?
- What is the impact of the staff role on the power allocation between leadership and bureaucracy and on the integrity of the authority structure in the Chinese political arena?

#### The Characteristics of Bureaucracy: Literature Review

In order to understand the inherent tension and unavoidable struggle between political leadership and the bureaucracy, it is necessary to appreciate the distinctive characteristics of the bureaucratic form of organization, both in concept and in practice, which tend to give it great actual power and autonomy.

According to the ideal type as first explicated by Max Weber, bureaucracy is characterized by hierarchy, impersonality, standardization, and specialization, which in turn are based on a comprehensive body of written rules,

regulations, and laws. The hierarchical structure is intended to guarantee the unity of command, namely, each official reports to one and only one superior, thus avoiding any confusion in the chain of command. But "hierarchical subordination ... does not mean that the 'higher' authority is simply authorized to take over the business of the 'lower.' Indeed, the opposite is the rule."<sup>5</sup> That is because the scope of competence for each bureaucrat is clearly defined and strictly delimited by rules and laws. Impersonality means, above all, that loyalty should go to the office rather than any individual leader,<sup>6</sup> and that duties should be performed without regard to particularistic considerations but according to universalistic, impartial rules, in order to minimize corruptive conduct like nepotism and favoritism.<sup>7</sup> Impersonality also means that personal sentiments and passions should be excluded from the process of decision making and implementation, so as to maximize predictability and stability of the bureaucratic operation.<sup>8</sup> Standardization requires that recurrent and common issues should be handled consistently and uniformly, without varying

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5. Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 197.

6. Ibid. p. 199.

7. Anthony Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967, pp. 59-60, 65-66.

8. Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," pp. 215-216.

from case to case. This also serves to enhance predictability and continuity. Specialization, or a high degree of division of labor, is meant to facilitate the accumulation of special expertise and perfection of necessary skills, so as to improve efficiency.<sup>9</sup>

In a nutshell, a bureaucrat is expected to use his head instead of his heart, to be instrumentally rational rather than morally or socially emotional, to follow rules instead of using excessive discretion, and to be loyal to the office instead of individual leaders. Put in another way, bureaucracy should function like a machine. Max Weber observed, "that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization ... is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability."<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, bureaucracies have revealed many serious weaknesses in practice. Some of the most widely acknowledged bureaucratic pathologies are as follows.

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<sup>9</sup>. Efficiency generally means maximum output with minimum input, e.g., time, money, manpower, or raw materials.

<sup>10</sup>. Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, edited and with an introduction by Talcott Parsons, New York: The Free Press, 1965, p. 337.

- Bureaucracy tends to be rigid, conservative, inert, and inept at adapting to fast changes.<sup>11</sup>
- Bureaucracy suppresses creativity of subordinates and stunts personal growth of individuals.<sup>12</sup>
- Bureaucracy is poor and inefficient at handling uncertain, ambiguous situations and tasks, even though it may be effective and efficient at pursuing clearly defined goals and well understood tasks.
- Bureaucracy tends to give priority to administrative efficiency over democratic participation, being aloof and irresponsible toward individual citizens.
- Bureaucracy tends to grow excessively regardless of real needs, hence "Parkinson's Law."<sup>13</sup>

For the purpose of this thesis, however, the above bureaucratic ailments are not the focus of research. Rather, the primary concern is with the various problems that bureaucracies present for political control. From politicians' point of view, the responsiveness of bureaucrats to their political considerations and personal wishes is the

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11. Peter M. Blau and Marshall W. Meyer, Bureaucracy in Modern Society, 3rd ed., New York: Random House, 1987, 139-140.

12. Warren G. Bennis, Changing Organizations: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966, p. 6.

13. C. Northcote Parkinson, Parkinson's Law, and Other Studies in Administration, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957.

most critical issue, and is nearly always short of satisfactory.

The universal politician-bureaucrat conflict is inevitable because politicians and bureaucrats have divergent perspectives and interests due to several reasons.<sup>14</sup> Politicians and bureaucrats have different career paths: the former come and go in fast succession but the latter stay much longer. This causes politicians and bureaucrats to have different time horizons. Politicians want quick results to win votes or to achieve their ideological ideals, while bureaucrats tend to care more about standard operating procedures (SOP) and long-term planning.<sup>15</sup> Politicians tend to have a broader vision and a more comprehensive, diffuse view, whereas bureaucrats like to focus on a narrow, well-defined vista, due to specialization.<sup>16</sup> Specialization

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14. It is admitted that the following characterization is conducted on a highly abstract level with a view to capturing the core features at the risk of oversimplification.

15. Douglas Yates, Bureaucratic Democracy: The Search for Democracy and Efficiency in American Government, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982, pp. 77-78.

In addition, bureaucrats usually enjoy de facto life employment under the protection of various civil service regulations and laws, which leave their job security virtually immune to political interferences. As an American bureaucrat smugly observes, "We're all like headless nails down here -- once you get us in, you can't get us out." (Charles Peters, How Washington Really Works, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1980, p. 46.) This often works to embolden bureaucrats to turn deaf ears to the policy preferences of their transient political superiors.

16. Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, p. 103.

inclines a bureaucracy to have a sense of a distinct professional identity, speaking its own language and forming its separate ethos or culture, which is difficult for politicians as outsiders to penetrate.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, politicians are typically generalists, often amateurs, but bureaucrats are specialists. This fact makes it difficult for politicians to be fully informed of bureaucrats' actual operations and thus for the politicians to make competent decisions to exercise effective control. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the bureaucracy's natural tendency to conceal its professional knowledge and secrets from outsiders.<sup>18</sup>

Last but not least, bureaucrats have their private interests. Out of his self-serving instincts, a bureaucrat "tends to distort the information he passes upward to his superiors in the hierarchy," and bureaucrats all have a tendency "to exaggerate data that reflect favorably on themselves and to minimize those that reveal their own shortcomings."<sup>19</sup> And when implementing policies laid down by his superior, a bureaucrat are often found to act aggressively in favor of those policies that advance his own interests and ignores or drags his feet on those that injure

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17. Yates, Bureaucratic Democracy, p. 89.

18. Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," p. 233.

19. Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, p. 77.

or simply fail to advance those interests.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is far from uncommon for bureaucrats to use any discretionary power at their disposal to exchange favors and look after their private needs.

As a result, politicians often find their supposedly subordinate bureaucracies practically beyond their control. Max Weber once pessimistically asked, "In view of the growing indispensability of the state bureaucracy and its corresponding increase in power, how can there be any guarantee that any powers will remain which can check and effectively control the tremendous influences of this stratum?"<sup>21</sup>

In the West, politicians have to apply a variety of measures in order to exercise some control over the bureaucracy. They retain the power to pass laws and make regulations governing bureaucratic performance. They resort to congressional oversight by periodically holding hearings, where outside specialists and experts are brought in to counterbalance the expertise of the bureaucracy. They put themselves in charge of the purse strings, exercising budgetary control over the bureaucracy. And they appoint people they trust to key posts in the bureaucracy, counting

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20. Ibid.

21. Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds., Vol. I, New York: 1968, app. 2, p. 1403.

on these political appointees to make the bureaucracy heed their desired policy orientation.

The above control measures, however, all have an inescapable weakness, in that they can be applied only intermittently. Thus, they often prove just enough to enable politicians to exercise "loose control" in order to "preclude 'bull in a china shop' behavior by bureaucracies," according to Yates.<sup>22</sup> In other words, they work more as "fire alarms" to prevent disasters or flagrant misconduct that enrages politicians' constituencies than as "police patrols" to exercise constant and close supervision, to borrow the metaphor from McCubbins and Schwartz.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, with all those control mechanisms in place but without adequate

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22. Yates, Bureaucratic Democracy, p. 162.

23. Mathew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms," American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 28, No. 1 (February 1984), pp. 165-179.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that from the perspective of the principal-agent theory, the "fire alarm" approach may be more cost-efficient and so more desirable than the "police patrol" approach. According to this theory, because of "information asymmetries," some loss of control is inevitable once the principal has delegated authority to the agent, who possesses special expertise or superior information regarding the task at issue. As a result, the primary attention on the part of the principal should be focused on designing an effective incentive structure, as "a second-best solution," to induce satisfactory outputs, rather than on chasing the impossible (or too costly) goal of closely monitoring the whole process. See John W. Pratt and Richard J. Zechhauser, "Principals and Agents: An Overview," in John W. Pratt and Richard J. Zechhauser, eds., Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1985, pp. 2-5.

personal staff assistance, politicians can still find themselves no match for the power of the bureaucracy.<sup>24</sup>

### The Control Function of Staffs

The preceding literature review provides ample testimony to the difficulty that political leaders encounter in their efforts to control the state bureaucracy. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that there exists an important and often effective measure for politicians to achieve constant control over a bureaucracy, namely, a large and competent personal staff, which can operate as a de facto "counter-bureaucracy."<sup>25</sup> Overlapping extensively with the functions of the regular bureaucracy, such a counter-bureaucracy is capable of continuously providing the politician with a countervailing base of expertise, an independent source of information, and an extra channel of authority flow. Since staff people are typically hired (or selected) and fired (or dismissed) at the pleasure of the leaders themselves and they

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24. This fact is well reflected in the general agreement concerning the ineffectiveness of legislative oversight in American politics: "Most [scholars] conclude that legislative oversight has been sporadic, atomized, erratic, trivial, ineffective, or some combination of these." (Morris S. Ogul, Congress Oversees the Bureaucracy: Studies in Legislative Supervision, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976, p. 193)

25. For that matter, the White House staff is often referred to as a "counter-bureaucracy" in American politics. It is noteworthy that the importance and saliency of staff role varies from country to country. The United States and China are among the countries where staffs play a crucial part in bureaucratic control, whereas in other countries like Japan where bureaucratic tradition is strong, the staff role in this regard is relatively limited.

work directly for their leaders, staff members can be counted upon to be personally loyal, responsive, and reliable to a much greater extent than regular bureaucrats. This control function of a staff is analyzed by Anthony Downs, who writes:

The control advantages of a staff result from its quasi-redundancy relative to the line.<sup>26</sup> An official served by a large staff really has two line organizations working for him: the line hierarchy and the staff hierarchy....Because the staff organization parallels the line but works through technically specialized vertical channels, the top-level official can use each organization as a means of by-passing and checking up on the other. The staff thus increases his control over the line because it acts as an external monitor and its functions partly overlap those of the line.<sup>27</sup>

In actual practice, having adequate staff assistance or not may mean the difference between being a true master or a mere figurehead. The correlation between power and the amount of personal staff assistance is illustrated by a comparison between Japanese and Italian politicians. Without adequate

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26. Here, the "line" refers to the leaders of a subordinate bureaucracy. Western organization theory contains a line-staff dichotomy. The concept of "staff" in this dichotomy refers basically to the same personnel as the concept being used in this research, namely, those who work directly for leaders and who are theoretically entitled only to provide advice and assistance upward to the leadership but not to issue orders and commands downward directly to subordinate departments in their own right. The "line" refers to the leadership personnel, who bear operational responsibility for a bureaucracy and have formal authority to make decisions and issue orders directly to the subordinates.

It should be pointed out that the line-staff dichotomy and the leadership-staff-bureaucracy triangle nexus do not correspond exactly, in that the concept of "bureaucracy" in the latter denotes both the line and the staff of a subordinate organization.

27. Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, p. 154.

staff assistance, Japanese political leaders find themselves heavily dependent upon the bureaucracy. Ezra Vogel explains:

Even the prime minister's office has only a limited research capacity,...Lacking the staff to make independent analysis, the prime minister's office must ally with the ministries rather than work around them....Indeed, the prime minister is not expected to formulate policy statements of his own. Rather, he works closely with the bureaucracy and enunciates what various ministries advise him to.<sup>28</sup>

In sharp contrast, supported by large, competent staffs, Italian politicians enjoy enough independence to be able to reduce career bureaucrats virtually to a state of irrelevance in the process of policy formation. Italian ministers, or political appointees, recruit their personal staffers from outside -- mostly from among university professors and experts in public corporations -- and they bring their large entourages of personal assistants with them "from ministry to ministry."<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Italian politicians can afford even to cut their contact with the career bureaucrats down to the minimum necessity for discharging their work. In one somewhat extreme case, "a director general of the Ministry of the Treasury confessed that for years he had not been able to see the minister on whom he depended."<sup>30</sup> Italian politicians are able to rely exclusively on their staffs for "drawing up of bills to submit to the approval of Parliament"<sup>31</sup> and thus

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28. Vogel, Ezra F., Japan as Number One: Lessons for America, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 61.

29. Sabino Cassese, "The Higher Civil Service in Italy," in Ezra N. Suleiman, ed., Bureaucrats and Policy Making: A Comparative Overview, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1984, p.44.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

they can monopolize policy initiatives over the bureaucracy.<sup>32</sup>

The correlation between substantial staff support and power of control may also be demonstrated by a single country at different historical times, as in the case of American politics. During the first decades of the United States' history when "(t)he Congress refused to make even the minimal appropriation to provide secretarial assistance [to the Presidency]," many of the incumbents of this apparently exalted office came to the conclusion that their job was actually "a situation of dignified slavery" or "a glorified clerkship."<sup>33</sup> Their responsibility was full of ceremonial trivia but had little real power, while power resided largely with department secretaries and the Congress.<sup>34</sup> Later, only

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32. Quansheng Zhao has also noticed the correlation between staff support and power in comparing the Japanese Diet and the U.S. Congress. Zhao writes: "The [Japanese] government provides only two or three congressional aides for Diet members, so that Diet members have to rely heavily on ... bureaucracy in drafting legislation. In contrast, members of the U.S. Congress have enough funds from the government to hire both administrative and legislative aides. The average number of aides a senator has, for example, is about twenty-five or more, and it may reach seventy-five. Many legislative aides have higher academic degrees, often Ph.D.s, in their fields and write drafts for legislation without outside help.... Instead of relying on the bureaucracy as Japanese politicians do, American politicians rely on congressional staff." Japanese Policymaking: Informal Mechanisms and the Making of China Policy, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993, pp. 200-201.

33. Michael Medved, The Shadow Presidents: The Secret History of the Chief Executives and Their Top Aides, New York: Times Books, 1979, pp. 11-12.

34. George C. Edwards III and Stephen J. Wayne, Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, p. 8.

with a greatly enlarged and strengthened White House staff did the balance of power begin to tip in favor of the Presidency. A large staff directly at the disposal of the President provided him with three advantages: "First, it gave the president more discretion and allowed him to take more personal credit for policy developed by his administration. Second, it gave the presidency a capacity to formulate policy distinct from and independent of the departments and agencies. Third, it accelerated the shift of power from the departments and agencies to the White House."<sup>35</sup>

It is well known to historians that Chinese emperors relied heavily on their personal staffs, called "inner court," to help control the state bureaucracy. The entire Chinese dynastic history was featured by recurrent power struggles "between the so-called inner court (neiting), the emperor's faction, and the outer court (waichao), the bureaucracy's faction."<sup>36</sup> Although at times "strong bureaucrats might isolate the emperors and administer the realm independently,"<sup>37</sup> many emperors were able to assert their will "to rule as well as to reign" and to exercise

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35. Ibid. p. 183.

36. Beatrice S. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723-1820, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 4.

37. Ibid. p. 4.

effective control over the bureaucracy with the help of "a strengthened inner court."<sup>38</sup> For example,

Thus strengthened within his inner court, Yongzheng [emperor] was able to reach out for power over matters previously not directly susceptible to his will. As many areas of government as possible were to be drawn into the inner court, where the monarch and his close assisting ministers, rather than the outer-court bureaucrats, would hold sway."<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, at the regional levels, centrally-appointed scholar-officials let their entourages of personal aides, called mufu (tent government), play a very large role in helping control their local subordinates, called "clerks" (li), who tended to amass tremendous actual power and become hard to control due to their deep-rooted connections with local populace and their familiarity with technical matters of government such as legal procedures, taxation, and bookkeeping.<sup>40</sup>

As is evident from the above examples, sufficient staff support is crucial for attempting effective control over the bureaucracy, hence the pithy saying: "Staffing is power."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, any assessment of the power allocation between

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38. Ibid. p. 24.

39. Ibid. p. 17.

40. The best study of the mufu system in English literature is probably Kenneth E. Folsom's book, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues: The Mu-Fu System in the Late Ch'ing Period, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

41. Harrison W. Fox, Jr. and Susan Webb Hammond, Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in American Lawmaking, New York: The Free Press, 1977, p. 1.

leadership and bureaucracy cannot be accurate without bringing the staff role into the calculus equation.

### The Chinese Case

Nevertheless, the role of personal staffs has so far been generally neglected by students of contemporary Chinese politics, whose attention has been attracted either to the few larger-than-life individual elites, like Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and Chen Yun, or to the gigantic, all-encompassing bureaucratic structure.<sup>42</sup> The existing literature contains a plethora of biographies and monographs about those top leaders and a large number of articles and books about Chinese bureaucracies. In sharp contrast, however, extended treatments of Chinese staffs are virtually nonexistent.<sup>43</sup> As a result, the widely held

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42. In this research, the concept of Chinese bureaucracy refers to both functional and regional organs. The former refer to functional ministries, agencies, and departments; the latter, regional governments and Party committees at levels of provinces, prefectures, municipalities, counties, etc.

43. In fairness, scholars are not unaware of the potential importance of leaders' staffs. For instance, Michel Oksenberg observes that "Secretaries, playing major information and communication roles, are crucial figures in the Chinese system." ["Methods of Communication within the Chinese Bureaucracy," China Quarterly, No. 57 (January-March 1974), p. 19.] Oksenberg and his co-author, Kenneth Lieberthal notice that various staff offices play crucial roles in linking the top leadership with the far-flung bureaucracy but they also admit that these roles are "as yet not well understood." (Policy Making in China, p. 42) And A. Doak Barnett provided very accurate description of many of the routine functions of a staff office in his Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

assumption, implicit or explicit, about the Chinese political system is that there are only a very small number of all-powerful but "understaffed"<sup>44</sup> leaders presiding over a far-flung, mammoth bureaucracy, thus leading to all kinds of control problems.<sup>45</sup>

Without bringing the staff role into the calculus equation, the dominant view about the Chinese leadership-bureaucracy nexus is that it has undergone, since the founding of the Communist regime, a process of transformation

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Insufficient research on the staff role in Chinese politics results primarily from unavailability of the relevant information. As Oksenberg explained back in 1971, "Documents obtained during the Cultural Revolution reveal two other important aspects of Mao's closest policy making associates. As the active heads of large bureaucracies, they had their own personal staffs of advisors, secretaries, and so on. How Politburo officials organized and used their staffs, how the staffs attempted to influence the men they served, and what the personal relations were among and within the staffs of the top leaders, are major questions for an understanding of Chinese politics, but the available information does not allow them to be answered." ("Policy Making under Mao, 1949-68: An Overview," in John M.H. Lindbeck, ed., China: Management of a Revolutionary Society, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971, p. 95.)

44. Oksenberg observes, at the conference on "The Structure of Authority and Bureaucratic Behavior in China," Tucson, Arizona, June 19-23, 1988, that "the top leadership in China is relatively understaffed." See Nina P. Halpern, "Information Flows and Policy Coordination in the Chinese Bureaucracy," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds. Bureaucracy, p. 131.

45. China's enormous Party and state bureaucracies number around thirty million bureaucrats, according to the PRC official statistics. See Yan Huai, Zhongguo dalu zhengzhi tizhi qiantan (Understanding the Political System of Contemporary China), Somerset, NJ: Papers of the Center for Modern China, 1991, p. 23. The author used to be director of the Research Institute of Organization and Personnel of the CCPCC Organization Department.

from the "totalitarianism"<sup>46</sup> of the Mao era to the current state of "fragmented authoritarianism,"<sup>47</sup> with political leadership becoming ever weaker and the bureaucracy ever more powerful. The two contrasting models, "totalitarianism" and "fragmented authoritarianism," are also called "command model" and "bargaining model" -- "the 'command model,' emphasizing the existence of a relatively unified and effective chain of command reaching from the top leadership down to the ministries and local units, and the 'bargaining model,' emphasizing the fragmentation of authority and the exchange nature of interactions between superiors and subordinate units."<sup>48</sup>

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46. "Totalitarianism" used in this research differs from its conventional sense. The term conventionally refers to state's total control over society, but it here means political leadership's total control over the bureaucracy. This "totalitarian" view is well reflected by Roderick MacFarquhar in his two volumes of Origins of the Cultural Revolution, New York: Columbia University Press, 1974 and 1983. It is also more or less reflected by Harry Harding in his Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976, California: Stanford University Press, 1981.

47. The "fragmented authoritarianism" model is suggested primarily by Lieberthal, Oksenberg, and Lampton, and it is explicated in these two books: Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988; and Kenneth G. Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, eds. Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

48. Nina P. Halpern, "Information Flows and Policy Coordination in the Chinese Bureaucracy," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds. ibid. p, 126.

Scholars seem to agree that the "totalitarianism" or "command" model fits the leadership-bureaucracy relationship for the first fifteen years or so of the Chinese Communist regime under Mao, the charismatic and all-powerful paramount leader. At this stage, generally speaking, power was highly concentrated in the hands of the leadership, so that "the top political leaders have sufficient power to elicit compliance from lower levels on almost any issues at any time."<sup>49</sup> In spite of Mao's repeated complaints, which might reflect his excessively exacting expectations, Chinese leaders' control over the bureaucracy was absolute by ordinary standards, to the extent that "the problem of excessive control seemed far greater than that of inadequate discipline."<sup>50</sup>

Nonetheless, even during this "totalitarian" stage, some scholars suggest, political leadership already began to show signs of losing ground to the bureaucracy. It is true that Chinese political leadership was capable of bringing to bear intensified and overwhelming coercive power, which no bureaucrats could possibly resist. Political leaders launched mass movements, rectification campaigns, massive purges, ideological broadsides, and other draconian measures, to pummel the bureaucracy into submission. But, for lack of "infrastructural power," some scholars suggest, such flexing

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49. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, p. 135.

50. Harding, Organizing China, p. 350.

of "despotic power" could not be sustained.<sup>51</sup> As a result, the bureaucracy could always wait and find a new opportunity to reassert its interests and actual power, if only in a subtle, disguised manner. Therefore, it is suggested that Chinese leadership's domination over the bureaucracy was better characterized, not by "totalitarianism," but by "sporadic totalitarianism." This perspective can be found in Yia-ling Liu's interpretation about the recurrent political games between the higher authorities and the local cadres in the development of private economy at Wen Zhou.

No one [of the local cadres] seemed able to resist the radical policy imposed by the work team [which represented the will of the higher authorities]. However, each time, after the campaign subsided and the work team left, the old practice of private business gradually crept in again. Sooner or later, this privatization process became strong enough to provoke another attack from the state. This cyclical process shows that the strong despotic power of the state exercised during a political campaign can indeed suppress social resistance to imposed radical socio-economic changes. But the state's weak organizational capacity prevents it from resisting compromise after the campaigns.<sup>52</sup>

It is also suggested that the Chinese leadership's felt necessity to assert overwhelming power sporadically and selectively arises from, or is intended to compensate for, its lack of organizational capacity to process the upward

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51. Yia-ling Liu, "Reform From Below: The Private Economy and Local Politics in the Rural Industrialization of Wen Zhou," China Quarterly, No. 130 (June 1992), p. 315.

52. Ibid. p. 316. A very similar view can be found in Vivienne Shue's book The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988, pp. 67-68.

information flow from the bureaucracy on a continuous basis and in an effective manner. As David Lampton puts it, the Chinese political system is characterized by "the very limited capacity of central authorities to oversee how policy is being implemented or to assess the full range of its effects in a timely manner." That is because "the Center has limited capacity to verify lower-level reports independently."<sup>53</sup> By imposing a conformity mentality through intermittent application of coercion, Chinese leaders hoped to achieve "greater fidelity [of the bureaucracy] to the goals of the leaders even in the absence of informational and other resources adequate to assure the desired level of compliance."<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, it is argued that the apparently totalitarian control by the leadership is also eroded by other two factors: the cellular or "honeycomb" structure and patron-client ties. Chinese regional bureaucracies are, according to some scholars, highly self-sufficient and have a natural tendency to become "independent kingdoms" (duli wangguo).<sup>54</sup> As a result, the central leadership's control over them is

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53. Kenneth G. Lieberthal, "Introduction: The 'Fragmented Authoritarianism' Model and Its Limitations," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds. Bureaucracy, p. 6.

54. David M. Lampton, "The Implementation Problem in Post-Mao China," in D. M. Lampton, ed., Policy Implementation In Post-Mao China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 19.

quite limited and can be in fact more token than real.<sup>55</sup> As Lieberthal and Oksenberg state:

According to this 'cellular' perspective, there is a great concentration of power in the hands of provincial level officials and leaders of lower level units (danwei). China is thus a cellular economy and polity, with the territorial components of the system surprisingly self-sufficient and capable of thwarting and subverting Beijing demands. Far from being an efficient system controlled from the top, then, this view considers the Chinese chain of command inefficient, largely ineffective, and -- to the extent it works -- laboriously slow.<sup>56</sup>

Scholars have also noticed that the Chinese leadership-bureaucracy relationship is riddled with the holes of personalistic, particularistic, and factional ties. Therefore, instead of being able to effectively exercise policy initiative on an aggregate level, Chinese leadership tends to be bogged down in the quagmire of dyadic, patron-client relationship of exchanges with individual bureaucrats at lower levels.<sup>57</sup>

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55. The most representative of this view is Audrey Donnithorne's article, "China's Cellular Economy: Some Economic Trends since the Cultural Revolution," China Quarterly, No. 52 (October-December 1972), pp. 605-619. It is also reflected in the following works: Andrew G. Walder, Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986; Vivienne Shue, The Reach of the State; and Victor Nee, "Between Center and Locality: State Militia, and Village," in Victor Nee and David Mazingo, eds., State and Society in Contemporary China, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, pp. 223-243.

56. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, pp. 135-136.

57. This view is reflected by the following authors: Jean Oi, "Communism and Clientelism: Rural Politics in China," World Politics, Vol. 37, No. 2 (January 1985), pp. 238-266; and Victor Nee, "Peasant Entrepreneurship and the

With Mao passing from the political scene, Chinese leaders seem to have lost dominance over the bureaucracy faster and more visibly: "The fragmentation ... grew increasingly pronounced under the reforms beginning in the late 1970s,..."<sup>58</sup> The current state of the leadership-bureaucracy relationship is captured by the "fragmented authoritarianism" model. According to this model, the leadership has been paralyzed by the fragmentation of the authority structure to the extent that the Chinese political process has in effect turned into something like "protracted guerrilla warfare,"<sup>59</sup> "the bargaining treadmill," or "the rural country fair or market, a setting characterized by protracted haggling, posturing, conditional outcomes, frequent failure to reach agreement, and issues that rise and fall on the agenda, but are rarely fully resolved or discarded."<sup>60</sup> Thus, the Chinese political process is better perceived, not any longer as a "command system," where leaders dominate the bureaucracy, but as a "bargaining system," where the leadership and the bureaucracy are

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Politics of Regulation in China," in Victor Nee and David Stark, eds., Remaking the Economic Institutions of Socialism: China and Eastern Europe, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, pp. 169-207.

58. Lieberthal, "Introduction," p. 8.

59. David M. Lampton, "A Plum for a Peach: Bargaining, Interest, and Bureaucratic Politics in China," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, p. 37.

60. David M. Lampton, "Chinese Politics: The Bargaining Treadmill," Issues and Studies, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1987), p. 12.

mutually dependent and have to achieve consensus through a "disjointed," "protracted," and "incremental" bargaining process, in order to get anything done.

The above transformation process from "totalitarianism" to "fragmented authoritarianism" is most succinctly formulated by Lieberthal and Oksenberg in an evolutionary pattern, which they believe applies to all communist regimes. This evolutionary pattern consists of these stages: "initial centralization; erosion of control; response by the leaders; response by the agencies; and emergence of a mature system." A more detailed discussion of the pattern goes as follows:

When a communist party first seizes state power by force, the political leaders "seek to establish a highly unified, centralized structure of authority...[and] attempt to eliminate bureaucratic opposition and independence and establish mechanisms for sustaining their command."<sup>61</sup>

This is soon followed by the stage of "corrosion of control." This arises because, in order to destroy any autonomous societal forces and put the whole society under its grip, the political leadership has to greatly enlarge the state bureaucracy, and this inevitably leads to proliferation of agencies, increased division of labor, and resultant "departmentalism."<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, each bureaucratic unit is

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<sup>61</sup>. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, pp. 403-404.

<sup>62</sup>. "Departmentalism" means pursuing separate bureaucratic missions and interests at the expense of overarching national goals and political leadership's comprehensive view.

put in charge of a certain amount of resources and thus comes to acquire a proprietary attitude toward them. In the absence of markets for allocating resources, bureaucracies enjoy de facto monopoly over those resources. On the strength of this monopoly, bureaucracies are in a position to cultivate networks of patron-client ties and mutual obligations to promote and protect their separate interests. Also, this monopolistic position gives rise to the fact that, "Formally subordinate units enjoy enhanced ability to bargain with their 'superiors,'" "rather than to simply accept the chain-of-command of formal organization charts."<sup>63</sup>

Then, "(t)he willful leaders at the apex find these trends vexing and frustrating, and they therefore embark upon periodic efforts to make the bureaucracy more responsive to them."<sup>64</sup> These efforts include restructuring bureaucracies to prevent "departmentalism," using the Party, the army, and the government to supervise and monitor each other, "sending down" (xiaofang, in Chinese) bureaucrats into the countryside for manual labor and ideological re-education, heavy doses of ideological indoctrination, political campaigns, and massive purges of bureaucrats.<sup>65</sup>

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63. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, p. 406.

64. Ibid. p. 409.

65. Ibid.

Nevertheless, the bureaucracy is always able to come up with one move or another to "counter these efforts and reduce their vulnerability to the vagaries of the top leaders,..."<sup>66</sup> It seeks to maximize its self-sufficiency by hiding critical information, by hoarding excessive slack resources, by exercising feigned compliance, and by cultivating patrons at higher levels. "Over time, in short, they [bureaucrats] learn to blunt the weapon of control of the top leaders."<sup>67</sup>

Between moves and countermoves of the political leadership and the bureaucracy, a "mature Soviet type system" emerges, which "is a bureaucratically dominant but fragmented system with a protracted, disjointed policy process characterized by bargaining and consensus building."<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, China scholars have noticed that the process of leadership losing power to the bureaucracy is also accelerated in recent years by Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The reforms have made the leaders more reluctant to use those Maoist coercive measures, increased the "extra-budgetary" resources available to bureaucracies, and reduced "the resources available to central leaders to discipline bureaucracies so as to achieve major regime goals."<sup>69</sup>

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66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid. p. 410.

69. Ibid. p. 411. The impact of redistribution of resources on the balance of power between the Center and localities during the years of reforms is also elaborated by Jean C. Oi in her "Fiscal Reform and the Economic Foundations

Besides, reforms inevitably involve issues of technical complexity, multiple trade-offs, complicated interrelatedness, and enduring uncertainties, the handling of which surpasses the competence of political leaders. All these contribute to flattening the hierarchical structure and tipping the balance of power in the favor of the bureaucracy.

The above review of the major works on the problem of bureaucratic control in China reveals that almost no attention has been given to the role of the staffs at the politicians' command, though those researches have unveiled many key elements of truth about China's leadership-bureaucracy relationship and its metamorphosis over time. As a result of this overlooking, there is a tendency in the existing literature to underestimate the power and capacity of political leadership and exaggerate the fragmentation of the Chinese authority structure in the post-Mao era.

Nonetheless, as will be a basic argument of this thesis, the staff system constitutes a crucial organizational tool for Chinese political leaders to use in controlling the bureaucracies. As will be demonstrated by this research, Chinese political principals do have large numbers of staff personnel in their service, who work to strengthen their control over bureaucracies. There are, significantly, around one million staff personnel in the Chinese political

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of Local State Corporatism in China," World Politics, Vol. 45, No. 1 (October 1992), pp. 99-126.

system.<sup>70</sup> This multitude of staff members are responsible for providing extensive political support and assistance to leaders. They are responsible for processing all incoming information, collecting, classifying, verifying, clarifying, condensing, and synthesizing. They are supposed to handle all outgoing documents, drafting, editing, censoring, and coordinating. They are required to constantly and closely monitor and supervise subordinate bureaucratic departments and units in their policy implementation. They are known to frequently go out on inspecting and investigating tours, to keep their leaders informed about the conditions and new developments at lower levels, as well as to ensure that the leaders' authority is unequivocally felt and properly obeyed. The findings of this research regarding the staff role will demonstrate that the Chinese political leadership is in fact much more powerful and effective than is suggested by the existing literature, thus forcing us to rethink the power

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70. Xu Ruixin et al, Zhongguo Xiandai Mishu Gongzuo Jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, p. 178. The number of about one million mishus can be calculated from the fact that: in addition to the Center and the provinces, "...there are totally over 300 prefectures or municipalities, over 2,000 counties or cities, more than sixty-eight thousand townships, and over ten thousand large or medium-sized enterprises, as well as numerous popular organizations and colleges and universities. Each of them usually contains both Party and administrative leadership squads, and each leadership squad has its own general office and mishu personnel." [Xi Zhongxun, "Preface" to The Work Regulations for General Offices, in Lingdao tongzhi tan mishu gongzuo (The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work), Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1989, p. 20.]

distribution between leadership and bureaucracy in Chinese politics.

### Working Definitions

Before going any further, clear working definitions of "leadership," "staff," and "bureaucracy" are in order, since the concepts being used in this research are somewhat different from their ideal-typical definitions or conventional connotations. There does not exist in the Chinese system a clear bifurcation between elective politicians and career civil servants or between political appointees and permanent bureaucrats, as is the case with the Western systems. Every one of the thirty million or so Chinese cadres can be regarded as a political appointee, in the sense that his appointment, promotion, or demotion is controlled or determined by the Communist Party. Therefore, the distinction between "political leaders" and "bureaucrats" in this research is not based on different career paths but instead on different positions being occupied by the actors at issue in the organizational structure. Put in another way, a Chinese cadre can be either a leader or a bureaucrat depending on different perspectives.

For example, a provincial governor is a bureaucrat from the perspective of the Central leadership squad, but he is a leader as a member of the provincial leadership squad, from the perspective of the provincial bureaucratic departments. The closest example of this relative definition of a

politician/bureaucrat identity in the American case is a department secretary in the executive branch. From the point of view of career civil servants, a department secretary is a politician, since he is appointed by the President to represent his policy orientation. But from the perspective of the President and the White House staff, a department secretary has become a bureaucrat. As soon as he has become head of the department, he has "married the natives," to use a somewhat derogatory metaphor of the White House staff to describe department secretaries.<sup>71</sup> And the Miles Law takes over, which dictates that "Where you stand depends on where you sit."<sup>72</sup> The tension between a comprehensive view and a specialized perspective and between overall organizational goals and parochial interests will arise immediately. Thus, "the secretary becomes the mouthpiece for the sentiments of the department in contacts with the president and the White House staff."<sup>73</sup> As is the case with all Chinese cadres, an American department secretary is either a politician or a bureaucrat, depending on different perspectives.

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71. Frank Kessler, The Dilemmas of Presidential Leadership: Of Caretakers and Kings, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982, p. 93.

72. James W. Fesler and Donald F. Kettl, The Politics of the Administrative Process, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1991, p. 61.

73. Kessler, The Dilemmas of Presidential Leadership, p. 93.

It is significant to note that the Miles Law is also applicable to Chinese politics, where its colloquial equivalent is: "Where you squat is where you shit."<sup>74</sup> This phenomenon is also called "reverse cooptation," a process in which a broad-visioned "statesman" is "captured" by the bureaucracy or bureaucracies he is put in charge of, thus becoming a "zealot" or "advocate" for the narrow institutional interests of those bureaucracies.<sup>75</sup> As Shirk explains:

Chinese governmental institutions are structured to encourage expressions of departmental points of view. Of course, ministers and ministry officials are appointed by the CCP and cannot stray too far from the preferences of the party, but the party expects ministers to articulate the interests of their particular sector.... Officials in China and the Soviet Union feel no need to disguise their commitments to departmental objectives.... Everyone in China, including party people, takes for granted that bureaucrats articulate departmental interests and perspectives.<sup>76</sup>

The following chart illustrates the three organizational positions that correspond to the three concepts,

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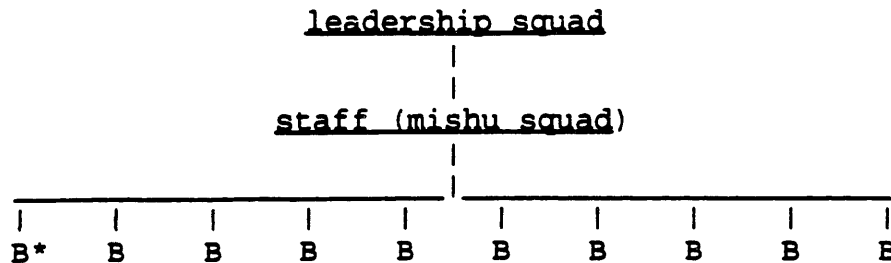
74. Susan L. Shirk, The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, p. 99.

75. David Bachman, Bureaucracy, Economy, and Leadership in China: The Institutional Origins of the Great Leap Forward, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 37, 44.

76. Shirk, The Political Logic, pp. 98, 100-101. It is noteworthy that when factionalism flares up, concerns for institutional interests are often overridden by power considerations which are determined more by personal loyalty than by organizational allegiance. See Lucian W. Pye, The Dynamics of Chinese Politics, Cambridge: Oelgeschlager, Gunn, and Hain, 1981.

"leadership," "staff," and "bureaucracy," that are used in this research with regard to the Chinese political system.

Table 1.1: The typical structure of leadership-staff-bureaucracy relationship in the Chinese political system



\* A subordinate bureaucratic organ, e.g., ministry, department, agency, or a lower-level government.

Every Chinese administrative organization is run by a leadership squad (lingdao banzi), which is composed of a handful of leaders. For example, the leadership squad for a provincial Party committee consists of about 18 leaders; that for a prefecture Party committee, 11; that for a county Party committee, 9.<sup>77</sup> And every leadership squad is served and assisted by its staff, which is called mishu squad (mishu banzi in Chinese). The mishu squad consists of both personal mishu (secretary-aides), who work directly for individual leaders, and organizational mishu, who work in the staff office<sup>78</sup> and serve the leadership squad collectively. Such a staff office, or "general office," is typically quite

<sup>77</sup>. Yan Huai, Understanding the Political System of Contemporary China, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup>. Such a staff office is usually called "general office" (banqongshi/banqongting in Chinese).

sizable. For example, a provincial general office consists of about 250 staff members, and the Central General Office, probably over 1,000. A general office is literally a counter-bureaucracy, composed of subunits that correspond to and overlap with virtually all of the subordinate bureaucratic departments or units under the leadership squad.

The mishu, literally meaning "secret book" but generally translated as "secretary," is a broad category of staff personnel, which include aides, assistants, advisors, secretaries, translators, office clerks, servants, housekeepers, and bodyguards. Both personal and organizational mishus are responsible for providing two basic categories of services and assistance to the leaders: 1) policy/administration and 2) logistics/private livelihood. The former includes processing information, conducting policy research, offering policy advice, ghost-writing official documents, and monitoring and supervising policy implementation; the latter refers to looking after the private livelihood of leaders in terms of food, housing, transport, security, medical care, recreation, down to funeral services. Although the mishu institution can be regarded roughly as the Chinese equivalent to the staff systems in other countries, it possesses so many distinctive features as to warrant the frequent use of its transliteration when referring to Chinese staff personnel in this thesis, in order to avoid the habitual connotations that are associated with the Western staff systems.

Those subordinate bureaucratic bodies in the chart refer to functional bureaucracies (e.g., ministries, agencies, or departments) or regional bureaucracies (e.g., lower-level governments). The subordinate functional bureaucracies number about 10 in the Party system, and several dozens in the government system; the subordinate regional bureaucracies number anywhere from five to over thirty.

Take the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (hereafter, CCPCC) for example. Its leadership squad refers to the Politburo, the Secretariat, and the various key Central leadership small groups, which together consist of about 40 top leaders. Its staff refers to those top leaders' personal mishus and their collective mishus working in the Central Committee General Office. Its subordinate bureaucracies refer to the twenty or so Central departments or units, including Organization Department, Propaganda Department, Department of United Front Work, Department of International Liaison, the Xinhua News Agency, the People's Daily, the Central Party School, as well as thirty provincial-level Party committees. The same tripartite structure is discernible in all Chinese political organizations at all levels.

#### Unique Features of the Chinese Mishu (Staff) System

It is only one half of the story to point out that the staff role has so far been overlooked in the studies of Chinese politics and that staffs are in effect used

extensively, as in many other systems and in Chinese history, to amplify political leadership's control over the bureaucracy. The other half, which is even more interesting and significant from the perspective of comparative politics, is that the Chinese mishu system also performs a highly unique function: it serves as a cushion to absorb conflicts and clashes among political leaders and to soften the impact of arbitrary political interventions upon the bureaucratic administration, so as to maintain the cohesion, stability, and continuity of the Chinese political process.

In China it is generally expected or even taken for granted that personality conflicts, policy disagreements, and factional power struggles will happen among political leaders.<sup>79</sup> But it is also generally expected that their mishus should play a major role in softening such conflicts and clashes. A PRC political observer explains:

Within the Chinese Communist Party there are a legion of political factions and interest groups. It is a delicate matter to conduct communications and negotiations among them. Whenever a difficulty occurs, mishus play an indispensable role in passing words back and forth among them and reconciling their differences.<sup>80</sup>

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79. This fact is admitted by a key Central mishu, Xu Ruixin in his The Essentials, p. 139. The author is head of Mishu Bureau of the CCPCC General Office and deputy director of the same General Office.

80. Luo Ning, "Chumo yu hongse gongqiang lide renwu" ("The Shadowy Figures behind the Blood-Red Wall"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11 (1992), p. 42.

Indeed, a large part of interpersonal relationships and communications among political principals are in effect conducted and mediated by their mishus. Leaders meet face to face only at certain intervals, say, once a week, a month, a year, or even less frequently, at formal meetings or conferences, but their mishus are constantly in touch with all the leaders and with each other.<sup>81</sup> During the intervals between formal meetings, leaders are not supposed to contact each other in private too frequently. A primary reason for this arrangement is that factionalism is regarded as an absolute taboo. Any two leaders directly contacting each other with any conspicuous frequency in private will surely arouse suspicion of factional foul play and thus draw fire from their colleagues. Consequently, political leaders have to rely heavily upon their mishus to communicate with each other in their work and even in their personal communications.

In order to cushion conflicts and facilitate smooth communications between leaders, mishu personnel are required and trained to be even-handed and impartial. They are all expected to be superbly skilled at handling various subtle power relationships and master the art of "walking a

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81. Because of their young age and juniority and the stringent selection process and psychological conditioning they are subjected to, mishu personnel are generally believed to be less prone to self-seeking factional activities than leaders. This point will become clear as our analysis unfolds in the following chapters.

tightrope" among clashing leaders.<sup>82</sup> It is taboo for them to be openly close to some leaders and distant from the others.<sup>83</sup> It is recorded that even personal mishus of rivaling top leaders have quietly contacted each other or their masters' enemies in efforts to patch up the differences and conflicts between their masters, as has been the case with the mishus of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun. (These practices will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.) Suffice it to say here that Chinese personal mishus perform a crucial part in cushioning clashes among political leaders, thus helping maintain a workable degree of unity and rapport within the political leadership -- under usual circumstances.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, Chinese political leaders' mishus bear, in a major way, the responsibility of ensuring the coherence and continuity of bureaucratic administration. It is something very peculiar about the Chinese political leadership that, on the one hand, it has to resort to various means to secure absolute domination over the bureaucracy, but on the other hand, it needs to protect, so to speak, the bureaucracy from

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82. Luo Ning, "The Shadowy Figures," p. 131.

83. Hou Rui, Zenvang dang bangongshi zhuren (How to Work as Director of a General Office), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 68.

84. It should be pointed out here that when factional infighting heats up and gets out of hand among political principals, as during the Cultural Revolution, staffs' cushioning effect is limited.

itself -- from its arbitrariness, inconsistency, and whimsical zigs and zags. In the West, it is typically not a major concern for the political party in power to guarantee the long-term consistency and continuity of the bureaucratic administration. Quite to the contrary, "change" is an appealing, vote-catching campaign slogan, since change is so difficult. Stability and continuity are ensured by laws,<sup>85</sup> by the autonomous institution of civil service, and by a legion of powerful status quo-oriented interest groups. Consequently, when a Western political party is in power, its primary concern is how to maximize its control over the bureaucracy and bend the bureaucratic administration as far as possible in its favor -- until the party itself is, sooner or later, voted out.

In China, political leaders need to worry about maintaining stability and continuity of the bureaucratic administration, since change is so easy. As Lucian Pye points out, "The history of Chinese politics is one of sudden zigs and zags in announced policies. It is not just that new leaders bring new policies, but the individual leaders have no strong obligations to be consistent. Chinese leaders will

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<sup>85</sup>. For example, many programs and budgetary obligations can be turned by laws into "uncontrollables" for a new administration, thus guaranteeing their continuity. See Page, Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power, p. 73.

routinely introduce new policies that totally reverse previous commitments,..."<sup>86</sup>

In addition, the practice of rule by man makes the consistency of bureaucratic administration particularly vulnerable. Whatever a powerful leader utters orally can be a new policy for change in the bureaucracy. What he says now, however, may contradict what he said on an earlier occasion, which he may have totally forgotten. And what one leader says on one occasion may conflict with what another leader says on another occasion. In the absence of the supremacy of written laws<sup>87</sup> and an autonomous civil service, the job of coordination to prevent disastrous changes is largely fulfilled by leaders' mishus. Mishus are responsible for preserving the institutional memory, which includes all of the leaders' past speeches, comments, opinions, and instructions. And all new decisions and policies are required to be researched, drafted, edited, and censored by mishu personnel, in order to bring some measure of consistency and coordination to them and to facilitate the stability and continuity of the bureaucratic administration.

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86. Lucian W. Pye, The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1988, p. 82.

87. As Lieberthal points out, "The legal system [in China] does not function in a fashion that enables it to adjudicate key issues and establish stable precedents. Law and regulation combined do not pose effective bars to the adoption of policies that redistribute power and violate past commitments." ("Introduction," p. 21.)

What is also interesting is the fact that there exists a distinctive division of personae roles between Chinese leaders and their mishus, which also helps fulfill the cushioning/smoothing function in the leadership-staff-bureaucracy nexus. In terms of styles, "leaders are expected to have their distinctive and quite individualistic styles,"<sup>88</sup> but their mishus typically have a humble, modest, unassuming, and self-effacing personality.<sup>89</sup> Leaders are expected to be bold, firm, pushy, demanding, and even ruthless (in the case of chief leaders) toward the bureaucracy, thus to be awed, feared, and promptly obeyed. In China, this intimidating quality around political authority is functionally indispensable for maintaining social and political order, for pushing forward with daring programs, and for the proper functioning of the bureaucracy in general. However, their mishus are expected to be easy-going, soft, flexible, and conciliatory, and it is their job to smooth out any erratic disruptions left behind by the leaders. By contrast, in a democracy, under the pressures of elective politics, politicians generally prefer to make themselves appear popular, likable, consistent, and reasonable, while letting their aides play the role of being tough, aggressive, pushy, and changeable and thus do the "dirty work." (This

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88. Pye, The Mandarin and the Cadre, p. 153.

89. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 131-32.

contrast between the Chinese and the American cases will be examined in Chapter Seven.)

What is also special about the Chinese mishu institution is that it is organized as a separate sub-system running vertically from the top down to the bottom of the Chinese political system and cutting across various bureaucratic hierarchies horizontally. Mishu offices at lower levels have the obligation to report to, and accept guidance from, those at higher levels and to coordinate with those at the same levels. In contrast, in the American political arena, a staff is typically accountable only for its own boss, and so is inclined, if anything, to compete and fight with the staffs of other politicians or institutions, as for example between the White House staff and the Congressional staff. As a result, American staffs typically function as a major source of innovations, changes, and conflicts and tensions, whereas Chinese mishus serve as a principal force toward rapprochement, integration, stability and continuity.

Finally, there are two other features that also add to the peculiarity of the Chinese mishu institution. First, in addition to its political functions, the Chinese mishu system is also responsible for taking care of the private life of political leaders with regard to housing, food, recreation, transport, health care, security, down to funeral services, whereas these matters lie basically outside of the public arena in the Western systems. In providing these services, Chinese mishus tend to form highly intimate and lasting

personal ties and mutual attachment with political principals, knowing all their personal secrets, winning their personal liking and trust, and becoming their favorites and confidants. Second, the Chinese mishu institution is a primary de facto "cadre school," where one can best learn all the political secrets, tricks, and skills necessary for being a successful politician in China.<sup>90</sup> As a result, a significant portion of Chinese leaders, including a good many top leaders, have come from a background of once working as mishus. The mishu institution is arguably the single most important avenue for upward mobility in the Chinese officialdom.

#### Central Arguments

The mishu system plays a dual role in Chinese politics -- amplifying political control over bureaucracies and smoothening the political process. Accordingly, there are two central arguments to be developed in this thesis.

First, like its counterparts in many other systems, the Chinese mishu institution provides Chinese political leaders with necessary organizational capacity to constantly and closely monitor and supervise the bureaucracy.

This argument is intended to be an antidote to the present tendency often to overstate the fragmentation of the

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<sup>90</sup>. Jiang Zhifeng, Wangpai chu jing de Zhongnanhai qiaojia (The Last Card of the Game of Zhongnanhai), San Francisco, CA: Minzhu Zhongguo Shulin Publishing House, 1990, pp. 144-145.

Chinese authority structure and the degree to which Chinese political leadership has lost power to the bureaucracy. Although it is generally true that the Chinese authority structure is now more fragmented than it was under Mao and that the leadership-bureaucracy relationship has undergone a transformation from a command system toward a bargaining system, this evolutionary model should not be reified as being an objective, unalterable law. It is important to realize that Chinese leaders are not powerless and helpless for it still possesses some powerful organizational tools to assert and perpetuate their authority and control over the bureaucracy. A key tool is the mishu system. If staffs have successfully helped politicians gain and maintain control and policy initiative over the bureaucracy in some Western systems, e.g., the United States and Italy, there is no logical reason to preclude such a possibility in the Chinese case.

Second, unlike its counterparts in other systems, the Chinese mishu institution functions as a principal cushioning/integrating mechanism for the Chinese political system and plays a major role in providing, under normal circumstances, a workable degree of unity and coordination among leaders and a measure of consistency, stability, and continuity for bureaucratic administration.

In short, the Chinese mishu institution performs two roles for the working of the Chinese political system: controlling role and cushioning/lubricating role.

### Empirical Data

Since the role of the Chinese mishu system has generally been neglected, there is little material to draw upon in the existing Western literature, and so empirical data have had to be collected by and large from primary sources in Chinese. The major information sources and brief evaluations of them are as follows.

(1) The memoir literature. The past decade has witnessed an outpouring of autobiographies and memoirs by the former mishus for the deceased top leaders including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, Ye Jianying, Chen Boda, and Jiang Qing. There is also a spate of biographies of these top rulers.<sup>91</sup> This memoir literature provides a wealth of new information about the inner workings of the Chinese leadership-bureaucracy interaction at the top level and they

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91. The memoir literature includes: Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai he tade mishumen (Zhou Enlai and His Mishus), Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992; Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying (Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying), Beijing: the Central Documents Publishing House, 1989; Li Yinqiao, Zouxia shentan de Mao Zedong (The Mao Zedong off the Altar), Shanxi: Zhongwai wenhua chuban gongsi, 1989; Ye Yonglie, Chen Boda qi ren (A Biography of Chen Boda), Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1990; Fan Shuo, Ye Jianying zai 1976 (Ye Jianying during 1976), Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1990; and Zhang Yunsheng, Maojiawan jishi: Lin Biao mishu huiyi lu (The Eyewitness Accounts of Maojiawan: The Memoirs of Lin Biao's Mishu), Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1988. Moreover, a very useful English book, which drew heavily on this source of information, is: Harrison E. Salisbury, The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Publishers, 1992.

are particularly revealing about how top leaders' mishus operated, formally and informally, in the Mao era.

(2) The mishu xue literature. Mishu xue (the study of secretarial/staff work) contains articles and monographs by Chinese leaders and their mishus concerning the mishu role in Chinese politics as well as training manuals and textbooks for current and prospective mishu personnel. It was a near-taboo to discuss openly the important role of mishus in China under Mao, but in recent years, serious efforts have been made by the Chinese to publicly rationalize and strengthen this role. Over ten professional journals have been established with regard to the mishu role in Chinese politics.<sup>92</sup> Training programs have been set up at over one hundred and fifty institutions of higher learning. Professional conferences and symposia have been convened regularly for exchanging experiences and improving mishu work.<sup>93</sup> Top leaders and their key mishus have published many articles and books regarding the mishu role.<sup>94</sup> These sources

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92. Wang Qiangong et al., Shiyong mishu gongzuo shouce (A Practical Handbook for Mishu Work), Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1987, p. 400.

93. Zheng Xinghan, Dangzheng jiguan mishu gongzuo gaishu (An Outline of Mishu Work in Party and State Organs), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 62.

94. Particularly useful are the following two books: The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work; and Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials; and Dang zheng jiguan mishu gongzuo congshu (A Series of Books on Mishu Work in Party and State Organs), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, which consists of fourteen volumes altogether and are all authored by mishus in the general offices of Beijing, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Shanxi, and Tianjin.

provide not only a considerable amount of factual data about Chinese mishu in action but also information about the normative thinking behind the formal structures and functions of the Chinese mishu system.

Harry Harding has expressed in personal correspondence his concern about the need to distinguish between prescription and description, official doctrine and actual fact, and myth and reality in treating the information from this Chinese source. He advises against falling into the same trap as did such early China scholars as John Lewis and Franz Schurmann, whose works, as was pointed out by Harding in his influential article, "were less an analysis of Chinese political practice than an exegesis of the formal doctrine of the Chinese Communist Party."<sup>95</sup> Harding's prudent advice will be properly heeded in this research. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that the literature on mishu theory and practice is a new breed of Chinese organization theory. It differs, in two significant aspects, from the doctrinal writings of the top leaders on which those early researches were based.

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In this series the following are particularly useful: Hou Rui, How to Work as Director of a General Office; Hou Rui, Huiyi zhuzi yu fuwu (Organizing and Servicing of Conferences); Qi Peiwen et al., Zexiang danghao lingdaoren mishu (How to Be a Good Personal Mishu for a Leader); Wang Fangzhi et al, Wenjian shoufa yu chuli (Receiving, Dispatching, and Processing of Documents); and Wang Zhande et al., Gongwen zhuanxie yu begao (Drafting and Editing of Official Documents).

<sup>95</sup>. Harry Harding, "The Study of Chinese Politics: Toward a Third Generation of Scholarship," World Politics, Vol. 36 (January 1984), p. 288.

First, the literature on mishu work is more like practical advice than authoritative injunctions. It involves more consensus-building discourse appealing to the common sense (conditioned by the popular cultural ethos) than the official doctrine that simply imposes leadership's will in a monological and high-handed manner. Second, while the works of the earlier Communist leaders advocated a revolutionary break with the Chinese tradition, the new mishu literature consciously seeks roots in traditional Chinese political thinking. For instance, almost all the textbooks and training manuals for Chinese mishus begin with a chapter or two on the history of the Chinese mishu system, which trace the institution back for thousands of years, dynasty by dynasty. In this regard, this new breed of Chinese organization theory is more consistent with enduring and deep-seated elements of Chinese political culture, and deserves to be taken more seriously.

(3) Chinese literature published outside mainland China. Chinese political observers and exiles in Hong Kong, Taiwan, United States and elsewhere have noticed the role of mishus in Chinese politics and touched upon it in their publications.<sup>96</sup> Information from this source is particularly

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<sup>96</sup>. One of such books that is especially useful is Jiang Zhifeng, The Last Card of the Game of Zhongnanhai. The author used to be a personal mishu to a Chinese Central leader.

Journal articles that are particularly useful are Shi Liuzi, "Zhonggong 'mishu bang' qunxiang" ("A Group Portrait of the Chinese Communist Secret Secretaries"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11 (1992), pp. 24-28; Sima Mai, "Yuyong xiucai de beiju: Mao Zedong de zhengzhi mishu Tian Jiaying" ("The Tragedy of the Imperial Scholar: Mao

useful for examining the mishu role for the current top leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Zhao Ziyang, and Jiang Zemin.

(4) Interviews. Interviews have been made with some important Chinese mishus at the Central and regional levels as well as Chinese officials who are studying, visiting, or in exile in the United States at the time of writing, and with people who have first-hand knowledge about the mishu role in Chinese politics. The accounts by the interviewees have proved very useful for revealing an considerable amount of important new information, for corroborating and fleshing out the data collected from the other sources, and for testing the intuitions so as to decide whether to give up, adjust, or follow them through in the research.

#### Notes on the Methodology

Two basic research techniques have been employed for this research: comparative approach and interpretative approach.

COMPARATIVE APPROACH. Comparisons have been made with the staff role in other political systems, so as to avoid the parochialism that frequently characterize in-depth area studies. The comparisons also help to drive the analytical points home more vividly, and to shed new light on some larger theoretic issues, such as the problems of

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Zedong's Political Secretary Tian Jiaying"), idem. pp. 29-33; and Luo Ning, "The Shadowy Figures."

political control over the bureaucracy, the impact of structural and cultural factors on political behavior, and alternative paths for political development.

Special attention has been placed particularly on comparison with the American staff system. This comparison is significant and interesting in that for all the vast differences between China and America in terms of political structure and culture, political leaders of both countries are very much alike with regard to depending heavily upon their staffs to control bureaucracies. Of all the democracies, the United States is perhaps the most similar to China in this aspect, paralleled or followed closely by Italy. In other democracies, where the bureaucratic tradition is strong as in Japan, Britain, and Germany, political leaders have smaller staffs and the staff role is thus more limited.

Furthermore, despite the fact that American and Chinese political leaders have a similar tendency to use their personal staffs extensively, staffs in the two systems behave very differently in that American staffs tend to function as a major source for innovations, changes, tensions and conflicts in interactions with the bureaucracy and other institutional rivals, whereas Chinese staffs are a principal force for harmony, reconciliation, continuity, and stability. Therefore, the comparison between the two staff systems presents an ideal case for analyzing the influences of political structure and political culture on the behavior

patterns of staff personnel as well as of political principals in dealing with the bureaucracy and other political actors.

INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH. This is essentially a qualitative study aiming at understanding the motives and meanings behind the manifest behavior patterns of different political actors in the leadership-staff-bureaucracy nexus.

In interpreting actions, special efforts have been made to avoid the pitfall of reification, namely, treating the Chinese political system as if it were a biological organism, in which each part -- leadership, mishu, and the bureaucracy -- automatically performs its pre-determined function for the benefit of the whole. Although analysis is made with regard to the mishu role for the functioning of the Chinese political system as a whole, a holistic approach will be consciously avoided by efforts to anchor the methodological ontology in individual actors' rationality and their perceptions of self interests. Accordingly, although parts of the analysis are conducted on a "systemic" level, the typical research questions to be addressed in this thesis are individual-oriented and run as follows.

- Why do political leaders prefer to trust and empower their staffs over regular bureaucrats?
- Why do staffs perceive it in their best interest to try to maintain and enlarge their bosses' power over the bureaucracy?
- What self-interested considerations incline Chinese leaders to play the role of being bold, demanding, awe-inspiring, and even ruthless, while leaving their mishus playing the

role of being reconciliatory, personable, and accommodating?

- What self-interested considerations incline American leaders to save for themselves the role of being nice, popular, reasonable, and consistent, while letting their staffs play the role of being tough, pushy, aggressive, and innovative?

### The Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter examines the personal benefits that the mishu institution brings to individual actors -- leaders, bureaucrats, and mishus themselves -- treating them as individuals with self-interested motives and self-serving strategies. From the point of view of individual leaders, the mishu institution characterized by personal intimacy, diffusiveness of role, flexibility of oral communication, and sensitivity to individuals' needs and wishes, offers a welcome antithesis to the rigidities and inconveniences of bureaucracy characterized by impersonality, proceduralization, primacy of written rules, and specificity of role. It is argued that leaders find most convenient and reliable agents and servants in their mishus; bureaucrats benefit from mishus' help in learning leaders' true intentions and feelings behind the usual vagueness and generality of written documents as well as in manipulating leaders' perceptions and decisions; and mishus are in the best position to learn political secrets and skills necessary for becoming successful leaders in their own right in due

course and to please leaders and curry favor with them, particularly in terms of career promotions.

The third and fourth chapters analyze the roles of the mishu institution for the functioning of the Chinese political system as a whole. Two basic roles are identified: 1) amplifying political leadership's control over bureaucracies; and 2) smoothening the political process by cushioning conflicts, facilitating coordination, and sustaining continuity and consistency. The control role, as is studied in Chapter Three, is primarily embodied in the following two aspects: 1) enhancing leadership's information and decision capacity; and 2) strengthening leadership's monitoring and supervision capacity. In other words, the two aspects can also be understood as 1) improving leaders' ability to respond effectively to what bureaucracies communicate upward willingly, and 2) expanding leaders' capability to find out what bureaucracies want to hide and to push them to do what they are reluctant to do.

The smoothening/facilitating function is examined, in Chapter Four, with regard to the following aspects: 1) working out properly and subtly hierarchical relationships among leaders to diminish friction-generating or conflict-provoking ambiguities; 2) mediating communication among leaders and between leading and led so as to deflect direct confrontations and absorb conflicts and clashes; 3) drafting, editing, and censoring all official documents so as to guarantee their consistency and continuity; and 4) organizing

all conferences and meetings to minimize the disruptive impact of the uncertain and the unexpected and lubricate intra-elite interactions.

The fifth chapter tries to sort out the formal structures and functions of the Chinese mishu system. Moreover, efforts are made to clarify the confusion about the relationship between the mishu offices and some other key organs (e.g., leadership squad, leadership small group, and research center) and actors (e.g., personal mishus). In addition, this chapter contains two in-depth case studies of the Central leadership's mishu squads, that is, the Central Committee General Office and the State Council General Office.

The sixth chapter compares the contemporary mishu system with its historical roots, focusing primarily on the grand council institution at the center and the mufu (tent government) system in provinces in the Qing dynasty. This longitudinal comparison aims at revealing significant continuities and changes in terms of the controlling and cushioning roles as well as at explaining the underlying causes in terms of overall structural arrangement and individuals' career pattern.

The seventh chapter is a horizontal comparison between the Chinese mishu institution and the American staff system, with an emphasis on examining the causes behind the contrasting behavior patterns of American and Chinese staff personnel. The causal factors to be analyzed include

different structures of the political game (open competition vs. power monopoly), different career paths ("in-and-outers" vs. groomed successors), different political cultures (low esteem vs. veneration toward politicians), and different levels of technological development (preoccupation with new techniques vs. preoccupation with human relations).

Finally, in the conclusion of the eighth chapter, a balance sheet will be offered with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese mishu system. On the basis of this analysis, speculations will be made about the impact of the mishu role on the political development of the Chinese system. An attempt will be made to provide answers to this fundamental question: How can a balance between the vitality and the stability of the Chinese political process be maintained? Too much domination of political leadership can cause erratic, reckless, and disastrous changes; too much power in the bureaucracy can lead to fragmentation and stagnation. Can Chinese mishus' controlling and smoothening roles serve to provide a healthy balance between the two extremes, thus presenting an viable alternative path for political and economic development?

## Chapter Two

### PERSONAL BENEFITS

This chapter analyzes the various personal benefits that the mishu institution brings to individual actors -- leaders, mishus, and bureaucrats, for it is the underlying assumption for this entire research that it is individual actors' perceptions of self interests that motivate and sustain, in the final analysis, the mishu institution in the Chinese political arena. (This is arguably the case with all stable organizations.) By starting off with this individual-oriented analysis, it is hoped that an overly holistic view,<sup>1</sup> as might be suggested by the following three chapters focusing on the structures and functions regarding the system as a whole, can be avoided.

#### Personal Benefits for Leaders

The mishu institution is particularly advantageous for Chinese leaders personally, in that it provides a welcome antithesis to the various inconveniences and rigidities that are inherent in the bureaucratic form of organization. The basic rationale behind the mishu institution is opposite to

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1. A major criticism often directed at the structural-functionalism is that it tends to treat a social system as if it were a biological organism with each component performing, more or less involuntarily, a predetermined function for the benefit of the whole. Such a holistic approach tends to focus on the controlling effect of the whole on the parts to the extent that the importance of individuals' self-interested calculations, maneuvers, and manipulations is shortchanged.

the one behind bureaucracy. The latter emphasizes impersonality, primacy of written rules, standard operating procedures, specialization, and well-defined and strictly delimited scopes of competencies, so as to guarantee predictability and stability of the organizational operation. These features can make a bureaucracy behave in a stable and predictable way to be sure,<sup>2</sup> but they also make it not very responsive to the personal wishes and needs of individual leaders. In contrast, the mishu institution places premium on personal trust, mutual understanding, oral communication, versatility, and diffusion of role, in order to accommodate personal needs of leaders. These features make the mishu institution particularly responsive to miscellaneous, and even whimsical, desires and wishes of political leaders. Mishus are the most convenient personal agents and servants for Chinese leaders. There are a huge variety of mishus to look after virtually every need of Chinese leaders, such as: "political mishu," "policy mishu," "literature mishu," "personnel mishu," "news mishu," "confidential mishu," "letter-writing mishu," "foreign affairs mishu," "security mishu," "administrative mishu," "personal life mishu,"

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2. It should be noted that these ideal-typical features of bureaucracy may not fully materialize in practice and that even though they may facilitate intra-organizational regularity and coordination, they can hardly prevent inter-organizational conflict and fragmentation.

"translation mishu," etc.<sup>3</sup> There are also other more technical mishu types, which are responsible for typing and printing, encoding and decoding, and binding and filing dossiers. Moreover, there are some mishu types which do not necessarily contain "mishu" in their titles, such as "confidential yuan (worker), typing yuan, stenographing yuan, library yuan, management yuan, etc."<sup>4</sup> There are also ad hoc types of mishu, such as "liaison yuan" whom Mao Zedong used in the last days of his life to pass on his instructions to the Politburo.

Nevertheless, for all the nominal classifications, a mishu is ideally a generalist so that he is readily interchangeable with other mishus and universally capable, being thus better able to satisfy the irregular needs of a leader.<sup>5</sup> The diffusiveness of a mishu's role is revealed by

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3. Chen Hongbin et al., Jianming wenmi gongzuo shouce (A Concise Handbook of Mishu Profession), Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987, p. 61.

4. Ibid. p. 57.

5. Diffusiveness of role seems to be a universal phenomenon with personal staffs, as in contrast with the fixed and well defined scopes of competence in a bureaucracy. For example, when asked by a fellow White House assistant about drawing up an organizational chart of the inner circle of the Johnson White House staff, top presidential aide Bill Moyers replied: "Such an exercise is a gross misuse of a good man's time; nothing useful can come from it since the White House staff reflects the personal needs of the President rather than a structural design....There is no pattern to it that can be fitted to a chart."<sup>5</sup> (George C. Edwards III and Stephen J. Wayne, Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, p. 201.) The same Moyers also told U.S. News & World Report: "The [White House] staff is like a basketball team. No one has a rigid position, and each man is able to handle the ball when

Zhang Yufeng, who was Mao Zedong's personal life-cum-confidential mishu during his last years: "In fact each of us [Mao's personal mishus] held multiple positions, as mishu, nurse, servant, and had to learn many other skills."<sup>6</sup> As a rule, the routine work of almost all types of mishus involves trivial chores as an inevitable component of serving their leaders. Xi Zhongxun, formerly chief mishu of the State Council, asserts that a mishu "must not only fulfill important duties (da shi) well but also carry out trivial odd jobs (xiao shi) satisfactorily: the two aspects should be combined and mutually complementing, without emphasizing one at the expense of the other."<sup>7</sup> So, ideally a mishu is supposed to combine all the roles -- as administrative

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it is in our part of the court and move it toward the goal." (Michael Medved, The Shadow Presidents: The Secret History of the Chief Executives and Their Top Aides, New York: Times Books, 1979, p. 295.) Nevertheless, The role of a Chinese mishu is even more diffused, including many responsibilities that are highly intimate and personal and thus usually lie outside of the public arena in the Western systems.

6. Zhang Yufeng, "A Few Anecdotes About Mao Zedong and Zhao Enlai in Their Late Years," in Hua Lin, ed., Mao Zedong he tade zhanyou men (Mao Zedong and His Comrades-in-Arms), Beijing: Hualing chubanshe, 1990, p. 130. Diffusiveness of role is also true of Mao's bodyguards, who have additional duties of going shopping for him and giving him a daily massage before bedtime. [Ibid. 133; Wang Hebin, Ziyun xuan zhuren: wo suo jiechu de Mao Zedong (The Master of the Purple Cloud Compound: Mao Zedong I knew), Beijing: the CCP Central Party School Publishing House, 1991, p. 39.] The author used to be Mao's health care and administrative mishu.

7. Xi Zhongxun, "Wei zuohao mishu gongzuo shuo ji ju hua" ("Some Remarks on How to Carry Out Mishu Work Well") in Lingdao tongzhi tan mishu gongzuo (The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work), Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1989, p. 18.

assistant, political adviser, ghost-writer, bodyguard, housekeeper, and menial servant when waiting on his leader. It should be pointed out, however, that diffusiveness of role is more pronounced with personal mishus than organizational mishus; in other words, division of labor is more developed among the latter, who work in general offices.

Being generalists with multiple skills and flexible responsibilities, mishus are supposed to be capable of providing any services that leaders desire. Thus, leaders can reap the following benefits:

When a leader wants to do something, all he needs to do is just move his lips, and his mishu<sup>8</sup> will get it done to his satisfaction. When a leader wants to articulate something, all he needs to do is utter a point or two, and his mishu will expand them into a full-length article, ready to be delivered by the leader or published in his name. When a leader hits upon a vague, immature idea, all he needs to do is convey it to his mishu, who will research, investigate, try it out, and come up with concrete options for the leader to choose from. When a leader has a family quarrel, all he needs to do is tell his mishu, and he will go contact the appropriate unit or mediate privately to get it settled. When a leader wants something that is hard to come by, his mishu will make one phone call or two and obtain it for him.<sup>8</sup>

The personal benefits and conveniences that mishus provide to Chinese leaders are also well reflected in their roles as personal servants, housekeepers and bodyguards. As the servant, a mishu is responsible for looking after his leader's private life in terms of housing, food, transport, recreation, and medical care. Chinese mishus are required to

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8. Jiang Zhifeng, Wangpai chu jing de zhongnanhai qiaojia (The Last Card of the Game of Zhongnanhai), San Francisco, CA: Minzhu Zhongguo Shulin Publishing House, 1990, p. 144.

take painstaking care to fully satisfy their leaders' needs in these regards. With regard to housing, a mishu's responsibilities include 1) seeing to it that there is no source of noise, pollution, or danger in the vicinity of where his leader lives; 2) making sure that supply of electricity, gas, heating, and water is adequate; and 3) keeping his house well maintained. It is also his job to take care of his leader's rent for housing and utilities, figuring out how much should be reimbursed by the state and how much paid out of the leader's own pocket and then making a detailed and easily understandable report to the leader on a regular basis.<sup>9</sup> In respect to food, a mishu is responsible for purchasing food on a daily basis, for seeing to it that the most palatable menu is provided according to his leader's budget, habit, and taste, for budgeting carefully and keeping clear track of all the expenses, and for ensuring that "food is sanitary, nutritional, and safe."<sup>10</sup> If his leader has a high enough rank to be provided by the state with a cook and other maids, the mishu is entrusted with supervising them.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of transport, the mishu is in charge of the chauffeur if his leader is equipped with a personal car; or else he is responsible for contacting the vehicle management

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<sup>9</sup>. Qi Peiwen et al., Zenyang danghao lingdaoren mishu (How to Be a Good Personal Mishu for a Leader), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 155.

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid.

office of the unit whenever the leader needs a car. Whenever the leader makes a trip, the mishu should accompany him and is responsible for purchasing air fare and train and boat tickets and arranging accommodations and proper reception at each stop.<sup>12</sup> When it comes to medical care, a mishu is supposed to monitor his leader's health condition closely, "know thoroughly, with the help of physicians and nurses, his health problems, and report promptly to the medical department any changes of those known symptoms."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, "Extra precautions should be taken if the leader is an aged person in poor health and when he goes out on a trip. It is his job to remind the leader to take right medicines at right times."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, "Wherever they go, the mishu should get to know well where the local hospital is and how to get there fast in case of an emergence."<sup>15</sup>

A mishu also acts as the chief bodyguard for his leader. As such, he must guarantee absolute safety and security of his leader's residence "...around the clock, in any weather, and all the year round to protect it from any disasters, natural or man-made, including fire, burglary, murder, revengeful acts, etc."<sup>16</sup> In order to do that, he is supposed to do the following.

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12. Ibid. p. 156.

13. Ibid. pp. 156-57.

14. Ibid. p. 157.

15. Ibid.

"1) Total familiarization with the key information. A mishu should be familiarized with the surrounding geography [of his leader's residence], the locations of the nearest anti-aircraft shelter, other safety facilities, buildings, traffic condition, and dangerous spots in the neighborhood. He should also learn from the local police the whereabouts of the evil persons and the preventive measures that have been taken against them."<sup>17</sup>

"2) Regular safety check-ups. A mishu should conduct a safety checkup of the leader's residence thoroughly...before every important activity, and before and after a storm. A check-up must determine whether the telephone, door bell, fire hydrant, faucets, fire extinguishers, electricity fuse panel, various switches, etc. are in order; whether there are explosives, inflammables, or other dangerous materials in the vicinity;..."<sup>18</sup>

"3) Tight security at the entrance. A mishu should "select reliable guards, and scrutinize and register each entering car and visitor carefully."<sup>19</sup>

It should be pointed out that a personal mishu's duty toward his leader's private life is far from being confined to the above aspects. "In addition to housing, food, transport, and medical care, a mishu should take care of baths, haircuts, decoration of the rooms and yard, receiving and entertaining relatives and friends, and any major activities in his family. In a word, a personal mishu is responsible for managing and arranging for his leader all aspects of his life, even though they are not directly related with his work."<sup>20</sup>

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16. Ibid. pp. 158-59.

17. Ibid. pp. 159-60.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid. 157.

One of the reasons why mishus are indispensable for political leaders in taking care of their private needs is that it is often inappropriate or politically costly for a leader to personally look after his own private interests, such as asking for additional perquisites, obtaining commodities that are hard to come by, and helping his children with their career advancement. It is then his mishu who is expected to go and contact the persons or units concerned and get the leader's needs and wishes taken care of properly.

Perhaps, the ultimate benefit that a mishu provides for a leader is the fact that he is the person who is the most sensitive to his personal needs and wishes. Mishus are trained to be great mind-readers of their leaders. In order to best understand or even anticipate a leader's needs and wishes, a mishu is expected to thoroughly study his leader's personality. A leading training manual for mishu personnel states that, "No matter whether you work as a mishu for a particular leader or serve several simultaneously, you should know thoroughly your leader's style, personality, habits, pattern of life, way of thinking, language idiosyncrasies, hobbies, and even his whole work history. Only in this way can you provide optimum service, making it easier to be in harmony and step with your leader."<sup>21</sup> A mishu is also urged to

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21. Xu Ruixin et al., Zhongguo xiandai mishu gongzuo jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, p. 137.

"be thoroughly familiar with his leader's "health condition, education level, ...family situation, and social connections."<sup>22</sup> All this is intended to sensitize a mishu to his leader's various needs even before they are explicitly expressed or even felt. "A mishu should know," exhorts an experienced mishu, "how to figure out his leader's needs from his words and acts, so as to be able to provide various services in advance. For instance, when a leader is contemplating a policy issue, his thoughts will be betrayed in his verbal utterances and bodily movements, as, for example, in some cases he may be seen looking up and down for something, fidgeting. When his mishu sees these telltale signs, he should set himself immediately into action to figure out what is on his leader's mind, what he is meditating at the moment, what he needs, and what he himself as a mishu should do accordingly." In a word, "a mishu should think of his leader's needs before the leader thinks of them; and he should have already considered them thoroughly, concretely, and comprehensively when his leaders just begins to think of them."<sup>23</sup>

As a result of their training and socialization, Chinese mishus usually have incredible ability to understand the ways their leaders' minds work. For instance, Premier Zhou Enlai

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22. Wang Qiangong et al., Shiyong mishu gongzuo shouce (A Practical Handbook for Mishu Work), Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1987, p. 97.

23. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 11.

only needed to "utter half a sentence" to his mishu every time he assigned a job, and his experienced mishus "could understand him intuitively and thoroughly (xinling shenhui) ... and fulfill his assignments satisfactorily."<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, in order to be responsive to a leader's needs and desires, a personal mishu is urged to cultivate the same interests and hobbies as his leader has, be they "listening to music, going to theater, playing chess, admiring paintings, watching sports, theorizing, summarizing, writing, making speeches, going down to investigate, chatting, etc."<sup>25</sup> Another important benefit that mishu institution brings to Chinese leaders is compensation for leaders' ignorance and incompetence. It is not uncommon for Chinese leaders to have obtained their leadership positions primarily because of political loyalties, personal connections, or military heroism during the war years prior to 1949. As a result, many of them are not adequately educated or even barely literate.

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24. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai he tade mishu men (Zhou Enlai and His Mishus), Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992, pp. 95-97.

25. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 137. In this regard, Chinese mishus bear strong resemblance to courtiers of an absolute ruler. As Tullock observes, "When we read accounts of life at the courts of absolute rulers, we are often astounded at the extent to which all turns on the desires and the whims of the ruler. The courtier not only follows the least indication of the ruler's will; he also spends a great deal of time trying to discern the ruler's unexpressed desires so that he may respond also to these. There is tremendous interest in everything connected with the personal life of the ruler." (Gordon Tullock, The Politics of Bureaucracy, Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965, p. 67.)

Not many of them are professionally competent, when it comes to tasks that involve technical complexity and require special training and expertise.<sup>26</sup> In many cases, for example, Chinese leaders' exorbitant dependence on their mishus in handling information and documents results from their' own incompetence. As Oksenberg observes, "Time is not the only consideration here, however; some leading officials do not read swiftly, and depend on their frequently more educated secretaries for guidance."<sup>27</sup> As a rule, the higher a leader's rank, the greater choice he has in selecting his personal mishu and so the more capable and talented his mishu tends to be. As a result, even if a high-ranking leader himself is poorly educated or inept, he still enjoys the advantage of having high quality mishus working for him to make up for any inadequacy in himself.

Moreover, another related advantage is that mishus work to ensure that their masters' power and influence will not diminish as they age and get physically and mentally weaker. Although the Chinese traditional respect for age open the way to the phenomenon of a gerontocracy, it is also in large part the energizing force of their mishus which sustains and propels the continuing political involvement of the septuagenarians and octogenarians.

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26. The problem was particularly serious during the Mao era, and it has been somewhat alleviated during Deng's reforms of recent years.

27. Michel Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication within the Chinese Bureaucracy," China Quarterly, No. 57 (January-March 1974), p. 19.

What is more, mishu personnel also provide Chinese leaders with the benefit of personal reliability and loyalty. Chinese political leaders have far greater control over their mishus than over regular bureaucrats in terms of selection, reward and punishment. Personnel decisions over bureaucratic subordinates are usually subject to consensus of the leadership squad and the approval of the higher authorities, but it is all up to an individual leader to select or dismiss his personal mishu. For instance, if a leader wants to remove a bureaucrat from a certain post, he has to present a reasonable explanation to his colleagues in the same leadership squad or to superior leaders. In case of his personal mishu, he can fire him any time; all he needs to say is: "I can't get along with this person." No further rationalization is necessary.<sup>28</sup>

Chinese leaders enjoy virtually total freedom in selecting their mishus, personal mishus in particular. Of course, leaders' freedom in this regard is more limited with organizational mishus of general offices, and so the following discussion is mainly applicable to the selection of personal mishus. The selection process is usually conducted

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28. It was the same case with the emperor-eunuch relationship. If an emperor wanted to sentence a minister to death, he had to give a rational reason for the action, but if he wanted to behead a eunuch servant, a fit of rage was a good enough ground. This was a major reason why Chinese emperors generally felt that their eunuch servants were more reliable than bureaucratic officials, and thus they tended to rely on the former more than the latter.

in the following three ways. First, leaders personally hand-pick their own personal mishus, based largely on their intuition. This usually happens by accident: a chance encounter may impress a leader with someone's potential for loyalty and his useful talent. Then the leader instructs the department concerned (usually the general office or the organization department) to thoroughly investigate the background of the candidate to make sure that nothing seriously contradicts his instinctive reaction. Our research reveals that a good many personal mishus have actually been selected in this manner. Second, candidates are recommended by the leader's current mishus, his trusted friends, or his old subordinates. Third, a leader will specify his requirements and then entrusts the appropriate department, e.g. the general office or the organization department, with searching for a suitable candidate, who will serve the leader on probation. If he passes the personal test of the leader, he stays on; otherwise, he is sent back, shame-faced.<sup>29</sup>

In selecting a mishu, a leaders looks particularly for the following characteristics, which are believed to be correlated with the quality of reliability.

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<sup>29</sup>. As a new development worth mentioning in recent years, some high-ranking Chinese leaders have appointed each other's offspring as their personal mishus, as a way of exchanging favors and strengthening mutual ties. These arrangements also enable leaders' children to jump directly to top positions of the bureaucracy upon leaving the personal service of other leaders' without having to rise grade-by-grade through the normal channels. (Jiang Zhifeng, The Last Card, p. 145.)

UNASSUMING PERSONALITY. A leader prefers to have as his mishu someone who has a pleasant, easy-going, and self-effacing personality.<sup>30</sup> A mishu's submissive personality should enable him to bear with hot-tempered and even unwarranted tongue-lashings by his leader.<sup>31</sup>

YOUNG AGE. Mishus are generally very young. When Tian Jiaying first became one of Mao Zedong's major mishus, he was only twenty six years old.<sup>32</sup> When Wang Ruilin first became Deng Xiaoping's mishu, he was only twenty years of age.<sup>33</sup> Premier Zhou once had over twenty mishus in his personal mishu office, and "all of us," observes one of his former mishus, "were in their twenties or thirties."<sup>34</sup> In recent years, the age qualification for mishus has been explicitly stipulated: "All mishus at the Central and provincial levels should be mostly young and middle-aged people with only a few old comrades; and all mishus at city, prefecture, county, and

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30. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 131-32.

31. Ibid. pp. 131, 141.

32. Peng Yaxin, "Tian Jiaying xiaozhuan" ("A Short Biography of Tian Jiaying") in Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying (Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1989, p. 316. The editor is the widow of Mao's mishu, Tian Jiaying. The other contributors include Yang Shangkun and Hu Qiaomu, who were both at one time Mao's mishus.

33. Deng Rong (alias Mao Mao), "Zai Jiangxi de rizi li" ("Those Days in Jiangxi"), Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), 22 August 1984, p. 4. The author is Deng Xiaoping's daughter.

34. Qian Jiadong, "Haishi rang women tan zhongli ba" ("Let Us Continue to Talk about the Premier") in Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai and His Mishus, p. 261. The author used to be Zhou Enlai's foreign affairs mishu.

township levels should be mostly young people, with a few middle-aged persons."<sup>35</sup>

Using young people makes the domination-submission relationship between leaders and mishus more in tone with Chinese traditional respect for old age, thus helping deflect any potential power rivalry between leaders and mishus. Chinese are very sensitive to the effect of age differences, as is explained by a Chinese expert on Chinese psychology in his book Psychology in Using People.<sup>36</sup> "It is regarded as normal and taken for granted for an older person to reprimand a younger one. The reprimander will feel no uneasiness, the one being scolded can take it easy, and the onlookers will find nothing to disapprove of." However, "if a younger person reproaches an older one, things will become complicated. If his criticisms are many, he will probably be regarded as 'unfair' and 'extreme'; if his words are harsh, he will probably be regarded as 'arrogant' and 'disrespectful toward senior comrades.' In such a situation, not only the older person will find it hard to take in but also the onlookers will not tolerate the younger person."<sup>37</sup>

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35. Zheng Xinghan et al., Dang zheng jiguan mishu gongzuo gaishu (An Outline of the Mishu Work in Party and State Organs), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, pp. 141-42.

36. Gu Baohua, Yongren zhong de xinli xue (The Psychology in Using People), Beijing: Dizhen chubanshe, 1989, pp. 237-238.

37. Ibid. pp. 49-50.

Letting young people with little seniority into the inner circle of power can also have the advantage of making them work with an extraordinary sense of gratitude, responsibility, and enthusiasm.

LOW RANKS. Another precaution taken to make mishus reliable and less menacing to political leaders is to appoint as mishus people with glaringly low ranks which are far from commensurate with their powers and responsibilities. At the provincial level, mishus hold no more than the ranks of "section staffer (ke yuan)," "section chief (ge zhang)," or, in rare cases, "deputy head of division (fu chuji)."<sup>38</sup> At the Central level, mishus' ranks range from "deputy head of division," "head of division (chuji)," "deputy director of bureau (fu juji)," to "director of bureau (juji)"; in rare cases, directors of personal mishu offices for key national leaders can hold the rank of up to minister.<sup>39</sup> For example, "Deng Xiaoping's personal mishu, Wang Ruilin, has a rank of minister; Chen Yun's personal mishu, Xu Yongyao, that of deputy minister; those of Yang Shangkun, Jiang Zemin, and Li Peng, that of bureau head; and those of most heads of Central commissions or departments, that of division head."<sup>40</sup>

New mishus typically have very low ranks so that they can be made grateful for each promotion that their leaders

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38. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 113.

39. Jiang Zhifeng, The Last Card, p. 143.

40. Shi Liuzi, "Zhonggong 'mishu bang' qunxiang" ("A Group Portrait of the Chinese Communist Secret Secretaries"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11 (1992), p. 25.

hand out afterward. The advantages in using young and low-ranking people as mishus will be made more clear when we comes to the historical comparison in Chapter Six.

PERSONAL LOYALTY. Of all the qualifications for being a mishu, by far the most important one is personal loyalty. This means that the critical test of a candidate for a position of mishu has to revolve around judgments about his potential for loyalty. For example, Ye Qun, Lin Biao's wife and chief mishu, stipulated ten criteria for selecting a mishu for Lin Biao. Three of them reflected concerns for loyalty. First, he must come from an army unit that had fought under Lin's command; second, he had to have right family background, with no connections with ranking officials, particularly, in Beijing; and third, he must not have a "big mouth or loose tongue."<sup>41</sup>

The best way to ensure faithfulness is, of course, to have one's family member work as one's mishu, as is a widely accepted practice in Chinese politics, at top level in particular. For example, the following is a partial list of Politburo members whose wives have worked as their mishus.

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41. Zhang Yunsheng, Maojiawan jishi: Lin Biao mishu huiyi lu (The Eyewitness Accounts of Maojiawan: The Memoirs of Lin Biao's Mishu), Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1988, p. 3.

Table 2.1: A partial list of Politburo members whose wives have worked as their mishus<sup>42</sup>

leader	wife/ <u>mishu</u>
Mao Zedong	Jiang Qing
Zhao Enlai	Deng Yingchao
Lin Biao	Ye Qun
Liu Shaoqi	Wang Guangmei
Chen Yun	Yu Ruomu
Kang Sheng	Cao Yi'ou
Chen Yi	Zhang Qian
He Long	Xue Ming
Chen Boda	Li Shuyan
Peng Zhen	Zhang Jieqing
Ren Bishi	Chen Congying
Huang Yongsheng	Xiang Huifang
Qiu Huizuo	Hu Min

Moreover, Deng Xiaoping is now having his daughter, Deng Rong (alias Su Rong or Mao Mao), work as his political/personal life mishu.<sup>43</sup> This practice was copied by local leaders in the Mao era, as was the case, for example, with Han Xianchu, the

42. Sources: Shi Liuzi, "A group portrait"; Luo Ning, "Chumo yu hongse gongqiang lide renwu" ("The Shadow Figures behind the Blood-Red Wall"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11 (1992), pp. 40-41; (Who's Who in China: Current Leaders), compiled by the Editorial Board of Who's Who in China, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989.

43. He Pin and Gao Xin, "'Zong shejishi' de xiao erduo: Deng Rong chongdang Deng Xiaoping de zhengzhi lianluo yuan" ("The Little Ears of the 'General Architect': Deng Rong as Deng Xiaoping's Political Liaison Officer"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), American edition, No. 23 (1992), p. 15.

former commander of the Fuzhou Military Region, whose wife, Liu Zhi, worked as his chief mishu. This used to be a common practice among army generals, until recent years.<sup>44</sup>

After a rigorous screening by leaders, those who become mishus tend to be highly reliable, particularly, in terms of keeping secrets for their leaders. For instance, Lin Biao's mishu, Zhang Yunsheng, had been so tight-lipped about the nature of his work, not telling his wife a thing, that when he wrote his memoirs, after more than a decade's silence, about his experience as Lin's mishu, she thought he had acquired a new hobby of fiction-writing.<sup>45</sup>

Since their personal mishus are the most reliable and the least menacing persons in the Chinese political arenas, leaders feel safe to confide to them their innermost thoughts and secret plans, counting on them to reveal to no one else. Mao's Russian interpreter/mishu Shi Zhe recalls: "The Chairman frequently talked with me in private about what he was contemplating in terms of his analyses and plans. He was casual and offhand. He would never reveal what he had told me at the meetings of the Secretariat until the situation and developments had borne out his predictions. At first, I was puzzled, but I later came to realize that the Chairman liked to tell his immature thoughts to me because I would never

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44. Luo Ning, "The Shadow Figures," p. 41.

45. Zhang Yunsheng, The Eyewitness Accounts, p. 21.

leak them out and I had no obligation to carry them out."<sup>46</sup>

Chinese leaders may also be willing to take criticisms from their trusted mishus, whose young age and juniority prevent them from constituting challenges to the authority and dignity of the leaders. For example, "Mao would listen to suggestions only from persons too junior to be political rivals....Mao maintained a fairly comfortable relationship with his secretaries and bodyguards and often talked things over with them. He did not bridle when they asked sharp questions or voiced doubts that he would never have tolerated from equals."<sup>47</sup>

In addition, after stringent selection, mishus generally are people who possess the quality of being hardworking, diligent, and conscientious in performing their duties for their leaders. Mishus are expected to work diligently and conscientiously for their leaders. They "do not observe day and night, Sundays, or holidays."<sup>48</sup> In some cases, they work so hard as to ruin their health. Mao's mishu Tian Jiaying once kept working intensely for days in order to fulfill his task until out of exhaustion he vomited blood.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, for

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46. Shi Zhe, Zai lishi juren shenbian (Being Close to the Historical Giants), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1991. p. 238.

47. Harrison E. Salisbury, The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992, p. 147.

48. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 112.

49. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and his mishu Tian Jiaying," ("Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying"), in Dong

all occasional reports of their venal behavior,<sup>50</sup> mishu personnel are on the whole the least corrupt elements of the Chinese political system. The general morality stems partly from the effects of strict selection and psychological conditioning (to be discussed later) and partly from self-interested considerations. Being young and on the fast track for upward mobility, mishus are usually willing to defer immediate gratification for the sake of future profits; grabbing short-term benefits (e.g., taking briberies) at the risk of compromising their career advancement is not in their best interest, after all.<sup>51</sup>

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Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying, p. 21. The author is a former mishu of Mao.

50. One example of mishus taking advantage of their privileged positions to promote their private interests in violation of the law is Li Shanyou, a deputy chief mishu of the provincial government of Hainan, who "has had low morality and lived a dissolute life, having a long-time mistress, visiting prostitutes, arousing public indignation, and taking briberies by abusing his powers." Li was recently arrested and indicted of the above crimes. (People's Daily, overseas edition, December 25, 1993, p. 1.)

51. Mishus' mentality in this regard is explained by an important mishu in the State Council General Office. According to him, the work of the State Council GO mishus is very heavy and stressful, and they receive fewer fringe benefits than ordinary people with comparable ranks, because they are supposed to set the example for others to emulate. The State Council GO mishus are motivated, according to the interviewee, by two factors: 1) a strong sense of responsibility and importance of their work; and 2) valuable experience and skills to be learned and virtually guaranteed promotions upon leaving their posts.

### Personal Benefits for Mishus

The Chinese proverb "The moon shines clearest on the pavilion nearest the water (jin shui loudai xian de yue)" refers to the fact that he who is physically close to a center of power will benefit first and most. This fits a mishu's situation perfectly in that physical proximity to political leaders automatically brings them respectability, power, and influence. Depending on the prestige and authority of their leaders, mishus are generally treated as honored figures in themselves, demanding special attention and treatment wherever they go from all they deal with. For example, Wang Ruilin, director of Deng's personal mishu office, is regarded as "the number one person 'connected with heaven.'"<sup>52</sup> "All VIPs of the CCP who want to see Deng Xiaoping have to pass through Director Wang. All that Deng Xiaoping is exposed to and says has to go through Director Wang as well."<sup>53</sup> As a result, Wang Ruilin is considered by political insiders in Beijing as "the real boss" of the country, and even Yang Shangkun, then PRC president and Deng's close personal friend for sixty years, "comes after him."<sup>54</sup>

It is political commonplace in China that there are three kinds of people one can ill afford to offend: a leader,

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52. "Deng Xiaoping mishu: tongtian yihao renwu" ("Deng's Mishu: the Number One Person Connected with Heaven"), Jingji ribao (The Economy Daily), Hong Kong, April 2, 1992.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

his spouse and children, and his mishu. Mao's mishu, Zhang Yufeng, was a case in point. "During the time when she worked for Mao Zedong, some people would stop at nothing to please her and ingratiate themselves with her. Even her mother-in-law would receive special favors when she was hospitalized. The head of the hospital would make a point of personally presiding over all joint diagnosis sessions on her case by experts."<sup>55</sup>

Being physically close to political leaders, mishus are generally treated as political leaders' alter egos, thus being held in high regard. Even political leaders themselves tend to be deferential toward mishus of other leaders. For example, Ye Qun, Lin Biao's wife and a Politburo member herself, was overheard by her mishu to use an extremely supplicating tone when talking with a mishu of Chen Boda: "Mishu Wang, I am begging you for a favor....I am not being polite, but I am literally begging you...."<sup>56</sup> Chen Boda, in his turn, acted in an even more humble manner when talking with mishus of Jiang Qing. When the mishus, who were very young in age, asked Chen, a member of the Politburo standing committee, for "guidance and criticisms," Chen insisted that they treat him as their equals: "We should look after each

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55. Ruan Jihong, "Mao Zedong he tade jiyao mishu Zhang Yufeng" ("Mao Zedong and His Confidential Mishu Zhang Yufeng") in Zhang Yufeng et al., eds., Mao Zedong Yishi (Anecdotes About Mao Zedong), Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1989, p. 40.

56. Zhang Yunsheng, The Eyewitness Accounts, p. 82.

other...help and inspire each other....Please put in some words in my favor to Comrade Jiang Qing. I am bothering you two for this favor."<sup>57</sup> On occasion Premier Zhou Enlai would ask politely Mao's personal mishu, Tian Jiaying, for policy guidance.<sup>58</sup> Deng Xiaoping treated respectfully the same mishu by helping him with a promotion.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, leaders' children usually are taught to act respectfully toward their parents' mishus. When mishus go down to lower level bureaucracies on inspection tours, the bureaucrats there will go to extraordinary lengths to please them. The mishus receive much more attention and favorable treatment than their actual ranks deserve. For example, when Chen Yun's mishu Xu Yongyao made his inspection tour of Shenzhen and some other Special Economic Zones, he was received "with an extraordinary fanfare," which was usually reserved for a vice-premier, even though Xu only held the formal rank of deputy ministership.<sup>60</sup> By the same token, if the mishu of a provincial leader comes down to a prefecture-level leadership squad on an inspection tour, at least one of the chief leaders will receive and

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57. Lin Qingshan, Jiang Qing chen fu lu (The Rise and Fall of Jiang Qing), Beijing: Zhongguo xinwen chubanshe, 1988, pp. 414-415.

58. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying," p. 66.

59. Ibid., p. 83.

60. He Pin, "Fengsheng hedi gao gaige" ("Waging Reforms with a Fear of Dangers Lurking Everywhere"), Zhongguo zhi chun (China Spring), No. 110 (1992), p. 27; Shi Liuzi, "A Group Portrait," p. 28.

constantly accompany him during his visit and he is entertained with endless feasts and delights.<sup>61</sup>

The memoirs of almost all the former mishu for political leaders tells of how the news of being chosen for the position threw them into a state of great excitement and gave them wildly pumping hearts and agonizing worries about their competence for the job of such apparently staggering importance. The new mishu's colleagues and immediate superiors would instantly shower them with congratulations, flattery, and envy.

Mishu is such an enviable title and will automatically bring so much respectability and status to its bearer that about ten million people proudly and enthusiastically claim the title in the Chinese political arena.<sup>62</sup> Anyone who provides some service directly to a political leader, important or trivial, will insist on being labeled or counted in as a "mishu." For example, state-assigned housekeepers for Chinese leaders are gladly entitled their "personal life mishus (shenghuo mishu)"; senior bodyguards, their "security mishus (jingwei mishu)"; ghost-writers or speech-writers, their "writing mishus" (wenzi mishu); foreign language interpreters, their "translation mishus (fanyi mishu)"; document keepers, their "confidential mishus (jiyao mishu)";

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61. Personal interviews.

62. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of Mishu Work, p. 90.

advisers, their "political mishus (zhengzhi mishu)"; so on and so forth.

The nature of their job enables mishus to form close personal relationship with political leaders and thus win their personal liking. A mishu is expected to be loaded with a rich supply of amusing anecdotes about literature, geology, sciences, Chinese history, world history and the like, so as to be a delightful and informative companion to his leader.<sup>63</sup> Our research reveals that it is a very common practice for Chinese leaders to have a relaxed chat with their mishus from time to time, in order to cheer themselves up or just to kill time, and to use them as guides when visiting historical sites or other tourist attractions.<sup>64</sup> For example, one of Mao's greatest pastimes was to chat with his knowledgeable mishu Tian Jiaying almost every evening, with topics ranging from poetry, philosophy, Chinese classics, history, to calligraphy.<sup>65</sup>

Strong emotional attachment tends to develop between a leader and his mishu. Mishus and their leaders are, for that matter, encouraged "to be emotionally attached to each other"

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63. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, pp. 226-228.

64. Ibid.

65. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying," pp. 2-3; Salisbury, The New Emperors, p. 194.

and to "trust each other like friends."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, a mishu and his leader tend to treat each other as family members. For instance, a security mishu, who had served Mao for over fifteen years, recalls: "Mao Zedong always showed fatherly care for me in every detail of my life from my dating to my marriage and to the birth of my child. I gradually came to regard myself as a member of Mao's family."<sup>67</sup> When he was transferred to another position and was saying good-bye to Mao, he was choked with tears. Mao seems to have had similar emotional feelings for him. Mao broke into tears and hugged him passionately, saying: "My home is your home and you should come to visit me once a year as long as I live. After I die you should come to visit my grave once a year and I will be pleased."<sup>68</sup> Jiang Qing once told her mishu: "I treat you more warmly than I treat my own daughter....Sometimes I scold you and slap your face, but they are signs of motherly love."<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, intense emotional attachments can backfire badly and turn into hatred, when intra-elite strife gets out

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66. Wu Shaozu, "Shouzhang mishu gongzuo zongheng tan" ("Extensive Observations on the Work of a Leader's Mishu"), in The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work, p. 116.

67. Li Yingqiao, Zou xia shengtan de Mao Zedong (The Mao Zedong off the Altar), Shanxi: Zhongwai wenhua chubanshe, 1989, p. 265.

68. Ibid.

69. Lin Qingshan, The Rise and Fall of Jiang Qing, p. 415.

of hand, as during the Cultural Revolution. As an important one-time mishu Wu Shaozu explains:

...a hostile relationship occurred [between some leaders and their mishus] during the Cultural Revolution, causing some mishus to sell out their leaders in exchange for honors or their own survival and some leaders to frame and persecute their mishus. This was a very saddening situation.<sup>70</sup>

A well-known example was Mao's once most trusted mishu Tian Jiaying, who was driven to commit suicide after he lost Mao's trust.<sup>71</sup> Another case of love-hate relationship happened between Mao and Li Rui, who was once Mao's close mishu but later was persecuted and imprisoned by him. The same fate happened to Jiang Qing's confidential mishu Yan, her one-time favorite, who was thrown into jail after incurring her ire.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, these extreme cases take place only when normality of political life is seriously disrupted.

Under normal circumstances, however, the mutual trust and attachment between mishus and leaders enables mishus to enjoy the benefit of receiving frequent promotions. It is tacitly understood, according to our interviewees, between mishus and leaders that mishus should be promoted by one to three ranks by the time they leave the service of their leaders. Indeed, the post of mishu is the fast track for

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70. Wu Shaozu, "Extensive Observations," p. 117.

71. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying," pp. 69-80.

72. Lin Qingshan, The Rise and Fall of Jiang Qing, p.420.

upward social mobility in Chinese society. That is largely because:

In choosing his successor or promoting someone, a leader will think of his own mishu before anyone else. Because his mishu is obedient to him, and will remain so after being promoted, power will actually remain with the leader who would not feel so at ease if another person were chosen. Consequently, the shortcut into Chinese officialdom is to become a mishu. Indeed, children of high officials flock to the posts of mishu.<sup>73</sup>

The post of mishu is also a de facto cadre school, where one can best learn all the political secret, tricks and skills necessary for becoming a successful politician in the Chinese political arena. As a mishu, "one can learn the structure, systems, operations, networks, survival strategies, and struggle philosophy (of Chinese officialdom)."<sup>74</sup> Therefore, "Those who have been mishus make skillful and cunning officials, thus enjoying widespread goodwill, security and endurance, and frequent promotions. Those who have never been mishus tend to find themselves a square peg in a round hole, with their paths of promotion bumpy, their backing shaky, and their life expectancy in officialdom short."<sup>75</sup> Wu Shaozu explains:

"The post of mishu is an invaluable opportunity for learning [politics]. A mishu is usually young, but he is able to take part in important activities undeserved by his low rank and thus learn a lot of valuable knowledge that cannot be learned normally....From April 1972 to June 1975, I worked as a mishu

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73. Jiang Zhifeng, The Last Card, pp. 144-145.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

for Wang the Elder [Wang Zhen]. I feel that I was spending the time in a university on society. I had been a natural science major with just some meager experience in mass work, but had been completely ignorant about politics. My political talent was mostly formed during those three years....I learned many things from him [Wang Zhen] which have benefited me ever since."<sup>76</sup>

It is well-known to Western China watchers that China boasts a so-called "crown princes faction (taizi dang)," which refers to the fact that a significant number of political leaders' children have become ranking officials by dint of their family ties. Little known to the West, however, is the fact that there also exists in China a so-called "mishu faction (mishu dang or mishu bang),"<sup>77</sup> which refers to the fact that political leaders' mishus have risen to power in droves. It is claimed that "nine out of ten new leaders at various levels in China have had work experience as mishus."<sup>78</sup> While this may be an exaggeration, a considerable number of ranking officials, even quite a few top leaders, have indeed been mishus of one type or another in their past. Take Mao Zedong's wu da mishu (five major mishus) for example;<sup>79</sup> at least three of them rose to the highest level of Chinese political authority: Chen Boda became a member of the

<sup>76</sup>. Wu Shaozu, "Extensive Observations," pp. 112, 117.

<sup>77</sup>. Personal interviews; also see Shi Liuzi, "A Group Portrait," pp. 24-28.

<sup>78</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>. They were Chen Boda, Hu Qiaomu, Ye Zilong, Jiang Qing, and Tian Jiaying. Kao Zhi, "Jiang Qing wo zhineng guan bange" ("I Can Only Control Half of Jiang Qing"), in Quan Yanchi, ed., Lingxiu lei (The Leader's Tears), Beijing: Qiushi chubanshe, 1989, p. 94. The author was Mao's confidential mishu.

Politburo standing committee; Hu Qiaomu, a Politburo member; and Jiang Qing, a Politburo member.<sup>80</sup> Mao's other mishus who rose to political prominence include: Zhou Xiaozhou, the first secretary of a provincial Party committee; Qi Benyu, a member of the Cultural Revolution Small Group, which was the de facto Secretariat of the Central Committee at the time; Xie Juezai, President of the National Supreme People's Court; and Yan Mingfu, member of the Central Secretariat and head of Central Department for United Front Work.<sup>81</sup>

Table 2.2 provides a partial list of other top leaders' mishus and the highest positions they have achieved.

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80. Although she was Mao's wife personally, her official position for a long time was his administrative-cum-confidential mishu.

81. Shi Liuzi, "A Group Portrait," p.26.

Table 2.2: A partial list of other Politburo members' mishus and their subsequent highest positions<sup>82</sup>

leader	<u>mishu</u>	highest positions
Chen Yun	Wang Heshou	2rd secretary of CCDI* minister of heavy industry
Deng Xiaoping	Liu Huaqing	vice-chairman of CMC**
	Liu Fuzhi <sup>83</sup>	procurator-general of Supreme People's
	Wang Ruilin	deputy head of the General Political Department of PLA***
Hu Yaobang	Zheng Bijian	president of the China Academy of Social Sciences
Ke Qingshi	Zhang Chunqiao	member of Politburo standing committee
Lin Biao	Ye Qun	member of Politburo
Liu Shaoqi	Deng Liqun	member of CCPCC Secretariat head of Dept. of Propaganda of CCPCC
Peng Zhen	Ding Guangen	member of Politburo
Wang Jiaxiang	Tao Zhu	member of Politburo standing committee
Wang Zhen	Wu Shaozu	minister of SCPCS****

82. sources: Sheng Ping, Zhongguo Gongchandang renming da cidian (Who's Who in the Chinese Communist Party), Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1991; Zhongguo renming da cidian: xiandai dang zheng lingdao renwu jian (Who's Who in China: Current Leaders), compiled by the Editorial Board of Who's Who in China, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989; Shi Zhe, Zai lishi juren shenbian (Being Close to the Historical Giants), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1991, p. 245; Zhang Zuowei, "Kua shiji jiebanren: qunxiang" ("The Cross-Century Successors: Their Profiles"), Tansuo (The Quest), Vol. 6, No. 102 (1992), p. 12; and Shi Liuzi, "A Group Portrait," , pp. 25-26.

83. He also used to be Zhu De's mishu.

Table 2.2: (continued)

leader	<u>mishu</u>	highest positions
Zhao Ziyang	Tian Jiyun	member of Politburo standing committee; vice premier
Zhou Enlai	Song Ping	member of Politburo standing committee
Zhu De	Huang Hua	state councilor foreign minister

\* Central Commission for Discipline Inspection

\*\* Central Military Commission

\*\*\* The People's Liberation Army

\*\*\*\* State Commission for Physical Culture and Sports

The mishu position as the directorship of the CCPCC General Office has been a particularly powerful catapult to top leadership positions. Yang Shangkun, former state president of PRC and the one-time permanent vice-chairman of the Central Military Affairs Commission, was its first director after the founding the Communist regime in 1949. "He often described himself as actually the mishu for the Central leaders."<sup>84</sup> Chronologically after Yang Shangkun, the occupants of that position, and their subsequent highest posts, were: Wang Dongxing, vice-chairman of the CCPCC; Yao Yilin, a member of the Politburo standing committee; Hu Qili, a member of the Politburo standing committee; Qiao Shi, a member of the Politburo standing committee and Chairman of the National People's Congress; Wang Zhaoguo, a member of the CCPCC Secretariat; and Wen Jiabao, a member of the CCPCC Secretariat.<sup>85</sup> The pattern is the same further down the line,

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<sup>84</sup>. Wang Qiangong et al., A Practical Handbook, p. 91.

so that the directorship of the general office in any danwei (work unit) is a relatively sure elevator to a higher rank, and as such a much coveted and sought-after position.

In emphasizing the mishu position as an important social elevator, Chinese authors on mishu work like to flaunt the fact that Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping both once worked as mishus. Deng Yingchao, Zhou Enlai's wife, observed: "Comrades Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Ren Bishi, Qu Qiubai, among the late revolutionary leaders of the first generation, and Comrade Deng Xiaoping, of the current leadership, have not only made numerous important instructions on how mishu work should be carried out, but they have also worked as mishus themselves, being the founders of our Party's mishu work style and setting examples for us."<sup>86</sup> Mao has been hailed as "the very first mishu in the history of the Chinese Communist Party," since he was the mishu for the first National Congress of the CCP in 1921, and later worked as the mishu for the CCP Central Committee in 1923, a position which was equivalent in power to chief mishu (mishu zhang) of later time.<sup>87</sup> Deng served as chief mishu for the CCPC for a long time.<sup>88</sup>

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85. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo dang zheng jun qun lingdaoren minglu (Who's Who in the Party, Army, Government, Popular Organizations of the People's Republic of China), Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1990; People's Daily, overseas edition, October 1992, p. 1.

86. Deng Yingchao, "Mishu renyuan bixu zhongcheng dang de shiye" ("Mishu Personnel Must Be Loyal to the Party's Cause"), in The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work, p. 6.

87. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 72-73.

From the perspective of comparative politics, what is significant is the fact that in a society of rule of law, lawyers tend to be the dominant element in politics, whereas in China, where the principle of rule of man still prevails, mishus are the single most important social group in turning out political elites. For example, in American Congress, "just under half of House members are lawyers and about three fifths of senators are lawyers."<sup>88</sup> In the current Politburo of China, at least eleven or a half of its 22 full and alternate members come from a mishu background.<sup>90</sup> The skills and personality traits of mishu personnel are especially favored by the peculiarities of Chinese politics.

#### Personal Benefits for Bureaucrats

Bureaucrats benefit from the mishu institution by learning the true intentions, opinions, preferences, and feelings of leaders through their mishus. In China, where politics is still largely colored by the principle of rule of man, it is not very easy to get the above information, and yet such information is of critical importance. The

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88. Ibid. pp. 74, 76.

89. Randall B. Ripley and Grace A. Franklin, Congress, the Bureaucracy, and Public Policy, Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1984, p. 38.

90. They are: Chen Xitong, Ding Guangen, Hu Jintao, Jiang Chunyun, Li Langqing, Liu Huaqing, Qian Qichen, Qiao Shi, Tan Shaowen, Tian Jiyun, Wang Hanbin, Wei Jianxing, Wen Jiabao, Xie Fei, and Zou Jiahua, according to the biographical data provided in People's Daily, overseas edition, October 20, 1992, pp. 2-3.

difficulty arises from the fact that in the Chinese political process, written documents are typically too vague and too general to be good indication of leaders' real intentions, as will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter. Chinese leaders have a tendency to be deliberately vague and ambiguous in their written statements, leaving the subordinate bureaucrats to muddle through while claiming credits for achievements and successes but not being held accountable for any policy failures.

Besides, the Chinese document circulation system has a peculiar feature which facilitates leaders' practice of equivocation, that is, "circling" (guanyue). Under this system, all that a leader needs to do about a draft document in circulation among the members of the leadership squad is to circle his name on the readers' list to indicate that he has read the document; he has no obligation to make any comments, pro or con. It is by no means uncommon that even such circles are in fact drawn, not by leaders themselves, but by their mishus. A mere circle often leaves his colleagues and bureaucrats to guess about his true intentions. Mao is a case in point, as Salisbury's field interviews reveal: "...not since 1949 had Mao signed any memorandum from Liu [Shaoqi]. Papers came back marked with a small circle to indicate that Mao had read them but there was never any mark of approval or disapproval. Since the founding

of the People's Republic, Liu had to guess with every document whether Mao was for or against it."<sup>91</sup>

The gap between the vague wording, equivocation, or generality and leaders' true intentions is largely left to be filled by the informal oral communication by the mishus between leaders and bureaucrats.<sup>92</sup> Mishus are in the best position to fill this role, since they are physically the closest to leaders and enjoy access to their innermost thoughts and virtually all their secrets. "For all their low ranks," explains Wu Shaozu, an important former mishu, "mishus know a great deal -- as much as their leaders do,..."<sup>93</sup> One of our interviewees, who used to be a personal mishu for a minister, even claimed:

A mishu may even know more than his leader, since he is the one who reads and sifts all incoming documents. A large part of those documents never get through to the leader. It is little wonder that he knows a lot that his boss doesn't know.

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91. Salisbury, The New Emperors, p. 270.

92. It is significant to note that in the American political process, deliberate ambiguity also occurs in many policy documents, as for example, "...many laws are the product of compromises in ideas and language. Often the crucial agreements are achieved through deliberate ambiguity, and the conflicting forces then merely shift the field of battle from the legislative halls to the administrators' offices. (Bernard Rosen, Holding Government Bureaucracy Accountable, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982, p. 4) In such a case, however, interpretation of the "intent" of the law at issue is open to many actors, such as administrators, the court, interests groups, issue specialists, and the White House staff. Political openness precludes any single set of actors from monopolizing "the most authoritative" interpretation, as mishus do in the Chinese political process which is still shrouded in secrecy or semi-secrecy.

93. Wu Shaozu, "Extensive Observations," p. 114.

But there is very little that his leader knows he doesn't know.

Chinese mishus are said to enjoy easy access to three types of vital secrets of or about Chinese political leaders: 1) "the decisions reached by leadership cores that have not yet been put in practice, and leaders' thoughts, intentions, and opinions concerning how various issues should be handled;" 2) "the secret documents of the Central and local governments and the top secrets of the state about economy, scientific researches, military defense, technologies etc.;" and 3) "leaders' whereabouts and their itineraries, and the situations of their family members."<sup>94</sup>

Take Mao for example, "Mao had few secrets from his closest associates, his bodyguards and his secretaries. With them he was open and remarkably frank."<sup>95</sup> Mao Zedong once told his long-time security mishu that, "There are no secrets about me or my family that I can hide from you even if I can hide them from heaven or earth."<sup>96</sup> The same was true of Mao's once most trusted mishu Tian Jiaying: "Tian told a

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<sup>94</sup>. Chen Hongbin et al., The Concise Handbook, pp. 64-65. The importance of these secrets is such that "whenever ministers and governors meet, they like to exchange these types of secrets -- not just out of curiosity but because of the fact that it is of critical consequence for political survival to learn the secrets as early as possible and anticipate possible new developments." Jiang Zhifeng, The Last Card, pp. iv-v.

<sup>95</sup>. Salisbury, The New Emperors, p. 170.

<sup>96</sup>. Quan Yanchi, Zouxia shengtan de Mao Zedong (The Mao Zedong off the Altar), Beijing: Zhongwai wenhua chuban gongsi, p. 1.

friend that he and Mao were genuine confidants. He told Mao everything he knew or thought, and he believed Mao did the same with him."<sup>97</sup>

Mishus know almost all of their leaders' true thoughts and intentions also because they have the responsibility of being the censors for their public statements. For instance, three of Mao's top mishus, Tian Jiaying, Hu Qiaomu, and Chen Boda, were primarily responsible for compiling and editing Mao's collected works. They published only revised versions, making no note of what had been changed, which they kept to themselves.<sup>98</sup> Besides, since the early 1950s Mao's mishus took pictures for record of all of Mao's letters, public or private, "with only a few exceptions," in order to keep track of the development of his thoughts.<sup>99</sup>

As a consequence, mishus are often the most authoritative interpreters of leaders' thoughts and intentions, and bureaucrats have to go to them, hat in hand, to fish for such interpretations. That was why Premier Zhou Enlai had to ask Mao's mishus from time to time about Mao's opinions on a particular policy.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, even Zhou's wife Deng Yingchao had often to turn to his mishus to learn what

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97. Salisbury, The New Emperors, p. 193.

98. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying," p. 13.

99. Ibid. p. 11.

100. Ibid. p. 66.

Zhou was up to.<sup>101</sup> A Chinese mishu explains: "Working constantly in the presence of his leader, a personal mishu is regarded by the broad masses and cadres as the representative and spokesman for his leader. Accordingly, his words and acts, as a rule, are watched closely and his opinions are taken seriously."<sup>102</sup> Mishus' interpretation of leaders' thoughts and intentions becomes all the more important when leaders get old and even senile. During his last years when Mao was "somewhat not in his right mind," according to Ji Dengkui, a former Politburo member and Mao's protégé, it was the job of his confidential mishu Zhang Yufeng and his interpretation mishus Wang Hairong and Nancy Tang to translate his grunts and slurs into coherent statements.<sup>103</sup> Today, Deng Xiaoping's chief mishu Wang Ruilin and his political mishu Deng Rong (his daughter) are apparently performing the same role with him.

In some cases, mishus are the only channel for bureaucrats to get access to critical information about leaders, such as the information about leaders' health condition, feelings, and preferences. Mao's confidential mishu Zhang Yufeng has recently revealed that his mishus were the only persons who knew the true condition of Mao's health

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101. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai and His Mishus, p.463.

102. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 198.

103. Hai Lude et al., eds., Shenghuo zhongde Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong in Real Life), Beijing: Hualing chubanshe, 1989, p. 299; Salisbury, The New Emperors, pp. 341, 345.

and no other people, not even Politburo members, were allowed to know this topmost secret.<sup>104</sup> Today, Deng Xiaoping's mishus keep absolute secret about the true condition of his health, and Wang Ruilin, director of his personal mishu office, lets only the seven members of the Politburo standing committee in on this information.<sup>105</sup>

As for learning and handling leaders' personal feelings and preferences, Chinese bureaucrats rely heavily upon mishus for guidance. Yang Shangkun, who was director of the Central General Office for over twenty years, was a good example in this regard:

There was hardly a secret Yang did not know and no one of consequence in the Party with whom he was not on familiar terms. Yang Shangkun ... usually could advise others on when and how best to approach the chairman [Mao] and on which topics could be brought up and which were to be avoided....He was the insider's insider.<sup>106</sup>

Mao's personal mishus were also able to provide bureaucrats with tips as to "which way Mao's wind was blowing" -- whether he was in a "good news" pattern or a "bad news" mood.<sup>107</sup> Without realizing a leader's emotional state, a

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104. Zhang Yufeng, "A Few Anecdotes," p. 129.

105. Zhong Xingzhi, "Fan Deng anchao yin lan you qi" (A New Anti-Deng Undercurrent Is Surging Secretly"), Zhongguo Shibao Zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 83 (August 1-7, 1993), p. 16.

106. Salisbury, The New Emperors, pp. 201-202.

107. Ibid. p. 171.

bureaucrat runs the danger of stroking his hair the wrong way and thus incur serious consequences for his political fate. As a caveat, the practice of letting mishus interpret leaders' "true intentions" is not without problems or even dangers. There have been occasional complaints about mishus deliberately distorting or falsifying "imperial decrees," namely, leaders' oral instructions.<sup>108</sup> A well-known example is Mao's chief mishu Tian Jiaying, who deliberately omitted some key points in editing Mao's talk regarding the issue of the historical play Hai Rui Dismissed from Office on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. (This incident will be discussed in Chapter Four.)

Of course, deliberate distortion and subtle manipulation easily shade into each other. Thus, Chinese bureaucrats benefit not only from mishus' tips about leaders' intentions and feelings but also from mishus' assistance in manipulating individual leaders' perceptions and decisions to advance their separate interests. Chinese leaders are particularly susceptible to persuasion and manipulation of their mishus. Thus, mishus' help is critical for getting a leader's support or bringing his mind around to a bureaucrat's point of view. Again, take Mao for example. Mao often appeared iron-willed, menacing, and uncompromising to his colleagues and bureaucrats, and yet he was open and receptive to the

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108. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 138.

opinions and suggestions of the mishu personnel around him. His long-time security mishu Li Yingqiao recalls:

It was my feeling that Mao Zedong sometimes had an over-receptive ear for words from the people immediately around him, if they were repeated over and over....Comrade Shi Zhe the [Russian] interpreter once told Mao that Gao Gang<sup>109</sup> was a good cadre with unusual talent. After hearing the remark several times, Mao himself began to praise Gao.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, bureaucrats can benefit a great deal if they have mishus incessantly insinuate their points of view to the leaders. That was why Liu Shaoqi cultivated an ally in Mao's trusted mishu Tian Jiaying and had Tian present Liu's policy views to Mao in his behalf. In the wake of the "Great Leap" fiasco, Tian "repeatedly suggested to Mao...that Chen Yun be restored to taking charge of the economy."<sup>111</sup> At Liu Shaoqi's request, Tian suggested to Mao that Chen Yun's policy to "assign production quotas to individual households" be adopted.<sup>112</sup>

It is now no secret that the Gang of Four's "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius" campaign, which was in fact aimed at attacking Zhou Enlai, was successfully launched only with the

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109. A key Party leader, Gao was purged in the 1950s in the so called Gao-Rao incident under the charge of attempting to split the Party and conspiring with the Soviet Union.

110. Quan Yanchi, The Mao Zedong off the Altar, pp. 141-142.

111. Peng Yaxin, "A Short Biography of Tian Jiaying," p. 324.

112. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying," pp. 67-68.

help of Mao's two interpreter-mishus, Wang Hairong and Nancy Tang:

Wang Hairong and Nancy Tang had begun to feed Mao hints about Zhou Enlai. They reminded Mao that Zhou had not been enthusiastic about the Cultural Revolution. Wang Hairong trod very cautiously. "I have an idea -- I don't know whether it is right or not," she said. "In the Cultural Revolution when the rebels built a fire, Zhou was always there to put it out." Mao was not eager to launch a new campaign. "Sunset is very beautiful," he observed. "But dusk is approaching. The time for me to report to Marx is nearing by the day." But Wang Hairong persisted, and Mao finally agreed that Zhou was indeed a modern Confucius, always searching for the golden mean. "It is time to criticize him," he said.<sup>113</sup>

The Gang's campaign to "Criticize Deng and Fight the Rightist Wind," which brought Deng Xiaoping down for a second time, got off the ground after Mao's liaison mishu, Mao Yuanxin,<sup>114</sup> talked the Chairman into authorizing it:

On an early November day in 1975 Mao Yuanxin had a talk with his uncle. Mao was coughing. A cold wind was blowing. The nephew said: "The wind outside isn't as strong as another wind."

"What do you mean?" Mao asked.

"I mean the wind of some people to negate the Cultural Revolution."

"Tell me more," Mao said.

"There are a number of questions here -- whether the Cultural Revolution was seventy percent good and thirty percent bad or the reverse. How to assess the campaign against Lin Biao and Confucius and whether to continue to criticize Liu Shaoqi."

With a surgeon's skill the nephew touched the most sensitive nerves of Mao's ideological being. Deng Xiaoping was at the root of the problem. Deng, he said, hardly ever mentioned the Cultural Revolution or Mao. He never criticized

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113. Salisbury, The New Emperors, p. 343.

114. Mao Yuanxin was Mao's nephew, son of his brother Mao Zemin.

Liu Shaoqi. He lauded Zhou Enlai. All he talked about was production. Mao's face darkened. His breath came quicker.<sup>115</sup>

Mao's case was by no means an exception. Evidence strongly indicates that it is a widespread practice for bureaucrats to try anything, including giving substantial gifts or bribery, to cultivate friendships with mishus in order to benefit from their help in getting leaders' attention and support. The critical importance of mishus' help is illustrated in the mishus' role in setting the agenda for a conference or meeting. It is usually the chief leader's mishu or director of the general office who is responsible for setting the agenda for any conference or meeting. It is largely up to him to decide what issues are to be included and what not, and when to raise them, with how much emphasis or casualness. One of our interviewees explains why personal connections with mishus are crucial in this regard:

If you have an urgent problem that needs immediate attention of the leaders, you have to first ask for help of the mishu [or director of the general office]. Otherwise he can easily block or kill your issue, by raising it at an inappropriate time or in an inappropriate manner, or simply by putting it off. It's so difficult for all the leaders concerned to meet and sit down together at the same conference that skipping one such opportunity often means that your issue will be shelved for a long, long time, if not indefinitely. A mishu's cooperation or lack of it makes all the difference.

Moreover, mishus' help in letting leaders grant public appearances is also very important for bureaucrats, since they often play a critical part in deciding and arranging

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115. Salisbury, The New Emperors, pp. 343-344. Also see Fan Shuo, Ye Jianying zai 1976 (Ye Jianying in 1976), Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1990, pp. 57-63.

such appearances. An important leader's mere appearance at an activity organized by a bureaucracy can bring enormous benefits to the host unit. This is because:

It is a common practice that with the presence of one leader or another, an activity will be automatically regarded as a success; but without the presence of a leader, it will be regarded as a failure or an insignificant event. When judging the importance of an activity, people will first see which important leaders have come, hence the frenzied struggle to invite leaders to various activities regardless of whether it is necessary or not.<sup>116</sup>

### Summary

The mishu institution is different in nature from bureaucracy in that embodying the traditional leader-follower relationship, the former is based on intense personal attachment, oral communication, diffusiveness of role, and fluidity of responsibilities, whereas the latter is based on the principles of impersonality, primacy of written rules, specialization, proceduralization, and fixed and well-defined scopes of jurisdictions. The mishu institution proves personally beneficial to all the parties in the Chinese political arena. Leaders have reliable and versatile agents/servants to take care of their private interests and personal needs. Mishus are able to directly please leaders and win their personal liking and trust. As a result, they are rewarded with quick and frequent promotions by the

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116. Yi Chengjie et al., Zhengwu jieqia yu lingdao huodong anpai (Receiving of Official Visitors and Arranging of Leaders' Activities), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 58.

leaders, in addition to enjoying great respectability and wielding tremendous de facto power. Moreover, mishus also profit by enjoying opportunities to learn all the political secrets, tricks, and skills for becoming successful leaders in the Chinese political arena. The mishu institution offers bureaucrats with several crucial benefits. Mishus' oral communication and assistance enable bureaucrats to find out leaders' otherwise vague and elusive intentions and feelings, to get critical political information about leaders as persons, and to privately manipulate leaders' perceptions, decisions, and activities for the sake of promoting their separate interests.

## Chapter Three

### THE CONTROL ROLE

The previous chapter examined the personal benefits that the mishu institution work to bring to individual actors. When it comes to the functioning of the Chinese political system as a whole, the Chinese mishu institution performs two basic roles, namely, amplifying political leadership's control over the bureaucracy and cushioning conflicts and clashes among political leaders and between leaders and bureaucracies. This chapter focuses on the analysis of the control role while leaving the examination of the cushioning/coordinates role to the next chapter.

For analytical purposes, the mishu system's control role can be regarded as consisting of two aspects: 1) enhancing leadership's information and decision capacity; and 2) strengthening leadership's monitoring and supervision capacity, though the two aspects are inseparably intertwined in practice. Put in another way, the two aspects can also be understood as: 1) improving leaders' ability to respond effectively to what bureaucracies communicate upward willingly, and 2) expanding leaders' capability to find out what bureaucrats want to hide and to push them to do what they are reluctant to do. This chapter comprises two parts to examine these two aspects separately.

#### Part I. Amplifying the Information and Decision Capacity

### Sifting and Condensing Information

With decision-making power highly concentrated in themselves, Chinese political leaders make an extraordinarily wide scope of decisions for the bureaucracies under their charge, ranging from policy goals, personnel, budgets, political and moral education, down to family planning and birth control. As a result, leadership squads always find themselves drowned "in a Niagara Falls of issues."<sup>1</sup> In order to exercise effective leadership, a staggering amount of information from below has to be processed on a continuous basis. As a result, communication overload has been a chronic burning issue for Chinese leaders. Chinese political leaders rely heavily upon their mishus' assistance to reduce to manageable proportions the information torrents, which constantly gush upward from bureaucracies.<sup>2</sup>

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1. David M. Lampton, "A Plum for a Peach: Bargaining, Interest, and Bureaucratic Politics in China," in Kenneth G. Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China, California: University of California Press, 1992, p. 52.

2. Chinese leaders have, in theory, adopted the practice of so-called management-by-exception in order to alleviate the problem of overload. This means that the subordinate bureaucracies are encouraged to work out solutions to as many problems as possible among themselves instead of passing the buck upward. Once a decision is made by consensus among the bureaucracies on an issue, it will be automatically approved by the presiding leadership squad. Only when consensus cannot be reached should the issue be passed upward to the leadership squad. This practice is, in theory, meant to reduce the leadership squad's overload, to make the best use of the expertise of the bureaucrats, and to cultivate a sense of participation among subordinates and enhance their commitment to the decision thus made. In practice, however, this arrangement rarely works as intended. The bureaucrats

To be able to handle, with tolerable effectiveness, large amounts of information passed upward from bureaucracies, Chinese political principals let virtually all incoming information first pass through their mishu, personal and/or organizational, so that it is "sifted, classified, abstracted, analyzed, evaluated, verified, and refined."<sup>3</sup> For example, all letters and visits for a leader have to be first processed by his personal mishu, regardless of what they are about -- suggestions, criticisms, petitions, pleas, accusations, reporting on someone, exposing evil-doings, and the like. The mishu is required to decide whether they should be passed on to his leader, be forwarded to the subordinate departments concerned, be handled by himself, or just be ignored.<sup>4</sup>

The same is true of all incoming official documents. A mishu is supposed to "read carefully and repeatedly every

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are still inclined to refer decisions, big and small, to the leadership instead of trying to settle them among themselves. After all, intervention from leadership is usually more effective and beneficial than the deal worked out by bureaucratic co-equals through laborious bargaining and haggling. This point is explained by Susan L. Shirk in "The Chinese Political System and the Political Strategy of Economic Reform," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, pp. 71-73.

3. Wang Zhaoguo, "Chongfen fahui bangongting de canmou. zhushou zuoyong" ("Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices in Providing Advice and Assistance"), in Lingdao Tongzhi Tan Mishu Gongzuo (The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work), Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1989, p.74.

4. Zheng Xinghan et al., Dangzheng jiguan mishu gongzuo gaishu (An Outline of the Mishu Work in the Party and State Organs), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 79.

incoming document" so as to "sift through (shaixuan)" them and "filter out unimportant ones."<sup>5</sup> He is also responsible for establishing the priority of urgency on each document for getting his leader's attention, by determining "which ones the leader should read immediately, and which ones he should read later; which information reported from below the leader should learn in detail, and which he should only learn generally; which suggestions submitted from below the leader should respond to, and which ones he need not;..."<sup>6</sup> For example, Mao's former confidential mishu, Kao Zhi, recalls that, "One of my important jobs was to sift through all the documents, telegrams, and materials sent in from all the ministries, provinces, cities, and prefectures, and decide which of them should be passed on to the Chairman and which should not."<sup>7</sup>

The mishu also has to abstract (zhaiyao) and refine those documents that are to be read by his leader in order to make them concise and easily understandable. If they are too long, he must condense them; if they are poorly organized, they must rewrite and polish them.<sup>8</sup> If a mishu fails to do so

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5. Ibid. p. 40.

6. Ibid., p. 201.

7. Kao Zhi, "Jiang Qing wo zhineng guan bange" ("I Can Only Control Half of Jiang Qing") in Quan Yanchi, ed., Lingxiu lei (The leader's Tears), Beijing: Qiushi chubanshe, 1989, p. 94.

8. Qi Peiwen et al., Zenyang danghao lingdaoren mishu (How to Be a Good Personal Mishu for a Leader), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, pp. 170-171.

but just passes a document on to his leader as it is, he will be reprimanded. For instance, Zhou Enlai's personal mishus each received about thirty documents every day from the ministries under their respective scopes of responsibility.<sup>9</sup> These documents were as a rule "rather long" and Zhou's mishus had to read them carefully and write an abstract of no more than a few hundred words for each of them.<sup>10</sup>

It is also a common practice for high-ranking Chinese leaders to let their mishus do all the reading and then report orally to them the gist of the documents. Lin Biao was a typical example. One of his mishus' job was to read each day all the documents that came from various bureaucracies to Lin's office and to report orally on the most important ones. The decision about the relative importance of each document lay totally with the mishu. He had to condense the daily load of about one hundred documents into two such presentations, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, each lasting only ten to twenty minutes.<sup>11</sup> It is also known that

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9. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai he tade mishumen (Zhou Enlai and His Mishus), Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992, pp. 100, 181. The contributors are all Zhou's former mishus.

10. Ibid, p. 263. A mishu once failed to pluck up enough courage to touch a report from a certain vice-premier but passed it on to Zhou without re-writing it, Premier Zhou flew into sharp-tongued fury, accusing the mishu of wasting his time. (Ibid, pp. 103-104.)

11. Zhang Yunsheng, Maojiawan jishi: Lin Biao mishu huiyi lu (The Eyewitness Accounts of Maojiawan: The Memoirs of Lin Biao's Mishu), Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1988, pp. 12-13.

Deng Xiaoping relied heavily on his mishus' oral reports and presentations in managing incoming information flows.<sup>12</sup> Such practice apparently enables leaders to keep track of a wide scope of issues and new developments in the bureaucracies.

#### Enhancing Leadership's Decision-Making Capability

In order to help leaders cope with the constant deluges of information from bureaucracies, Chinese mishus not only sift and condense all incoming information, but also in effect make large numbers of decisions on behalf of their leaders. For example, they are said to make preliminary decisions (niban) on most incoming documents that require responses from the leaders. A mishu is supposed to read every document that is intended to be read by his leader, and "for each document a mishu is expected to offer his suggestions to the leader as to how it should be handled, providing options if necessary. In case of several options, the mishu should indicate his own preference and his reasoning," so as to facilitate his leader's decision-making.<sup>13</sup> An example is provided by Deng Xiaoping's practice. It is recorded that "...Deng would receive a document from subordinate written for his approval. Deng requested Wang [one of his mishus] to

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12. Michel Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication Within the Chinese Bureaucracy," China Quarterly, No. 57 (January-March 1974), p. 20.

13. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, pp. 41-42.

read it first, and if he [Wang] found nothing objectionable, Deng signed without examination."<sup>14</sup>

Chinese mishus are, in many cases, entrusted with the authority even to "make the final decisions and directly issue instructions (piban)" on a wide variety of documents. Carol Hamrin has noticed this role of Chinese personal mishus in her research: "In the Chinese system, like the Soviet system, these secretaries tend to be better educated than the leaders and actually do much of the work, making important decisions on their own."<sup>15</sup> When authorized to issue instructions by himself to subordinate departments in processing documents, a mishu is expected to "stipulate the guidelines, principles, and methods for handling the issues."<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, mishus amplify leaders' decision-making capacity by offering extensive advice. Take Zhou Enlai's personal mishus for example. "When he [Zhou Enlai] was reading documents, he would frequently ask us mishus for opinions and encourage us to offer our thoughts, if he was not sure about something. One of us mishus once told him: 'All the documents that pass through our hands have already been signed by the ministers and must have been thoroughly

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14. Oksenberg, "Methods of Communications," p. 21.

15. Carol Lee Hamrin, "The Party Leadership System," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, p. 122.

16. Qi Peiwen et al, How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 45.

studied, and so we cannot think of anything more to say.' The Premier disagreed."<sup>17</sup> Zhou demanded his mishus "to be creative and not to be confined to routine and technicality. He urged repeatedly: 'You can make policy suggestions boldly and help me with ideas.' He often asked questions and discussed problems with us mishus. He would accept whatever little bits of our suggestions made sense."<sup>18</sup>

A mishu is expected to provide advice on literally everything to his leader in his leadership work. For example, before a political leader meets a foreign visitor, it is his mishu's duty to brief and counsel him with regard to the relevant information about the visitor, his mission, and his country, "so that the leader can raise pointed questions and provide accurate answers during the meeting."<sup>19</sup> Before a leader goes to watch a dramatic performance or sports game, his mishu is expected to brief and counsel him concerning the event and each of the actors or players, "so that the leader can encourage them, point out their shortcomings, and answer in an informed manner questions they may ask."<sup>20</sup>

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17. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai and His Mishus, p. 183. It is typical of Chinese mishus to modestly understate their role in front of their leaders.

18. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai and His Mishus, p. 183.

19. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 150.

20. Ibid. p. 152.

## Part II. Amplifying the Monitoring/Supervision Capability

### Collecting and Verifying Information

Although Chinese political leaders are constantly under the relentless pressure of information overload, they experience difficulty of varying degrees in getting true, accurate and useful information from bureaucracies. Bureaucrats have a natural tendency to hide the information that will not show them in a favorable light. Consequently, Chinese leaders have to rely heavily upon their mishus to serve as their "eyes and ears,"<sup>21</sup> in order to have some capacity to collect or verify information independently.

Mao Zedong's practice was an example in point. Mao repeatedly complained that "nobody tells me anything" through the normal bureaucratic channels.<sup>22</sup> So he made frequent travels across the country in an attempt to obtain information independently by himself, only in vain. "He staged surprise attacks, in which he would suddenly order his special train to halt at an obscure village, leap out, and hurry to the Party office, hoping to catch the residents unaware."<sup>23</sup> However, the news of his coming always traveled

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21. Qi Peiwen et al., ibid. p. 4; Xu Ruixin et al., Zhongguo xiandai mishu gongzuo jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, p. 150.

22. Harrison E. Salisbury, The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1992, p. 79.

23. Ibid.

faster, so that "even the whisper of a visit by Mao created a frenzy to fix things up, to paint houses, to fill cupboards, to bring in food, to find happy peasants to tell Mao everything was just dandy."<sup>24</sup> Mao complained: "Wherever I go they prepare for me. I can't find out the truth."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Mao ended up having to depend on his mishus to gather information on his behalf. He sent them out frequently on field investigations. He relied particularly on "the no-words-spared reports" of his then most trusted mishu, Tian Jiaying, to find out bad news and unpleasant facts.<sup>26</sup>

As individual leaders depend heavily upon their personal mishus to obtain true and accurate information, so leadership squads rely primarily upon the organizational mishus in the general offices for clarifying and verifying information from subordinate bureaucracies. In terms of information flows, a general office is often described as the "hole of the

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24. Ibid. p. 173. Also see Li Yingqiao, Zouxia shentan de Mao Zedong (The Mao Zedong off the Altar), Shanxi: Zhongwai wenhua chuban gongsi, 1989, p. 54.

25. Salisbury, The New Emperors, p. 79.

26. Ibid. p. 196. It is noteworthy that in addition to his mishus, Mao also let his body guards play an important role in collecting or verifying information for him in order to be able to circumvent the normal bureaucratic channels. Mao had a large detachment of body guards directly at his disposal. Mao ordered that each of his personal body guards be selected from a different prefecture across the country without overlapping, so that he could "obtain true information about the whole country" through them. [Quan Yanchi, Zouxia shengtan de Mao Zedong (The Mao Zedong off the Altar), Beijing: Zhongwai wenhua chuban gongsi, 1989, p. 50.] Since China has 336 prefectures, this was about the size of Mao's personal bodyguard detachment.

funnel," in the sense that virtually all information that goes to a leadership squad passes through its general office, to be verified and clarified -- to a greater or lesser degree.

In order to improve or maximize the truthfulness of the information from bureaucracies, the Chinese mishu system maintains an extensive and elaborate information network, which presumably connects all bureaucratic units vertically and horizontally throughout the country. For example, both the Central Committee General Office and State Council General Office have maintained "an elaborate information system consisting of information-gathering points and information gatherers throughout the country."<sup>27</sup> The same is true of the general offices at lower levels. For example, the General Office of the Heilongjiang provincial Party committee has an information network, which "keeps constant contact with 1,649 information-gathering points and 4,696 information gatherers across the province."<sup>28</sup>

In order to counteract the natural tendency of bureaucrats to distort unpleasant information, this mishu-operated information network apparently enjoys a measure of autonomy from the bureaucracies at the various levels in which the general offices are embedded. They are even

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27. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 184. The information points and gatherers probably refer to information divisions or sections of lower-level general offices and mishus in them.

28. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 184.

entitled to report on their immediate leadership squads to the superior authorities. For instance, according to Wang Zhaoguo, then director of the Central General Office, every general office at all levels has the obligation to report regularly all important information about its immediate leadership squad to the higher-level GOs. "The general offices of all the provinces, autonomous regions, directly-governed municipalities, and Central ministries and departments," Wang Zhaoguo states, "have the right and obligation to report to us [the Central GO] in a timely manner the information [about their units or localities] with regard to major work plans, leading comrades' activities, measures taken to implement Central policies, new local policies, public opinions, important social trends, etc., so that we can pass it on to the Central leaders."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, even personal mishus who work directly for individual leaders have the obligation to report on their bosses under extreme circumstances, as is explained by a Chinese author: "If the leader's decision or instructions are clearly in violation of the Party line or state law, his mishu has the obligation and right to advise against them and help the leader correct them, and even report them to higher authorities."<sup>30</sup> It is noteworthy that the mishu-operated information/intelligence

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29. Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," pp. 76-77.

30. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of Mishu Work, p. 105.

network bears some resemblance to the palace memorial institution, a highly effective internal communications system of the Qing dynasty, as will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Although evidence is lacking as to how this mishu-operated information network works in practice, namely, how it actually divides its loyalty between the immediate leadership squads and higher-level authorities, this network constitutes at least some constraint on subordinate bureaucracies deterring them from engaging in fragrant violations of political leaders' policies and intentions. An example that offers a glimpse into the inner workings of this mishu-operated information network is provided by Jiang Zemin's personal mishus. Jiang's political enemies reportedly tried to undermine his position by accusing him of boasting, during his visit to Japan in 1992, to a Japanese politician about the certainty of his being reelected for the general secretaryship in the upcoming Fourteenth Party Congress. Since "every single word of his [Jiang's] had been recorded by his mishus who were constantly at his side during the entire course of the trip," the mishus' transcripts were reportedly sent over to Deng Xiaoping's personal mishu office. After examining the transcripts, the accusation was dismissed as groundless rumor.<sup>31</sup> Another revealing example was

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31. Zhai Xin, "Jiang Zemin shi zhenming tianzi ma?" ("Is Jiang Zemin the Son of Heaven with True Mandate?"), Jiushi Niandai (The Nineties), No. 32 (September 1993), pp. 32-33.

found in the intelligence gathering capacity demonstrated by Marshal Ye Jianying's personal mishus during the Cultural Revolution. At the request of Ye, his mishus managed to collect detailed statistics about the organizational strength and activities of the Gang of Four faction in terms of "how many people had been promoted [by the Gang], which of them were still possible to win over, which of them came from a background of 'Cultural Revolution rebels,' and which of them were die-hard followers."<sup>32</sup>

So far as the entire political system is concerned, the efficiency of the mishu-operated information network seems on the whole to be remarkable, at least when it comes to reporting about emergencies and crises. For example, every general office at all levels has an on-duty division/section, which keeps watch for any emergencies around the clock, every day of the year, so that critical information can be brought promptly to the attention not only of the immediate leadership and but also of the superior leaderships at next levels above. The Central General Office is said to be usually able to obtain the urgent information about a major incident anywhere in the country and pass it on to the Central leaders within fifteen minutes.<sup>33</sup> For example, when a Taiwan airliner defected and landed in Guangzhou, the

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32. Fan Shuo, Ye Jianying zai 1976 (Ye Jianying in 1976), Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1990, p. 243.

33. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 186-187.

incident was reported by the local general office to the Center within only fifteen minutes. Once when a flood suddenly inundated a whole county in Shaanxi province, the report of the disaster from the local mishu office reached the Center in twenty minutes. The delay incurred reproach.<sup>34</sup>

A word of caution is in order, however. There are also reported dissatisfactions about the inefficiencies of the mishu-operated information system. For example, Central leaders have complained that in some cases important information was first provided by the news media instead of the mishu offices, and that sometimes information provided by the mishu channels was "little, slow, exaggerating the positive side, and downplaying the negative side."<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, evidence suggests that Chinese leaders are, relatively speaking, able to stay well informed of the general conditions and major developments in the bureaucracies. Exaggerating or not, one of our well-informed interviewees in the State Council claimed:

It is almost impossible for subordinate units to hide anything from the Central leadership squad. The leaders may not take immediate action to correct a problem. That is not

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34. Ibid. In addition, an considerable amount of money has been invested in recent years to upgrade communications equipment and to provide computers for the general offices to improve their capability to collect, process, store, retrieve, and transmit information. (Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," p. 77; Zheng Xinghan et al, An Outline of the Mishu Work, pp. 174-175; personal interviews.)

35. Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," p. 76.

because they are unaware of its existence, but more likely because they have not found an appropriate solution yet.

Anyhow, it is safe to conclude that mishus play a significant role in helping Chinese political leaders stay, generally speaking, well informed and thus be able to wield reasonably effective control over the far-flung bureaucratic structure.

### Clearing House for All Official Documents

Mishus' control function is also reflected in the fact that a mishu squad or general office is supposed to be the clearing house for all official documents composed by subordinate bureaucracies. It is said that all such documents have to be submitted to the relevant mishus for reviewing, editing, and censoring, before they can be officially released. In reviewing and editing a document from subordinate bureaucracies, the general office has the authority to perform the following "seven checks" (qi cha) in order to ensure their conformity to the intentions and instructions of the leadership squad and higher authorities<sup>36</sup>:

- 1) Check and determine whether the document needs to be issued, based upon the requirements of the work of the Party and the state, the leaders' intentions, and the content of the document itself,...

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<sup>36</sup>. Wei Keyi et al., Mishu gongzuo tongshu (A General Guide for Mishu Work), Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1992, pp. 111-113. Also see Hou Rui, Zenyang dang bangongshi zhuren (How to Work as Director of a General Office), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 43.

2) Check and determine whether there are any contradictions, namely, whether the content of the document conflicts with the guidelines and policies of the Party and the state, the relevant laws, statutes, and regulations, superior leaders' instructions and decisions, and the past documents issued by the professional department in charge or by the unit itself....

3) Check and determine whether the new policy is well defined, namely, whether it is clear what shall be done or shall not be done, how it shall be done, and whether the measures are ambiguous, too rigid, too loose, or too complex,...

4) Check and determine whether the measures are feasible, namely, whether the measures are clear, practical,...whether the deadline is appropriate,...and whether the standards set are too high or too low....

5) Check and determine whether the document has followed the proper procedure, namely, whether it has been appropriately sanctioned, and issued in the name of the right organ..., whether it needs to be deliberated and ratified by a conference, co-endorsed by other units, approved by the superior leadership, or coordinated with the professional department in charge.

6) Check and determine whether the document is worded accurately, succinctly, and coherently....

7) Check and determine whether the document observes the correct format...in terms of rubric, heading, primary addressee and secondary addressee, confidentiality level, validity period, and key words.

If a document has serious flaws in those regards, the GO has the right to return it to the originating department for major revisions. In practice, it may not be possible to thoroughly review and edit all documents from the subordinate bureaucrats. Otherwise, Chinese official documents would not be peppered with the many contradictions and inconsistencies, a fact well known to China scholars. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that this formal clearance authority of mishus does constitute significant clout over bureaucrats in their processes of policy formation -- at least with regard to written documents.

### Enhanced Autonomy of the Mishu System

In order to ensure the reliability and integrity of the mishu system for the sake of centralized control, Chinese political leadership has in the last decade made great efforts to enhance a separate professional identity among mishu personnel across the country. In the past, general offices used to be accountable primarily to their immediate leadership squads,<sup>37</sup> but they are now more explicitly placed under the dual leadership of both their immediate leadership squads and the higher-level general offices, which are to provide "professional guidance" (yewu zhidao).<sup>38</sup> The general offices are thus now openly regarded as a separate sub-system running from the Center to the basic level bureaucracies.<sup>39</sup> As has been noted earlier, a general office has the obligation to report to the superior general offices with regard to the key information about its immediate leadership. And a higher-level general office is entitled to assign "a wide scope of tasks" directly to a lower-level general office with regard to conducting policy investigation, handling casework, etc.<sup>40</sup>

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37. Wen Xiang, Mishu renvuan xiuyang yu duiwu jiangshe (Training of Mishu Personnel and Building of the Mishu Army), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 87. As a matter of fact, higher-level GOs have always wielded some clout over the work of GOs in the subordinate units.

38. Wen Xiang, Training of Mishu Personnel, p. 88.

39. Hou Rui, How to Work as Director of a General Office, pp. 10-11.

40. Ibid. p. 11.

This new practice is embodied in the slogan which was first publicized at "National Symposium of Chief Mishus and Directors of GOs" convened in January of 1985: "Provide services three ways" (san fuwu) -- "to the Central and superior leaderships, to the immediate leadership and other leaderships at the same level, and to the subordinate leaderships and the broad masses."<sup>41</sup> The main thrust of this slogan is that an enhanced sense of separate professional identity should be formed among the mishu personnel, which should cut across the factional, regional, and institutional fault lines of the Chinese bureaucracy, so that centralized control and coordination can be improved.

In order to achieve closer cooperation among general offices at various levels across the country, regular professional conferences have been institutionalized, professional journals established, professional awards founded, and professional training programs and courses offered.<sup>42</sup> Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, for instance, two national symposiums have been convened by the Central General Office, one in 1981 and the other in 1985,<sup>43</sup>

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41. Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," pp. 70-71.

42. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 119.

43. The second one was attended by many top leaders including Hu Yaobang, Xi Zhongxun, Song Renqiong, Yang Shangkun, Yao Yilin, Hu Qili, Qiao Shi, and Tian Jiyun, as well as 166 general office heads from the provincial governments and Central ministries and departments (Zheng

for the general office heads across the country to meet and exchange information and experiences.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the general offices of local governments have organized regular conferences to strengthen their working relationship horizontally. For example, "In recent years, annual conferences have been held jointly by the general offices of Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Guangxi, Tibet, Xingjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia to review their past work and study new situations, new issues, and new experiences."<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, Chinese general offices at various levels issue their own periodicals for internal circulation so as to exchange information with each other. For instance, the Central General Office issues a periodical named Summaries and Abstracts (zonghe yu zhaibao),<sup>46</sup> and the State Council General Office issues a periodical named The State Council Bulletin (guowuyuan gongbao).<sup>47</sup> In recent years, the Chinese mishu system have also started to publish its own professional journals, such as Mishu Gongzuo (Mishu Work),

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Xinghan et al., ibid. p. 60; Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," p. 69).

44. Chen Hongbin et al., eds., Jianming mishu gongzuo shouce (The Concise Handbook of Mishu Profession), Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987, pp. 72-73.

45. Wen Xiang, Training of Mishu Personnel, p. 89.

46. Ibid.

47. Zhongguo Zhengfu Gongzuo Gaiyao (An Outline of the Work of the Chinese Government), Beijing: the CCP Central Party School Press, 1991, p. 214.

published by the Mishu Bureau of the Central General Office; Hangkong Dangan: Mishu Zhuankan (The Aviation Records: Mishu Column), published by the general office of the Aviation Ministry; Mishu Zhuanve (Mishu Profession), published by the general office of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee; and Mishu Gongzuo (Mishu Work), published by the general office of the Guangdong Provincial Government.<sup>48</sup>

Across China, more than 150 institutions of higher learning have set up programs and courses to train prospective mishu personnel and had turned out more than one hundred thousand graduates by the end of 1990.<sup>49</sup> The general offices themselves have offered regular seminars as short-term off-the-job or on-the-job training to improve the quality of mishus. The Central Party School and the Central General Office have organized national training programs for provincial-level mishus, and the provincial-level general offices have organized similar programs for mishus at prefecture and county levels.<sup>50</sup>

As shown in the above analysis, the Chinese leadership has made great efforts in the past decade to strengthen the role of the general office system in favor of centralized

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48. Wang Qiangong et al., Shiyong Mishu Gongzuo Shouce (A Practical Handbook for Mishu Work), Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1987, p. 400, Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 62.

49. Zheng Xinghan et al., ibid. p. 163.

50. Wen Xiang, Training of Mishu Personnel, pp. 73, 75, 88.

control and coordination, although it has allowed greater decentralization in some other aspects, economy in particular. As Lieberthal and Oksenberg shrewdly observed about the Center-locality relationship, "Frequently, a publicized grant of increased authority to the provinces, for example, is accompanied by a quiet, off-setting change in favor of the Center."<sup>51</sup> The strengthened mishu role can be understood as one such off-setting measure to achieve the continued effectiveness of Chinese leaders' domination over the bureaucracy.

#### Supervising the Implementation Process

In addition to helping political leaders find out what bureaucrats may want to hide, mishus also act to push them to do what they may not want to do. In other words, mishus are responsible for closely monitoring and supervising bureaucrats in order to see to it that they implement political leaders' decisions promptly and faithfully.

There is a special feature of the Chinese political process which makes the mishu function of monitoring and supervision particularly indispensable, from leaders' point of view. It is a great irony about the Chinese political process that for all that decision making is highly concentrated in leaders, written decisions are typically

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51. Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 139.

general, vague, and unspecific. For example, "central decisions often only set forth goals or prescriptions on what should be done. They do not bear close resemblance to the types of detailed implementing and regulating documents that frequently accompany high level decision making in the United States."<sup>52</sup>

The generality and vagueness of written decisions has the advantages of being applicable to a wide range of different conditions instead of being specifically confined to one single case,<sup>53</sup> leaving room for adaptations for particular situations and adjustments for unpredictable changes, and not being held accountable for policy failures. In terms of Central documents, most of them are understood to only convey the general "intention" (yitu) of Central leaders, which "should be followed in spirit rather than to

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52. Ibid. p. 27. It is noteworthy that although orders and instructions from the White House tend to be concrete and specific, laws and regulations passed by Congress are at times vague and general. This does not result, however, from high concentration of decision making power and the remote distance between the point of decision and the point of action. Rather it arises largely from the peculiarities of competitive politics: "The art of assembling majority support, among voters and legislators, for each program typically requires fuzzy goals and vague languages. The more precisely objectives are defined, the easier it is for competing parties to disagree with them." (James W. Fesler and Donald F. Kettl, The Politics of the Administrative Process, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1991, p. 185.)

53. Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 60.

the letter by local organs."<sup>54</sup> Central documents "typically permit (and assume) considerable flexibility in how local units handle them."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, even leaders' intentions are not supposed to be regarded "as something mechanical or static," but can be treated "flexibly" and "creatively."<sup>56</sup> Inevitably, however, the vagueness of written decisions leaves the door widely open for diverse interpretations and even deliberate distortion in the process of implementation by bureaucrats.

The problem is further aggravated by the fact that not only leaders are chronically plagued by upward communication overload, but subordinate bureaucrats are also beset by downward communication overload. Since leaders' written decisions are mostly vague and unspecific, they are not addressed to one or just a few bureaucracies but instead to virtually all of them across the board, regardless of whether they are directly relevant or not. As a result, subordinate bureaucrats are always swarmed with "an excessive flow of documents"<sup>57</sup> and with "diverse policy guidelines that cascade

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54. Kenneth Lieberthal, Central Documents and Politburo Politics in China, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1978, p. 6.

55. Ibid. p. 15.

56. Wang Zhande et al., Gongwen zhuanxie yu hegao (Drafting and Editing of Official Documents), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 22.

57. Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication," p. 33.

from above."<sup>58</sup> In practice, this downward communication overload gives, however, subordinate bureaucrats considerable de facto discretion in treating the documents from above in a selective manner so as to make them best suit their own interests. Bureaucrats can "determine which directives are really serious and merit priority attention and which can safely be discarded."<sup>59</sup> They are allowed to summarize and condense the huge volume of downward flow of documents when transmitting them to lower level bureaucrats. All these, again, leave the door open for deliberate distortion, delay or negligence on the part of bureaucrats in treating leaders' written decisions, particularly those which harm the interests of the receiving bureaucracies. As Lieberthal explains, "It is evidently not unusual, for instance, for a single Central Document to look quite different by the time it is presented to the masses in two different provinces. There is, then, considerable room for 'adjusting' the contents and implications of a Central Document during the transmission process by taking full advantage of the flexibility built into this system without clearly violating any of its rules."<sup>60</sup>

What is more, there is a peculiar feature of Chinese political culture, which makes implementation of written

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58. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, p. 344.

59. Ibid.

60. Lieberthal, Central Documents, p. 78.

decisions problematic. Chinese typically treat a written decision not as having the quality of finality but rather as marking the beginning of a new round of endless haggling and wrangling. As Susan Shirk puts it, "Governments with a higher degree of institutionalization solve the problem of instability in institutional choice by implicit contracts agreeing not to reconsider issues already decided by the group. China has not yet established this institutional rule."<sup>61</sup> As for example, one-time chief mishu of the State Council Chen Junsheng complains, "A decision is formally made, a correct one at that, but just because it involves the interests of a certain department, unit, or locality, some people will refuse to put it into effect under all kinds of pretext, and the result is a lot of arguing back and forth."<sup>62</sup>

In order to prevent bureaucrats from excessively stretching the spirit of written decisions, resort to

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61. "The Chinese Political System and the Political Strategy of Economic Reform," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, fn. 23.

62. Quoted from ibid. Chinese's flexible attitude toward written decisions is also well reflected in their treatment of international business contracts. Lucian Pye explains: "In contrast to American practices, the Chinese do not treat the signing of a contract as signaling a completed agreement; rather, they conceive of the relationship in longer and more continuous terms, and they will not hesitate to suggest modifications immediately on the heels of an agreement. Their expectation is that agreements will set the stage for a growing relationship in which it will be proper for China to make increasing demands on the other party. This Chinese view of unending negotiation also makes them insensitive to the possibility that canceling contracts may cause trouble in the relationship." Chinese Negotiating Style: Commercial Approaches and Cultural Principles, New York: Quorum Books, p. xvi.

deliberate distortion, procrastination or negligence in decision implementation, and incessantly wrangling back and forth, Chinese leaders have to rely heavily upon their mishus' constant oral communication with bureaucrats to flesh out, clarify, and adjust the leaders' intentions, as well as to make sure that the spirit of the written decisions is carried out with tolerable accuracy and rapidity.

The key for effective monitor and supervision is to have specifically designated mishus stay in constant touch with the bureaucrats. Thus, each general office has a counterpart subunit to virtually every subordinate bureaucratic department, as will be elaborated in Chapter Five. This arrangement is even duplicated in some top leaders' personal mishu offices. For example, Zhou Enlai's personal mishu office contained several teams, such as "finance and economy team, political and legal affairs team, culture and education team, military affairs team, foreign affairs team, and confidential team, etc."<sup>63</sup> Virtually all the major bureaucracies had their counterpart teams in Zhou's personal mishu office. One of Zhou's mishus explained: "Every working body in all the bureaucratic systems, e.g., the Party, the government, the People's Congress, the Political Consultative Conference, the mass organizations, the military, and the education institution had a mishu to contact in the Office [of Premier Zhou]."<sup>64</sup> It is now known that each of Zhou's

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63. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai and His Mishus, p. 331.

64. Ibid. p. 92.

mishus was put in charge of a kou (system),<sup>65</sup> which covered several related fields.<sup>66</sup> One of Zhou's former mishus explains:

All of us mishus [of Zhou] had each a scope of responsibility: I was in charge of the kou of agriculture, forestry, and irrigation; Wei Ming, culture and education; Yao Li, economy and transportation; Gu Ming, the Planning and Economic Commissions; Xu Ming, agriculture and foreign trade; so on and so forth.<sup>67</sup>

It is also known that he had other mishus who were in charge of the kou of finance, political and legal affairs, military affairs, and foreign affairs.<sup>68</sup> Zhou's personal mishus' control role is explained by one of them: "The Premier was in charge of the overall work, and we were each in charge of a specific kou. We had to look after whatever the Premier was unable to take care of personally."<sup>69</sup>

Effective monitoring and supervision also requires that mishus keep frequent face-to-face contact with subordinate bureaucrats in conferences and meetings. One of Zhou Enlai's personal mishus recalled: "I was in charge of contacting the

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65. Ibid. p. 254.

66. For example, one of Zhou's mishus was in charge of the culture and education kou and thus was responsible for "affairs related with propaganda, culture, arts, education, science and technology, medicine, sports, and mass media." Ibid.

67. Ibid. p. 57.

68. Ibid. p. 180.

69. Ibid. p. 100.

Planning Commission, the Economic Commission, and the Construction Commission, and so I attended the meetings of their leading Party groups, took notes, reported them to the Premier, and often conveyed his opinions or instructions back to them.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, effectiveness of monitoring and supervision necessitates mishus keeping up incessant pressures on bureaucrats. Therefore, mishus are said to have the right to anytime call them on the phone, send them letters, either order them to report in person or inspect them personally, and in general press them (cuiban) to expedite the fulfillment of the tasks assigned them by the leadership squad.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, mishus are frequently sent out to subordinate departments or units, delegated with the authority of the leadership squad, to investigate and solve (chaban) cases involving violation of the instructions and policies from above,<sup>72</sup> such as "excessive distribution of bonuses and benefits, misuse of public funds for sightseeing, tax evasions, illegal price hikes, cheating in sales, abusing of authority to promote private interests, and mishandling of

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70. Ibid. p. 5.

71. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 47; Wang Fangzhi et al, Wenjian Shoufa Yu Chuli (Receiving, Dispatching, and Processing of Official Documents), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 78.

72. Song Shizhong et al., Chaban Gongzuo (Investigating and Handling of a Case), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, pp. 16-17.

policies concerning the united front work, intellectuals, privately-owned houses, etc."<sup>73</sup>

What is noteworthy is the fact that although mishus are entrusted with pressing bureaucrats for timely and faithful fulfillment of tasks assigned by political leaders, that does not mean mishus themselves have to actively play the personae role of being aggressive, pushy, nasty, and assertive, as the White House staff assistants routinely have to. The Chinese authority structure is such that political leaders concentrate sufficient intimidating quality in themselves for their mishus to be able to play the personae role of being nice and accommodating and yet still be taken seriously. This peculiarity of Chinese mishus' work style will be examined in detail in Chapter Seven, where systematic comparison is made with the practice of American staff system.

The monitoring/supervising function of the mishu system is said to have been in practice ever since the founding of the Communist regime, and it was officially institutionalized in September of 1983 by the Central Committee as a routine part of all general offices' responsibilities at every level.<sup>74</sup> In the Central General Office, for example, a deputy director is personally in charge of this monitoring function, which is routinely handled by the Synthesizing Division (zonghe chu) of the Mishu Bureau. Every year, the Central

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73. Ibid.

74. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 194.

General Office is said to directly supervise, in the name of the Central leadership squad, several thousands of cases that are being handled at lower levels.<sup>75</sup> It is also known that almost all provincial and prefectural general offices have set up a special monitoring division (cuiban chu) to discharge this function.<sup>76</sup> It is said that today, "In every province or city, hundreds of problems, indeed more than a thousand, are directly solved each year [with this practice]," and "many more problems are indirectly solved due to a ripple effect [from this practice]."<sup>77</sup> In order to perform effective monitor and supervision, efforts have been made to give general offices greater clout over the subordinate bureaucracies, so that they are made to be more responsive to requests, demands, and inquiries from the GOs. As a result, the subordinates departments and units usually take the GOs' supervision very seriously. They will, it is reported, immediately study the issues involved and take prompt measures to solve them.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, mishu' monitoring and supervision function is widely applauded as being of "extremely significant consequence" for "overcoming bureaucratism, improving the work style, pushing forward the

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75. Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," pp. 78-79.

76. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, pp. 121-122.

77. Ibid.

78. Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," pp. 78-79.

fulfillment of various tasks," "enhancing efficiency, and quickening the work tempo."<sup>79</sup> Under extreme circumstances, a general office may even take over the jurisdiction of a subordinate department, as for example, the Central General Office largely took over the function of the Central Organization Department during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>80</sup>

### Summary

Chinese leaders depend heavily on their mishus in their efforts to exercise effective control over bureaucracies. Mishus perform the control role by sifting, condensing, collecting and verifying information; by providing extensive advice and making preliminary and even final decisions on virtually all routine issues; and by constantly and closely monitoring and supervising the process of decision implementation by subordinate bureaucracies. Each mishu squad is structured in the form of a counterbureaucracy in that it contains functional counterpart subunits to all the bureaucracies under the leadership squad; this way the mishu personnel can provide the leaders with necessary organizational capacity for attempting constant control over

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79. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 172; Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 78; Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 194.

80. Christopher M. Clarke, "Changing the Context for Policy Implementation: Organizational and Personnel Reform in Post-Mao China," in David M. Lampton, ed., Policy Implementation In Post-Mao China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 32.

the bureaucratic subordinates in decision implementation. In order to ensure the reliability and effectiveness of the control role, efforts have been made in recent years to enhance a sense of separate professional identity and autonomy among mishu personnel vis-a-vis their immediate leadership squads, by means of better professional training, more exchanges of professional activities, and closer professional ties, both vertical and horizontal.

Finally, it should be pointed out that Chinese mishus' control role is not very different from that of their counterparts in other political systems. For example, the White House staff in the United States perform the control role "by originating ideas: gathering, screening, and appraising ideas from others; giving him [President] orderly information for his decision making; and keeping track of the pace of execution of his decisions by the relevant agencies."<sup>81</sup> The White House staff's control role is well captured by the report of the Commission on Organization of the Government for Conduct of Foreign Policy. The President's staff, it says, must:<sup>82</sup>

- Identify issues likely to require presidential attention.
- Structure those issues for efficient presidential understanding and decision -- ensuring that the relevant facts are available, a full set of alternatives are presented, agency positions are placed in perspective.
- Assure due process, permitting each interested department an opportunity to state its case.

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81. Fesler and Kettl, The Politics of the Administrative Process, pp. 94-95.

82. Ibid.

- Ensure that affected parties are clearly informed of decisions once taken, and that their own responsibilities respecting those decisions are specified.
- Monitor the implementation of presidential decisions.
- Assess the results of decisions taken, drawing from those assessments implications for future action.

Nonetheless, if staffs' control role is similar everywhere, then Chinese mishus' cushioning/integrating role is highly unique, which is the topic for the following chapter.

## Chapter Four

### THE CUSHIONING/MODERATING ROLE

Chinese mishus work not only to amplify and improve political leaders' control over their bureaucratic subordinates but also to cushion and moderate conflicts and clashes and to coordinate the work and interpersonal relationships among the leaders themselves as well as between leaders and bureaucrats. Moreover, mishus' skill and care serve to compensate for the general inadequacy of infrastructural facilities in China, so that various activities can proceed smoothly, reducing "bumps in the road," minimizing uncertainties, and absorbing disruptive impact of the unexpected. This chapter concentrates on analyzing the cushioning/coordinating role of the mishu institution, as is reflected in these aspects:

- coordination among leaders (of the same leadership squad as well as from different units);
- coordination between leaders and bureaucrats;
- writing of official documents; and
- organizing and servicing of meetings and conferences.

#### Coordination Among Leaders of the Same Leadership Squad

One of the primary sources of tension and conflict among Chinese leaders is the problem of establishing authoritarian pecking orders among them when they come together. It is a very complicated and difficult job and takes a great deal of

skill and care on the part of Chinese mishus to make subtle and proper accommodations that befit the relative status and importance of all the leaders involved in any situation. Without such a hierarchic arrangement, friction and conflict will arise.

One telling example is provided by Lin Biao's personal mishus in handling the relationship between Lin and Mao. It was an important job for them to coordinate the timing of arrivals of Lin Biao and Mao Zedong at Tiananmen for ceremonious occasions. The perfect timing was considered as "the biggest political issue": If Lin arrived first and ascended the Tiananmen balcony before Mao, he would appear disrespectful. But if he arrived too early and had to wait for Mao for a long time, that would be demeaning for his status as the second in command and the heir apparent. Nevertheless, if Mao arrived first and so had to wait for him, Lin would appear impolite and insulting. Therefore, the best timing was "to let the boss [Lin] arrive exactly one minute before the Chairman and wait by the elevator downstairs for him [Mao]." A failure in coordination once caused Mao to arrive at Tiananmen one or two minutes earlier and to wait for Lin's arrival. Mao's unhappiness was only thinly veiled in his sarcastic remarks about Lin's sweating. It was regarded as "a major political accident." So in order to ensure the perfect synchronization, Lin's mishus had to make elaborate time-and-motion tests to determine accurately the distances from the residences of Mao and Lin to Tiananmen

and the times it took respectively. Lin's mishus were to be informed as soon as Mao departed so as to determine when Lin's convoy should start off.<sup>1</sup>

Once on the Tiananmen balcony, it was the mishus' "important task" to constantly remind Lin of his proper position relative to Mao, which must be "neither too far away nor too close: being too far away would make him appear not 'intimate,' and being too close would cause him to block Mao from view or to outshine him."<sup>2</sup>

Another vivid example of mishus deflecting potential tension among leaders involves the writing of inscriptions by Chinese leaders. Chinese leaders have a passion for handing out inscriptions wherever they go. It is almost a customary ritual for them to hand-write with brush-pens short slogans to mark an important occasion, such as Mao's slogan: "Learn from Comrade Lei Feng," which officially launched the nationwide movement to emulate this mythological Communist hero. Significantly, such public display of their personal calligraphy is intended more for signaling appropriate mutual power relationship than explicating new policy ideas. As Kraus explains in his brilliant study of the connection between politics and the art of calligraphy in Chinese politics:

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1. Zhang Yunsheng, Maojiawan jishi: Lin Biao mishu huiyi lu (The Eyewitness Accounts of Maojiawan: Memoirs of Lin Biao's Mishu), Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1988, pp. 230-231.

2. Lin Qingshan, Lin Biao zhuan (A Biography of Lin Biao), Beijing: Zhishi chubanshe, 1988, p. 492.

Clearly, the point of writing inscriptions is not originality of content. Banality is expected, even demanded. The social occasions for calligraphy demand reassuring gestures to a community of readers, not individual expression.<sup>3</sup>

It is now known that most of such inscriptions are in fact drafted or suggested by leaders' personal mishu. Short and simplistic as they may appear, it is a complicated job that requires no small amount of tact and political skill. In suggesting an inscription, a mishu should consider the status of his leader, so as to suit its tone and content with his relative position:

If he is not a high ranking leader, his inscription must not take on the tone of appealing to a broad audience. Or if a higher-ranking leader has already made a wide-ranging appeal in his inscription, a lower-ranking leader should choose another perspective to complement his superior's appeal. It is an absolute taboo for a leader to be arrogant and disrespectful in writing an inscription undeserved by his status, not knowing the height of the sky and the depth of the earth (buzhi tian gao di hou).<sup>4</sup>

In addition to establishing a proper hierarchical relationship in any situation, mishu' moderating role also looms large in conducting communication among leaders. Chinese leaders meet only at certain intervals. During the time in between, they are not supposed to frequently associate directly with each other in private. The higher up,

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<sup>3</sup>. Richard Curt Kraus, Brushes with Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup>. Qi Peiwen et al., Zenvang danghao lingdaoren mishu (How to Be a Good Personal Mishu for a Leader), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 106.

the more this is the case. According to our well-informed interviewee, the leaders of Fujian provincial government never casually walk into each other's office to have a friendly chat, even though their offices are adjacent to each other. In public their attitudes toward each other are as a rule very formal and aloof; they deliberately shun being seen mixing with any other leaders too often and too closely, though they can be jovial and convivial toward each other at formal meetings. The single most important reason for this behavior pattern is the anti-factional taboo.

Although it is regarded as the very essence of politics to actively seek allies and shift alliances on different policy issues under competitive politics, in China, under the centralized authority structure, it is an absolute taboo for some leaders to band together to promote a separate interest, whether regional, institutional, or factional. A leader does so at his own peril, which may result in his downfall. Consequently, for all the fact that factionalism does exist and even goes rampant at different times and different places in Chinese politics, Chinese leaders are very cautious in their open interactions with one another, in order to avoid arousing suspicion and accusation of committing this cardinal sin. Even during the periods of intensified factional infighting, very few leaders have dared to openly defy this anti-factional taboo. As a result, Chinese leaders' communication with each other is in fact largely conducted through their mishu, personal and organizational. Mishu

personnel are thus in a position to make a significant difference between apparent unity and intensified factionalism among political leaders, under normal circumstances.

Under usual conditions, Chinese mishus tend to play a cushioning role in mediating communication among leaders. They are warned: "...it is a matter of principle for mishus not to get involved in conflicts and clashes between leaders."<sup>5</sup> In conducting intra-elite communication, they are required to omit critical remarks, water down the venom of personal enmity, and reconcile divergent opinions, so as to facilitate a workable accord among the leaders.<sup>6</sup>

After all, it is usually not in the mishus' best interest to openly take sides among conflicting leaders, for that would antagonize some members of the leadership squad and thus jeopardize their own chances for getting ahead. Their best strategy for personal advancement and even job security is usually to play the role of peace-maker and reconciliator toward all the leaders.

Indeed, even Chinese leaders' personal mishus, who would be expected to be the most partisan players, tend to act in a reconciliatory and sympathetic manner toward their bosses'

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5. Xu Ruixin et al., Zhongguo xiandai mishu gongzuo jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, p. 139.

6. Hou Rui, Zenyang dang bangongshi zhuren (How to Work as Director of a General Office), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 82.

political rivals and enemies. A personal mishu tends, out of his self-serving instinct, to strike a delicate balance between appearing unquestionably faithful to his own boss, on the one hand, and showing sufficient goodwill to the other leaders, on the other hand. This is partly because in this way he can better survive his leader's fall from grace if that happens, avoid "putting all eggs in one basket," and increase his chances of career advancement. Indeed, even some of Mao's personal mishus tried to retain for themselves some elbow room for maneuver between Mao and his dissidents, by playing the role of reconciliator and attempting to bridge the difference between Mao and them.

For instance, during and after the ill-fated Lushan Conference, Tian Jiaying, Mao's most trusted mishu, was a secret sympathizer of Peng Dehuai and his supporters. He surreptitiously informed them of Mao's intentions and tried to deflect the confrontation.<sup>7</sup>

After the circulation of Peng Dehuai's letter, the atmosphere of the conference became tense. Zhang Wentian was still going to make a speech at the small group about his judgment on the work since 1958 and to urge the conference to make an earnest summary of the experiences and lessons from the "Great Leap" and the commune movement. Upon learning it, Tian Jiaying called Zhang Wentian immediately, telling him not to touch the issue since the one up there [Mao] had a different view. After the conference switched to fighting "rightism," a certain comrade came under fire. Tian Jiaying was very sympathetic toward his misfortune. One late night Tian

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<sup>7</sup>. Peng Yaxin, "Tian Jiaying xiaozhuan" ("A Short Biography of Tian Jiaying"), in Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying (Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1989, p. 325.

Jiaying ran to his place at great personal risk to express his indignation at the abnormality in the intra-Party life and to give support and comfort to him....<sup>8</sup>

Years later Mao Zedong still felt paranoid about the Lushan Conference and wanted to make an issue of the historical play Hai Rui Dismissed From Office. Again, the same Tian Jiaying tried to dampen the clash. "In order to minimize the impact of the campaign and to protect those who might be hurt, Tian Jiaying courageously left out the parts against Peng Dehuai...when he was editing Mao's talk."<sup>9</sup> Tian Jiaying's reconciliatory role was greatly appreciated by Mao's dissidents, Liu Shaoqi in particular, and thus there formed a special bond between Tian and Liu. Liu repeatedly protected Tian when he was in trouble. On one occasion when Mao was criticizing Tian furiously, Liu put in some words in his favor to release the tension; on another occasion when other people were exposing Tian's wrongdoing, Liu adamantly refused to let them finish. "As a result, Tian was always grateful and respectful toward Liu."<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, it is reported that Chen Yun's chief mishu Zhu Jiamu and Deng Xiaoping's chief mishu Wang Ruilin once contacted each other, behind the backs of their masters,

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8. Ibid. p. 325.

9. Dong Zhiying, ed., Mao Zedong vishi (Anecdotes About Mao Zedong), Beijing: Kunlun chubanshe, 1989, p. 130.

10. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying" ("Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying") in Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying, p. 71.

in an attempt to "establish rapprochement between the two overlords [Deng and Chen]."11 After Deng made his earth-shaking tour in South China in early 1992, which ushered in a new tidal wave of reforms, Chen Yun's mishus again appear to have performed a delicate balancing stunt. On the one hand, they reportedly made telephone calls around, in the name of their master, urging the responsible cadres at various localities not to be intimidated but to "hold fast to the socialist position, defend the socialist flag,...and keep a clear head and the Marxist viewpoint."12 On the other hand, Chen's current chief mishu Xu Yongyao then made an inspection tour of Shenzhen on behalf of his boss, which was interpreted as sending out a subtle signal of reconciliation with Deng, since the Special Economic Zone was Deng's most cherished brain-child and the ultimate symbol of his economic reforms.13

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11. Shi Liuzi, "Zhonggong 'mishu bang' qunxiang" ("A Group Portrait of the Chinese Communist Secret Secretaries"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11 (1992), p. 28; Luo Ning, "Chumo yu hongse gongqiang lide renwu" ("The Shadow Figures behind the Blood-Red Wall"), passim, p. 42; also see He Pin, "Chen Yun lumian jishi geng weimiao ("Chen Yun's Public Appearance Lends a Touch of Subtlety to the Situation"), Zhongguo zhi chun (China Spring), June (1992), p. 17.

12. "Beijing zhengju anliu xiongyong: lao Deng nan xun bu tong xunchang" ("The Turbulent Undercurrents in the Politics of Beijing: the Unusual Significance of Deng Xiaoping's Trip to South China"), Ziyou xinwen daobao (Press Freedom Guardian), March 6, 1992, p. 2.

13. He Pin, "Fengsheng hedi gao gaige" ("Waging Reforms with a Fear of Dangers Lurking Everywhere"), Zhongguo zhi

So far as the whole leadership squad is concerned, the director of the general office plays a vital role in moderating conflicts and coordinating various relationships among the squad members. "The general office director has great influence over the interpersonal relationship among different leaders. Since he is in the most frequent contact with all of the leaders, a good part of the communication among them is conducted through him, and many tasks have to be carried out through him. He knows a great deal of 'secrets' about the leadership squad."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, "Experience has proved that the GO director can effectively patch up the differences between conflicting leading comrades by taking advantage of his intimate knowledge and easy access to all of the leaders." To illustrate a GO director's cushioning role, the following example is given.

There was once a deep rift between the Party secretary and the administrative head of a certain enterprise. The administrative head blamed his failure to be admitted into the Party on the Party secretary's obstruction, while the Party secretary sensed the ill feelings on the head's part but found the situation hard to explain. So the GO director stepped in as the go-between, conveying to the factory head the Party secretary's goodwill toward him. The misunderstanding was thus removed and the two were back on good terms with each other.<sup>15</sup>

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chun (China Spring), No. 110 (1992), p. 27; Shi Liuzi, "A Group Portrait," p. 28.

14. Hou Rui, How to Work as Director of a General Office, p. 22.

15. Ibid.

When it comes to coordinating work relationship, the GO head is the person who is responsible for constantly keeping all the members of the leadership squad properly informed of each other's activities when they are separate between meetings and conferences. It is his responsibility to: 1) pass on to the other leaders the chief leader's intentions, opinions, and instructions; 2) report regularly to each leader the condition and progress of the work that the other leaders are doing; 3) convey to those who were absent due to illness or on leave the decisions reached at an important meeting; and 4) reconcile differences and conflicts among the leaders resulting from the division of labor.<sup>16</sup> Take the Central Committee General Office for example, the communication between the all-powerful political elders and the current Politburo members is known to be conducted primarily by the director of the Central GO.<sup>17</sup>

Trespassing upon the turf of another leader of the same leadership squad is a major source of tensions and conflicts, and it is largely the job of the GO head to skillfully smooth out such conflicts. When a leader instructs the GO director to handle a job which falls under the bailiwick of another leader, the GO director "should 1) suggest that he consult the leader officially in charge of the work; 2) report it to

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16. Ibid. pp. 66-67.

17. He Pin, "Zhonggong dui Tai gongzuo diyixian zhujiang" ("The Front-line Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Communist Party's Taiwan Affairs"), Zhongguo shibao zhokan (China Times Weekly), No. 68 (April 18-24, 1993), p. 71.

the chief leader and ask him for instructions and then convey them to the leader in charge; and 3) carry out the job first and then report it to the chief leader and the leader in charge."<sup>18</sup> In a word, the GO head must try his best not to let any party feel ignored or slighted.

Of significance is the fact that there is some similarity between mishus in the Chinese political system and civil servants in a Western political system, in the sense that both are expected to be non-partisan in order to preserve the stability and continuity of the political system as a whole. However, there is a significant difference in that a civil servant is supposed to stay away from partisan politics altogether, whereas a mishu is expected to be an active participant by getting to know all the political tricks and personal secrets, but, at the same time, playing the role of impartial reconciliator among various factions or individual rivals. One typical example is Yang Dezhong, the current head of the Central Security Bureau, a subunit of the Central General Office: Yang "is thoroughly familiar with every nook and corner of the Zhongnanhai politics and all its factional maneuvers, but he has never involved himself in any ideological contentions or power struggles,..." As a result, he has been able to win goodwill and praises from all sides and stay in his powerful position for decades.<sup>19</sup> In practice

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18. Hou Rui, How to Work as a GO Director, pp. 66-67.

19. He Pin, "Jiang Zemin de tebie zhuli: Zeng Qinghong, Yang Dezhong" ("Jiang Zemin's Special Assistants: Zeng

the thin line between the two roles is, however, understandably very difficult to maintain, and it is by no means uncommon for mishus to end up being partisan players, as will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion.

#### Moderation Between Leaders of Different Units

It is an even more delicate and difficult job to moderate and coordinate between leaders of different work units, since there is greater ambiguity with regard to a suitable hierarchical order to suit them. There is a relatively clear hierarchy of ranks among the members of the same leadership squad, who are unequivocally designated as "number one leader" (diyi bashou), "number two leader" (dier bashou), "number three leader" (disan bashou), and so on. However, when it comes to leaders of different danwei (work units), there is no clear-cut single set of rules to follow and many factors and ranking methods have to be weighed carefully before a proper pecking order can be established. Thus, mishus' moderating function in this regard is all the more necessary to avoid tension and conflict when leaders of different units gather together.

The Chinese designed an elaborate bureaucratic rank system, which serves supposedly to facilitate placement of

every official in a hierarchical relationship. The rank system is composed of the following major levels:<sup>20</sup>

The Central Level -- Politburo, State Council, Central Military Affairs Commission, the National People's Congress, and the National Consultative Conference of Political Affairs.

Provincial level -- ministry, Central department (bu), centrally administered municipality, and army (jun) in the military rank system.<sup>21</sup>

Prefecture -- bureau (ju, si, ting), provincial department, and division (shi) in the military system.

County -- division (chu), county level municipality, and regiment (tuan) in the military system.

Township -- county department, section (ke), and battalion (ying) in the military system.

Each of the above major levels has a sub-level for deputy heads, such as vice premier, vice governor, and so on. This bureaucratic rank system applies not only to government officials but also to virtually the entire Chinese society. For example, full professorship is equal to the rank of a

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Qinghong and Yang Dezhong"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 101 (December 5-11, 1993), p. 73.

20. Yan Huai, Zhongguo dalu zhengzhi tizhi qiantan (Understanding the Political System of Contemporary China), Somerset, NJ: the Center for Modern China, 1991, p. 22.

21. The Chinese military rank system corresponds largely with the civilian rank system.

prefecture or bureau-level office holder; associate professorship, that of a county or division-level office holder. Indeed, the bureaucratic rank system is even used to determine the status and privilege of access of church personnel: there are, for example, division-level monks, section-level nuns, and so on.<sup>22</sup> Not only individuals all have ranks but every bureaucratic organization is also assigned a rank. As Lieberthal and Oksenberg observe:

Every unit in China -- whether it be a government, Party, or corporate body or a sub-unit of any of these -- has a rank. This system enables each unit to appraise its status with respect to all other units.... This rank system is thus embedded in the hierarchy of formal levels of government that ascends from villages and cities through counties, prefectures, and provinces up to the national government (the "center") itself,...<sup>23</sup>

Interestingly, this system of ranks even extends to all foreign individuals and firms:

The Chinese may conclude that a particular foreign firm is roughly the rank, for example, of a division (chu) in a central ministry, and its subordinate representative office in Beijing will be treated accordingly in terms of access and amenities....While Chinese never directly inform foreigners of their rank, a sensitive observer can assess his standing based on the access and treatment he receives.<sup>24</sup>

Every Chinese cares greatly about his own rank and those of others' in the system, because the rank "determines a

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22. Yan Huai, Understanding the Political System of Contemporary China, p. 23.

23. Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 142.

24. Ibid. p. 148.

cadre's political power, economic welfare, social status, access to information, and various benefits in terms of clothing, food, housing, transportation, medical care, and funeral ceremony.<sup>25</sup> For instance, there are strict regulations concerning different treatments for different ranks. Central-level newspapers can mention by names only those with provincial-level ranks or above, and regional newspapers are allowed to mention by name those with prefecture-level ranks or above. Indeed, even the place of one's coffin in a cemetery is determined by one's rank in life: the more conspicuous and easily accessible places are reserved for the bodies or ashes of higher ranking cadres; those of lower-ranked ones are relegated to more obscure and inconvenient spots. Indeed, it has been a "big headache" for Chinese Central leaders that the family members of the deceased constantly fight for the limited number of honorable slots in the Babaoshan Cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, it is no easy job to establish an appropriate ranking order among leaders of different units. The above-mentioned rank system still leaves plenty of room for equals, and the real challenge is how to properly place each of the nominal equals into a subtle hierarchy acceptable to all, by carefully weighing many other relevant factors and ranking methods. As Lieberthal and Oksenberg observe,

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25. Yan Huai, Understanding the Political System, p. 23.

26. Ibid. pp. 23-24.

"calculations of real authority [and status] inevitably are complex and often cannot be arrived at by mechanically applying a [single] set of rules."<sup>27</sup> The factors that have to be taken into account are: civil service grade, Party status, current political standing, unit rank, age, and personal connections with higher authorities.

In addition to the bureaucratic rank system, the Chinese have developed a system of civil service grades, that includes more than thirty grades, with each grade specifying a salary range for the individuals in that grade.<sup>28</sup> The bureaucratic rank system and the civil service grade system do not correspond with each other exactly, in that the latter is based more upon seniority. However, Chinese cadres are sensitive to each other's civil service grades, which can make a difference in their perception of each other's relative status. Moreover, Party status is an important factor. Membership on the Party leading group in the government system or on the standing committee in the Party system automatically gives one a great deal of extra weight in personal stature: "...when two officials of equal government standing deal with a matter, the Party status of each can significantly affect their perceptions of each

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27. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, p. 146.

28. Ibid. pp. 145-146. For a more detailed discussion of China's bureaucratic rank system and civil service grade system, see Hong Yung Lee, From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 195-199.

other." That is because, "Occasionally, the most powerful individual within a ministry or other organ is not the person who formally heads that unit but rather is a 'subordinate' official who is the leading member of the Party group within the unit."<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, a leader's nominal position may not reflect his real current political standing, for some leaders may have already fallen out of grace but for one reason or another still retain their formal positions. As for example, Peng Dehuai and Chen Yun had already lost their de facto power in the early 1960s, even though they still retained their membership on the Politburo. Consequently, a leader's actual standing must be determined in figuring out his relative status. Moreover, a person who is from a higher-ranking unit, who is older of age, or who has important family ties or personal connections with key superior leaders will add extra weight to his relative stature.

It is largely the responsibility of the mishus to get the information, calculate the various factors mentioned above, and figure out an appropriate hierarchical arrangement, before the leaders of the different units come together.<sup>30</sup> When the leaders meet, the mishus must take great

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29. Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China, p. 146.

30. Yi Chengjie et al., Zhengwu jiegua yu lingdao huodong anpai (Receiving of Official Visitors and Arranging of Leaders' Activities), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, pp. 27, 84.

pains to ensure that the hierarchic arrangement is properly observed in order to avoid any tension-provoking deviations. For example, it is a mishu's job to properly introduce the leaders of the different units to each other. In doing so, he must introduce the lower ranking leader to the higher ranking one, the younger one to the older one, the less important one to the more important one -- not the other way round.<sup>31</sup>

Moderating and coordinating between leaders of different units is particularly the responsibility of the general office directors of the units involved. In order to facilitate or lubricate interactions between leaders of different units, GO heads are expected and encouraged to spend a considerable part of their time and energy cultivating as wide a network as possible of personal connections across the local community, if not throughout the country.<sup>32</sup>

#### Moderating between Leaders and Subordinate Bureaucrats

Chinese mishus' cushioning/moderating role between leading and led is such that leaders and subordinate bureaucrats do not usually contact or confront each other but go through the intermediary of the mishu personnel. The leaders pass most of their orders, instructions, decisions, and task assignments to the subordinate departments and units

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31. Ibid. p. 27.

32. Hou Rui, How to Work as a GO Director, pp. 13, 61, 70.

through the general office.<sup>33</sup> And in most cases the subordinate departments and units have to go through the GO to get access to individual leaders. "The subordinate departments or units usually do not go directly to the leadership squad to report their work or to request for instructions. Instead, they go to head of the GO first. For instance, if a department needs approval from the leadership for a new project, it sends in the proposal first to the GO."<sup>34</sup> That is because the "head of the GO is responsible for contacting the leaders concerned and deciding whether a conference should be held to further examine the proposal, what kind of conference it should be, and who should participate."<sup>35</sup> This role of the GO is particularly important with regard to the subordinate departments' annual work plans involving budgets and appropriations. The subordinate departments have to "consult and negotiate repeatedly with the GO" before they submit to the leadership squad the final version for approval. This is said to be the case with the planning process between the State Council, its GO, and the various Central ministries and agencies.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, "if a unit wants to invite the leaders to an activity it is going to organize, it has to go to the GO head and let him contact

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33. Ibid. p. 22.

34. Ibid. p. 11.

35. Ibid.

36. Xu Ruixin et al., The essentials, p. 206.

the leaders to see whether they are available and which of them are interested in coming."<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, when the leaders are unsatisfied with the work performance of a bureaucrat, they usually do not confront him directly; it is the GO director's job to drop a hint about the leaders' wrath without spelling out its full extent, in order to avoid "having a frontal confrontation with him, hurting his pride, increasing his psychological stress, affecting his enthusiasm, or engendering negative effects." Furthermore, if a leader has thought up a new plan whose effects he is not sure about, it is also the GO director's job to drop hints about it here and there to test out the responses from the various parties, so that the leader retains the flexibility of either following it through openly or backing off quietly.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the GO is also in many cases placed in charge of a most troublesome and stressful job, that is, balancing among the subordinate departments in terms of material interests, such as distribution of honors, bonuses, ration coupons, salary raises, and housing allocation.<sup>39</sup>

Besides, mishus perform an important part in correctly conducting various rituals and punctilios when leaders give audiences to lower-level bureaucrats or ordinary people, so

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37. Hou Rui, How to Work as a GO Director, p. 11.

38. Ibid. p. 80.

39. Ibid. p.23.

as to smoothen the process. When a leader receives low-level bureaucrats, it is his mishu's job to signal them where to sit, when to sit down, when to take a sip at their tea cups, and when to light up their cigarettes.<sup>40</sup> On such occasions, bureaucrats automatically look up to the mishu for cues for how to act properly.

#### Writing of Official Documents: Moderating Policy Differences

So far what has been examined about Chinese mishus' cushioning and coordinating role deals primarily with various interpersonal relationships; mishu personnel also play a crucial part in moderating disagreements and conflicts over policy issues in order to facilitate coherence and continuity of the Chinese political process. Such role is best reflected in the writing of official documents, a task which is largely handled exclusively by mishu personnel. In China virtually all official documents are written by mishu personnel, though they are issued in the name of individual leaders or leadership squads. The result is, however, that mishus' crucial role in document writing works to cushion and absorb much of political leaders' arbitrariness and smooth out their disagreements and conflicts.

Under usual conditions, leaders may just mumble vaguely, incoherently, or even unintelligibly, but it is their mishus' job to draft, edit, and censor each document in order to

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<sup>40</sup>. Yi Chengjie et al., Receiving of Official Visitors, pp. 86-87.

guarantee its conformity with policies, regulations, and laws of the Party and state and its consistency with past commitments and precedents, as well as to make sure that it conforms to correct format, style, and grammar.<sup>41</sup>

One important reason for mishus' virtual monopoly of all document-writings is that Chinese leaders are generally inept in this regard. The Chinese mishu authors themselves give a picture of the typical leader as being helplessly dependent upon his mishu for any kind of writing of documents. "A leader has only some rough idea, being unable to spell it out clearly but wishing to 'trade a brick for a piece of jade (pao zhuan yin yu).'"<sup>42</sup> Some leaders may offer a few concrete ideas for composing a document, but they "are not necessarily sensible, essential, but may be disconnected, incomplete, illogical, self-contradictory, and inaccurately worded."<sup>43</sup> In some cases, leaders may simply be ignorant: "It is understandable that the leading comrade of a danwei (work unit) may not be totally knowledgeable about his work or about complicated realities and therefore may utter some ideas which conflict with the real situation."<sup>44</sup> Thus, "In the process of composing a document, leading comrades need

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41. Wang Zhande et al., Gongwen zhuanxie yu hegao (Drafting and Editing of Official Documents), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, pp. 116-117.

42. Ibid. p. 19.

43. Ibid. p. 24.

44. Ibid. p. 26.

badly the help of their mishus, hoping that they can give full play to their wisdom, talent, and creativity so as to guarantee the quality of the document being composed."<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, a mishu is advised that it is not appropriate "to write just what was told by the leader."<sup>46</sup> Instead, he "should use the sensible ideas and dismiss the senseless ones, put together the disconnected ones, complete the incomplete ones, smooth out the illogical ones, correct the ungrammatical ones, and reconcile the contradictory ones,..."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, mishus are even encouraged to think creatively regardless of what their leaders have actually uttered. They should "think independently in an attempt to combine his own correct ideas with the leader's intentions: not just reflecting the leader's intentions but also injecting his own new opinions and thoughts."<sup>48</sup>

Chinese mishus' extraordinary discretion in composing official documents is euphemistically referred to as "figuring out a leader's intentions (linghui lingdao yitu)."  
What a leader has said may not be what he means, and what a leader really means may not have been said by him, because, "There is always a gap between what the mishu has heard and what is going on inside his leader's mind, and it is all up

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45. Ibid. p. 23.

46. Ibid. p. 22.

47. Ibid. p. 24.

48. Ibid. p. 23.

to the mishu to figure out what his leader's intentions are."<sup>49</sup> So, a mishu "should not understand his leader's intentions as something mechanical or static, but should dare to think actively, independently, and skillfully, and to give full play to his own brain in figuring out and elaborating on his leader's intentions in a creative way."<sup>50</sup> In order to "figure out a leader's intentions," a mishu is advised to do the following.

First, the mishu should "familiarize himself with the policies, regulations, and laws issued from above, the reports sent in from below, the precedents made by the other leaders of the same unit. This way the mishu can be sure that what he writes will not deviate from the instructions from the superior leaders, will reflect the reality and maintain the consistency of the policy concerned,..."<sup>51</sup>

Second, "in drafting a document, the mishu should thoroughly familiarize himself with the actual work of his danwei (work unit)."<sup>52</sup>

Third, "it is a good practice for the mishu to talk it over with other [more experienced] mishus or director of the general office in order to benefit from collective efforts,

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49. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 136.

50. Wang Zhande et al., Drafting and Editing of Official Documents, p. 22.

51. Ibid. p. 19.

52. Ibid. p. 25.

wisdom and experience in figuring out the essence of the leader's intention."<sup>53</sup>

Fourth, the mishu should record his leader's idiosyncratic expressions diligently and promptly. The mishu should keep a notebook constantly handy and write down his leader's new ideas and catchwords. Particularly, he should be familiar with his speech habit so as to be able to give some semblance of his leader's authorship to the document being composed.<sup>54</sup>

Fifth, "in drafting a document for a leader, the mishu should consult the other leaders of the same danwei (work unit) in order to avoid the limited vision of the single leader that results from the division of labor."<sup>55</sup>

Chinese mishus are responsible not only for writing documents but also for reviewing, editing, and censoring documents sent in from subordinate bureaucracies, as has been noted in the previous chapter. All the subordinate departments and units usually have to send their official documents concerning policies, regulations, and work reports to the general offices first before submitting them to the leadership squads or officially releasing them. "Take the general offices of the Party committee and government of a province for example," explains a Chinese GO mishu, "there

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53. Ibid. pp. 18-19.

54. Ibid. p. 20.

55. Ibid. pp. 26-27.

are more than one hundred differently specialized departments directly under the provincial leadership....All the documents they submit to the provincial Party committee or government have to go through the respective GOs for reviewing and editing."<sup>56</sup> Normally, subordinate departments and units are not allowed to send their documents directly to individual leaders. Even if they do so, leaders are supposed to turn such documents, usually called "extra-channel documents" (zhangwai gongwen), over to the GO for proper processing before they can be accepted.<sup>57</sup>

In reviewing and editing a document, the GO plays the coordinating/integrating role by making sure that it conforms to "the guidelines and policies of the Party," "the laws and regulations of the state," and "the instructions from above," and that they dovetail with "the decisions made by the same unit in the past or made by other related units of the same rank," in addition to being written in the correct style and format.<sup>58</sup>

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56. Wen Xiang, Mishu renvuan xiuyang yu duiwu jiangshe (Training of Mishu Personnel and Building of the Mishu Army), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 41.

57. Personal interviews. Also see Wei Keyi et al., Mishu gongzuo tongshu (A General Guide for Mishu Work), Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1992, pp. 121-122.

58. Hou Rui, How to Work as a GO Director p. 43. Handling of the format of Chinese official documents is a highly complex matter, in that there is a plethora of labels, such as: mingling (order), jueding (decision), guiding (regulations), zhishi (instruction), tongzhi (circular), yijian (opinion), chao'an (draft), tongbao (notification), to name just a few. Each label suggests a subtle shade in the different degrees of bindingness. Each official document

Because mishu personnel play a crucial coordinating/integrating role in writing, editing, and censoring official documents and because they are the principal carrier of the institutional memory and a primary medium of communication among leaders, it can be argued that Chinese official documents betray much fewer glaring contradictions than would be the case, given the sheer size and complexity of the country's bureaucratic structure. This contributes in a significant way to stability and coherence of the Chinese bureaucracy.

#### Organizing Conferences and Meetings

Chinese mishus' role of cushioning, coordinating, and integrating is most comprehensively demonstrated in the organizing of conferences and meetings, in that in doing so they have to coordinate both among leaders and between leaders and bureaucrats, and with regard to various interpersonal relationships as well as to differences or conflicts over policy issues. Therefore, a detailed

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must be assigned one of them to indicate to the receiving bureaucrats whether they must implement the letter as well as the spirit of the document, or implement only the spirit, or just treat the document as reference materials. Those labels are so complicated and confusing that only mishu personnel are competent to use them correctly. This is another important reason why mishus' role looms so large in the process of document writing. See Kenneth G. Lieberthal, Central Documents and Politburo Politics in China, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1978, pp. 10-15; Michel Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication Within the Chinese Bureaucracy," China Quarterly, No. 57 (January-March 1974), p. 17.

examination is made below of the functions of mishus during the entire process of organizing a conference, with a focus on their moderating and smoothening effects.

In China, all conferences and meetings are organized and serviced by mishus of various general offices involved. In order to appreciate mishus' significant role in this regard, it is necessary first to realize the important place that conferences and meetings hold in the Chinese political process. They are the occasions for leaders to meet face to face or for leaders and subordinate bureaucrats to gather together for consultations and bargaining. If a meeting is mishandled and thus flounders, it can trigger off serious confrontations and infightings. An example is the ill-fated Lushan Conference in 1959 in the wake of the Great Leap fiasco, where Mao and Defense Minister Peng Dehuai openly crossed swords. This confrontation was perhaps the most decisive origin of the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, well-organized conferences and meetings facilitate consensus-building, and serve as a major coordinating/integrating mechanism for the Chinese political system.<sup>59</sup> The part that mishus play is crucial for the smooth proceeding of any conference.

The importance of the conference system is reflected in the fact that there are a large variety of conferences in the

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<sup>59</sup>. The view that the meetings system is one of the primary integrative mechanisms was perhaps first suggested by Lieberthal and Oksenberg in their Policy Making in China.

Chinese political arena; some of the most common types are as follows.<sup>60</sup>

WORK CONFERENCES (gongzuo huiyi). A work conference is "a comprehensive meeting which searchingly reviews past policy and decides upon future tasks."<sup>61</sup> Work conferences are held by Central ministries and departments, and various "bureaucratic systems" (xitong) annually or semiannually.<sup>62</sup> Of particular importance is the institution of the Central Work Conference, where Central and provincial leaders get together. Parris Chang regards the institution as an important forum "for consensus-building in which diverse viewpoints were aired, differences were ironed out and there was considerable give and take among the participants."<sup>63</sup>

SPECIALIST CONFERENCES (zhuanye bumen huiyi). This type of conferences is similar to the work conference in purpose, but differs "by having fewer participants, having a better defined and limited agenda and by being much more narrow and technical in scope."<sup>64</sup>

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60. The following description of conference types is based on these two articles: Parris Chang, "Research Notes on the Changing Loci of Decision Making in the CCP," China Quarterly, No. 44 (October-December 1970), pp. 169-194; Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication."

61. Oksenberg, ibid. p. 3.

62. Ibid.

63. Parris Chang, "Research Notes," p. 173.

64. Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication," p. 9.

"SIT AND TALK" MEETINGS (zuotan hui). These are consultative meetings for informal exchange of opinions without having to reach decisions.

"BUMP HEADS" MEETINGS (pengtou hui). They are similar to "sit and talk" meetings in informality, serving the purpose of ad hoc exchange of views. But they "are usually secret and are held in a private office or in a small conference room," confined to "only a few participants, all occupying leadership positions in the same unit," to "evaluate their choices before policy has been set."<sup>65</sup> Informal as they are, "bump heads" meetings are "really more important than the bigger [formal] meetings."<sup>66</sup>

TRANSMISSION MEETINGS (chuanda huiyi). They are held to communicate higher level decisions to lower level units.

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE MEETINGS (jingyan jiaoliu hui). These are held to exchange information on how a certain policy has been implemented or a certain issue resolved successfully.

There are still other types of conferences and meetings, such as national congresses of the Party Central Committee and the National People's Congress; administrative conferences (bangong huiyi), where members of a leadership squad meet regularly to discuss and decide administrative affairs; and various ad hoc meetings, which key leaders can

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65. Ibid. p. 12.

66. Ibid.

convene anytime on almost any topic that they are dealing with.

Moreover, the importance of the meeting system for the Chinese political process can also be measured by the time and energy that Chinese officials spend on them. Participating in various conferences and meetings takes up a lion's share of Chinese cadres' waking (and even many sleeping) hours. According to a random survey conducted by the Chinese authorities in 1983, the Party and government leaders of a certain city spent 65 percent of their work days attending various conferences.<sup>67</sup> In the same year, the Chinese Railway Ministry conducted a random survey of 1,000 train passengers, out of whom more than 300, or 35 percent, were on their way to one conference or another. It is estimated that over six hundred million railroad tickets are sold every year to people to attend miscellaneous conferences.<sup>68</sup> In order to propagate and implement a single Central policy, a certain provincial-level unit convened 112 conferences over a period of nine months, or one conference every other day on average.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, conferences can be very large and last over a long period of time. For example, "the leadership has at times gathered together as many as

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67. Hou Rui, Huiyi Zhuzi Yu Fuwu (Organizing and Servicing of Conferences), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 104.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid. p. 106.

seven thousand of the highest-ranking cadres in the country for almost a month of discussion....<sup>70</sup>

Acting upon the instructions by the Politburo, the Central General Office stipulated in 1954 that the general offices be responsible for organizing all conferences and meetings.<sup>71</sup> As a result, "today, all conferences to be held by every Party or government organ at various levels are organized by its general office."<sup>72</sup> It is known that many GOs at Central and other levels contain a division or section which, called "conference division/section," is exclusively responsible for organizing various meetings and conferences.<sup>73</sup>

In case of a large conference, an ad hoc secretariat may be set up composed of personnel coming from various departments or units, but the major work is still to be carried out by the general office of the host unit.<sup>74</sup> A

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70. Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Bruce J. Dickson, A Research Guide to Central Party and Government Meetings in China, 1949-1986, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989, p. xxxii.

There are so many conferences and meetings that even Chinese cadres themselves complain of them being drowned in "an ocean of conferences," so much so that some localities have had to designate a few days of the year as "no conference day," in order to have some reprieve from the relentless pressure of conference participation. (Hou Rui, Organizing and Servicing of Conferences, pp. 105, 110.)

71. Ibid. p. 14.

72. Ibid. p. 21.

73. Ibid. P. 14; personal interviews.

74. Hou Rui, Organizing and Servicing of Conferences, p. 21.

conference secretariat is commonly called the conference mishu division, conference mishu office, or conference mishu team, depending on the size of the conference. A conference secretariat is usually headed by one or several members of the leadership squad(s), who meet and make major decisions periodically. It consists typically of four staff components to constantly take care of the various needs of the conference: administrative section, briefing/information section, service section, and security section.<sup>75</sup> The functions of these sections are spelled out as follows:

The administrative section is responsible for guiding, organizing, and managing the conference, setting the agenda, and assigning or handling various add hoc jobs. The briefing/writing section is responsible for processing all documents, e.g. conference papers, keynote speeches, minutes, bulletins, resolutions, etc. The service section is responsible for decorating and cleaning the conference room/hall and providing room and board, finance, equipment, transport, recreation, and medical care. The security section is responsible for maintaining confidentiality, security, and safety of the conference.<sup>76</sup>

In organizing and servicing a conference, it is largely the mishus' job to propose or prepare the agenda. Proposed topics for the conference may come from four sources: superior leaders, members of the immediate leadership squad, mishus of the general office, and subordinate bureaucrats. The GO mishus are expected to evaluate, select, and set up priority of the topics, and then propose the agenda to the chief leader of the leadership squad for approval. According

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75. Ibid. p. 22.

76. Ibid. pp. 22-23.

to our interviews, the chief leader's personal mishu and the GO director wield considerable sway over what issues are to be brought up, when and how, at a conference.

Then, the mishus involved conduct research and investigations for the conference -- retrieving and collecting relevant documents, reference materials, data and evidence for the discussion of the prepared topics, proposing policy options for deliberation and resolution, and investigating the backgrounds of the nominees for the positions under consideration. Very importantly, the mishus are expected to test out the private opinions and preferences of the participants.<sup>77</sup> Ideally, they should play some part in discussing the selected topics with the participants and reconciling their differences of opinion informally before the conference actually takes place.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, the mishus are responsible for proposing the list of participants for the conference. The list should distinguish clearly "regular participants," "non-voting participants," and "special guests." For some exclusive, highly confidential conferences, the list should also include the note-takers.<sup>79</sup> This responsibility is considered as "a very important job," in that, "If someone entitled to attend the conference is not invited, that means that his legitimate

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77. Ibid. pp. 25-26, 38-39.

78. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 191.

79. Hou Rui, Organizing and Servicing of Conferences, p. 104. pp. 26-27.

right has been deprived inadvertently," but if the wrong persons are invited, "it will have negative impact on the conference."<sup>80</sup>

During the conference, the mishus are responsible for drafting, editing, printing, and distributing all documents, which include speeches, outlines, notes, transcripts, records, bulletins, announcements, reports, minutes, motions, resolutions, news releases, etc. Mishus' great discretion in writing and editing conference documents is the same as was analyzed in a previous section. For a major conference a special writing team is formed, which works in shifts on a continuous basis in order to guarantee the timeliness and quality of each conference document.<sup>81</sup> Most of our interviewees expressed their amazement at mishus' remarkable ability at handling document-writing during conferences. "Looking at a mishu's summary of my speech," said one of them, "I couldn't help but wonder how I could have uttered something so elegant, logical, and profound. They [mishus] are really masters at writing documents." (Of course, complaints about mishus' incompetence in this regard are not unheard of.) However, it seems that in "summarizing" a speech, a mishu feels little need to be faithful to its letter or even spirit, and that the speaker himself tends to

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<sup>80</sup>. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, p. 111.

<sup>81</sup>. Ibid. p. 62.

feel grateful for the mishu's "refining" and editing. Mishus' great discretion in this regard is helpful toward apparent harmony and consensus-building of a conference, under usual circumstances.

The efficiency of the document-processing during a conference is also emphasized. For example, it is usually expected that what is discussed in the morning should have been processed, printed and distributed to the participants by the end of the afternoon; what is discussed in the afternoon should have been processed in the same manner and distributed to the participants first thing the next morning.<sup>82</sup>

To ensure that a conference goes smoothly, the GO is expected to go to extraordinary lengths to take care of every detail of the administrative and logistical support. Mishus' excessive care is not necessarily superfluous given the general inadequacy of infrastructural facilities in China. For example, an indispensable precaution that mishus must take for every major conference is to inform the local power station of the time and location of the conference. Details like this can mean the difference between success and failure of a conference. Once the mishus of the Party committee of a certain locality failed, in 1984, to do so while inviting a key Central leader to make a speech at a large conference being attended by thousands of people. As a result, the power

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82. Ibid. p. 68.

station cut off electricity for a full hour due to a shortage of supply, thus leaving the Central leader in a very embarrassing and humiliating situation.<sup>83</sup> Another example involved Premier Zhou Enlai and the visiting Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The two were having a dinner and were about to make a toast, when a blackout occurred, leaving the dining room "pitch dark." Premier Zhou was so mad that he held his ire deliberately until three o'clock the next morning. Then he rang the leaders of the Central General Office and the Beijing Power Supply Bureau, waking them up from their deep slumber and summoning them for an emergency meeting in his office. The first words he flung at them were: "I got you up from your beds and asked you to come at this hour on purpose in order to leave a deep impression on you."<sup>84</sup>

The mishus are also responsible for maintaining confidentiality, security, and safety of the conference including both its participants and documents. In case of a top secret conference, the mishus must make sure that nobody takes notes, no documents are issued, or else that the documents are confined to the restricted areas and returned properly and promptly without being copied.<sup>85</sup>

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83. Ibid. p. 45.

84. Cheng Hua, ed., Zhou Enlai he tade mishumen (Zhou Enlai and His Mishus), Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992, pp. 270-271.

85. Ibid. p. 98.

Moreover, the mishus are in charge of news censorship. "Journalists are usually not allowed into important and confidential conferences, and so all the news reports are drafted, edited and censored by the mishu department."<sup>86</sup>

During a conference, the mishus are responsible for providing comfortable rooms, delicious food, convenient transport, delightful recreations, and prompt and reliable medical care. They are also supposed to ensure the sanitation of the rest rooms, dining rooms, food, utensils, and drinking water, as well as to "remind the participants to pay attention to their personal hygiene, change clothes frequently, and take regular baths."<sup>87</sup> Mishus' negligence in any of these respects can cause disaster, according to the Chinese specialist on the mishu work. For example, a certain locality held an important conference, but it had to be called off because most of the participants fell ill by eating contaminated food. This unfortunate event happened "because the mishus had neglected to have the food analyzed before hand."<sup>88</sup>

One of the most sensible issues (or headaches) that the mishus must handle with extreme caution is to set up an appropriate hierarchical order among conference participants. The mishus should propose the proper seating arrangement

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86. Ibid. p. 99.

87. Ibid. p. 88.

88. Ibid. p. 45.

specifying who should be sitting on the podium and who not.<sup>89</sup> They should also suggest the suitable order in which the leaders enter the conference room/hall, ascend the podium, and deliver speeches. During photo-taking for the purpose of news release, special care is taken as to where each of the leaders should be positioned, for people will read tremendous significance into, or conjure up all kinds of speculations about, such positioning. In case of TV coverage, meticulous attention must be paid as to how long the video camera should stay on each of the leaders in strict accordance with his relative rank or importance. It is said that conference participants are fastidious about all these nuances, proper treatment of which makes a great deal of difference between unbearable tensions and apparent harmony.<sup>90</sup> It is no easy job, for participants may come from different units, and many factors have to be carefully weighed in determining their relative ranks vis-a-vis each other, as has been discussed earlier.<sup>91</sup>

In short, without the delicate skill and intensive care of mishus, hardly any conference or meeting can proceed

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89. Ibid, p. 34.

90. Based on personal interviews.

91. It is also noteworthy that after the conference, it is the duty of the mishus to try various means to prod and urge the units concerned to implement the decisions and resolutions reached at the conference and to collect the relevant feedback so as to keep the leaders informed of the results. Hou Rui, Organizing and Servicing of Conferences, pp. 69-70; Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, pp. 125-126.

smoothly and successfully in China, given the complexities of interpersonal relationships, inevitable disagreements and conflicts of opinions and interests, and general inadequacy and unreliability of infrastructural facilities.

#### Summary

Mishus play the cushioning/coordinating role among leaders by properly handling hierarchical and work relationships, soothingly mediating interpersonal communication, and skillfully reconciling or glossing over policy disagreements. Mishus also act as intermediaries between leaders and subordinate bureaucrats in order for them to avoid or minimize direct contacts and confrontations between each other. Mishus' moderating role is also well reflected in the writing, editing, and censoring of official documents. Mishus' extraordinary discretion in this regard works to facilitate the continuity, consistency, and coherence of the policy process. Moreover, mishus are responsible for organizing and servicing all conferences and meetings. Their meticulous care and moderating role are conducive to smoothening and lubricating the conflict-prone process of bargaining and negotiation involved when political actors of different ranks or levels and different bureaucratic units come together face to face.

## Chapter Five

### STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS

China is one of the largest countries in the world and has by far the largest population on earth -- over one billion and one hundred million. To govern this vast territory and huge population, Chinese political leadership has to have a gigantic bureaucracy, which numbers over thirty million cadres.<sup>1</sup> In order to effectively control this bureaucratic mammoth, the Chinese political leadership has to rely upon large staffs, as is the case with many other political systems. There are over one million mishus personnel in the Chinese political arena,<sup>2</sup> who perform the two basic roles -- amplifying leadership's capacity for bureaucratic control and smoothing and coordinating the political process, as has been analyzed in the foregoing two chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to sort out the formal structures and functions of the Chinese mishu institution. This chapter consists the following three parts.

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1. This number was given by Yan Huai, who used to be director of the Research Institute of Organization and Personnel of the Central Committee Organization Department. Included in the statistics are those in the official nomenklutura in Party and state organs and corporations at Central and local levels. Yan Huai, Zhongguo dalu zhengzhi tizhi qiantan (Understanding the Political System of Contemporary China, Somerset, NJ: the Center for Modern China, 1991), p. 23.

2. Xu Ruixin et al., Zhongguo xiandai mishu gongzuo jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, p. 178.

- Part I -- General Discussion
- Part II -- Case Analyses: the Central Committee General Office and the State Council General Office
- Part III -- The Relationship of General Offices to Other Key Organs and Actors

## Part I. General Discussion

In the Chinese political system, every formal organization, e.g., Party committee, government, enterprise, school, etc., at each level - Center, province, prefecture, county, or township - is directed by a leadership squad, which is served and assisted by a mishu squad. The mishu squad is formally called the "general office" (hereafter, GO). At the Central level, for example, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, the State Council, the standing committee of the National People's Congress, the National Consultative Conference of Political Affairs, and the Central Military Affairs Commission all have a GO.

A GO at the Central or provincial level is called a "bangongting"; one at the level of prefecture, municipality, county, or large state enterprise is called a "bangongshi." At lower levels it is sometimes called a "mishu chu" (secretarial division) or "mishu zu" (secretarial team).<sup>3</sup> For

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<sup>3</sup>. Chen Hongbin et al., eds., Jianming wenmi gongzuo shouce (A Concise Handbook of Mishu Profession), Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987, p. 58.

the purpose of this study the generic term "general office" will be used. Provincial-level GOs contain divisions (chu), which in turn consist of sections (ge). Lower-level GOs are usually composed of sections (ge) or teams (zu). (The organization of the CCPCC GO and the State Council GO will be discussed in a separate part later in this chapter.)

For all the inconsistencies about the names, evidence indicates that GOs at all levels share similar organizational structures and functions, as explained by Wang Zhaoguo, then director of the CCPCC GO, in his sweeping statement in January of 1985 to the "National Symposium of Chief Mishus and Directors of GOs": "A GO's responsibilities include offering secretarial services, providing security services, conducting research and investigations, processing electronic communications, handling visits and letters, supplying transportation, providing health care, maintaining confidentiality, looking after [leaders'] personal life, etc."<sup>4</sup> The support and assistance being spelled out here fall into two basic categories: political/administrative services and logistics/personal services.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, these services

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4. Wang Zhaoguo, "Chongfen fahui bangongting de canmou. zhushou zuoyong" ("Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices in Providing Advice and Assistance"), in Lingdao tongzhi tan mishu gongzuo (The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work), Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1989, p. 70.

5. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 180; also see the Central Document entitled "Decisions for All Levels on Mishu Organs and on the Responsibilities of Chief Mishus and of Directors of General Offices in Agencies Without Chief Mishus," in Hou Rui, Zenyang dang bangongshi zhuren (How to Work as a Director of a General Office), Beijing: Dangan

affect each and every member of the leadership squad that the GO serves, whereas any of the other subordinate bureaucratic departments or units may involve only one or just a few of the leaders. Putting all these services within one single staff unit is facilitative toward the coherence and integration of the leader squad it serves.

The political/administrative services that the GO provides include:

- collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, transmitting, and storing information;
- conducting research and investigation and providing options and advice for policy-making;
- drafting, editing, censoring, printing, and distributing official documents and maintaining their confidentiality;
- arranging meetings and conferences and leaders' activities;
- receiving and handling visits and letters;
- monitoring, supervising, and coordinating subordinate departments and units in policy implementation; and
- carrying out various ad hoc tasks assigned by leaders.

In order to perform all of these political functions, a GO is usually composed of these standard divisions or sections:<sup>6</sup>

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chubanshe, 1990, pp. 50-51.

6. Based on Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sheng zizhi qu zhixiashi dang zheng qun jiguan zuzhi gaiyao (An Outline of the Organization and Functions of the Provinces, Autonomous Regions, and Directly-Governed Municipalities of the People's Republic of China), compiled by Division of Organization of Local Governments, Personnel Department of the State Council, Beijing: Zhongguo renshi chubanshe, 1989; Zheng Xinghan et

Secretarial Division  
Confidential Division  
Information Division  
Administrative Division  
Reception and Accommodations Division  
Foreign Languages Translation Division  
Printing Division  
Investigation and Research Division  
Division for Handling Letters and Visits  
Discipline Inspection Division  
Political Work Division  
Personnel Division  
On-Duty Division (zhiban chu)

It should be noted that in practice these sub-units may not all be neatly juxtaposed on the same footing, but some may be subordinate to, or embedded in, the others.

In addition to the above common components, Party and government GOs often have other more specialized divisions of their own. A Party GO may contain a division for handling Party-public relationship (dang qun chu), a division for collecting Party historical data (dangshi zhengji chu), Party publications division, inspection tour division, etc.<sup>7</sup> The governmental GO usually contains such professional divisions

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al., Dang zheng jiguan mishu gongzuo gaishu (An Outline of the Mishu Work in Party and State Organs), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, pp. 121-122.

7. Ibid.

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Industry and Transportation Division  
Finance and Economy Division  
Auditing Division  
Science and Technology Division  
Agriculture Division  
Culture and Education Division  
Laws and Regulations Division.

In terms of logistics/personal services, a GO looks after the personal life of leaders with respect to food, housing, transport, health care, salaries, recreations, security, down to funeral services.<sup>9</sup> For these purposes, a GO usually contains the following sub-units:<sup>10</sup>

Personal Life Division (shenghuo chu)  
Housing Division  
Motor Vehicle Management Division  
Retired Cadres Division  
Medical Care Division  
Finance Division

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8. Ibid.

9. In some cases this category of functions belongs to a separate unit, usually called "Administrative Affairs Management Division" (ji guan shi wu guan li chu), which reports directly to the chief mishu instead of director of the GO. Hou Rui, How to Work as a GO Director, p. 18.

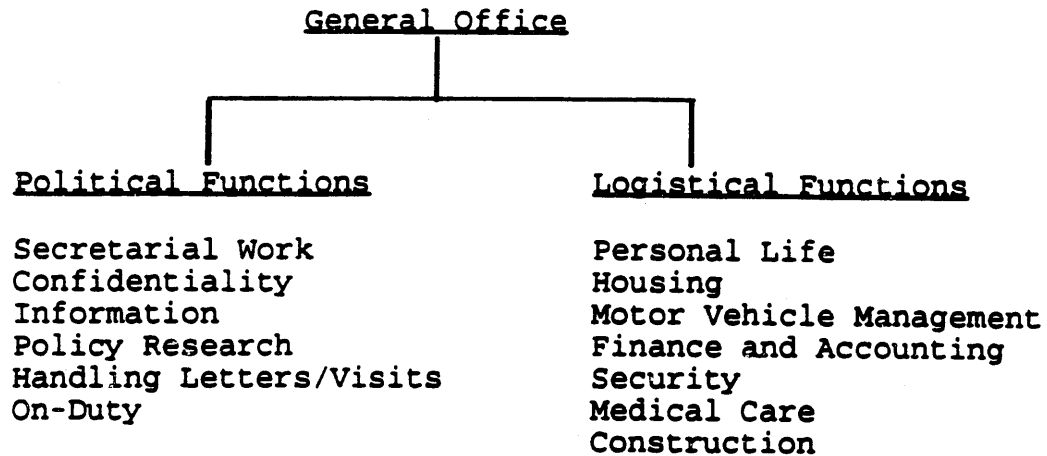
10. Based on An Outline of the Organization and Functions; Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, pp. 121-122.

Construction Division

Security Division.

The core structure of a typical general office can be illustrated as follows.

Table 5.1: The Core Structure of a General Office



It is noteworthy that in some cases, a GO's subdivisions do not bear the above-mentioned names, but instead are called Division/Section Number One, Division/Section Number Two, and so on. But they still perform the same functions as spelled out in the foregoing self-explanatory names.

The higher up a GO is, the more divisions and sections it contains and the greater the division of labor within it. A GO at a lower level of, say, a county, generally does not have so many sub-units, and so each section or individual mishu has to handle a wider scope of responsibilities. A GO is, however, generally quite sizable. For instance, the average size of a provincial Party committee GO is 269 members and that of a provincial government GO is 244,

figures which put them among the largest departments.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that in the Party system at the provincial level where there are on average twelve departments, the GOs are by far the largest; in the government system at the provincial level, they are among the largest of the usual sixty departments and bureaus, surpassed in size only by Public Security Bureau, Internal Security Bureau, and a couple of other departments.<sup>12</sup> The average size of a prefecture-level GO is about forty people.<sup>13</sup>

As a rule, almost all subordinate departments of the bureaucracy have their counterpart divisions, sections, or individuals in the GO of the presiding leadership squad.<sup>14</sup> This organizational structure reflects the GO's role as a counterbureaucracy serving the purpose of providing the leadership squad with countervailing capacity to closely and constantly control the bureaucracy, as was noted in Chapter Three.

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11. Based on the numbers provided in An Outline of the Organization and Functions.

12. Ibid.

13. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 150.

14. There are, however, two major exceptions in the Party system: the organization and propaganda departments, whose heads are usually members of the leadership squad and so report directly to the squad without having to go through the GO. (Hou Rui, How to Work as a General Office Director, p. 10.) Even so, the GO can intervene on occasion and still has an important role to play in terms of logistical/personal life support.

Formally, a GO has a status equal to that of a bureaucratic department at each level of the bureaucratic hierarchy. Thus, the CCPCC and State Council GOs have the same rank as a Central department or ministry; a provincial GO has the same rank as a provincial department;<sup>15</sup> so on and so forth. In practice, according to our well-informed interviewees, a GO enjoys a status equivalent, or even superior, to a supra-departmental/supra-ministerial commission (wei).<sup>16</sup> Thus, the GO director is generally treated as the first among equals vis-a-vis heads of the other departments or ministries. Head of a GO is usually a member of the standing committee in the Party system or a member of the leading Party group (dangzu) in the government system.<sup>17</sup>

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15. Zhongguo Zhengfu Gongzuo Gaiyao (An Outline of the Work of the Chinese Government), Beijing: the CCP Central Party School Press, 1991, p. 213.

16. Some commissions (wei) are generally regarded as enjoying a status a half rank higher than a regular ministry/department (bu) and thus wield a certain amount of authority over several relevant ministries or departments, as is the case with the State Planning Commission and the State Economy and Commerce Commission vis-a-vis other ministries in the State Council.

17. According to personal interviews; Hou Rui, How to Work as a GO Director, p. 5.

## Part II. Case Analyses

### The Central Committee General Office

To further illustrate the organization and functions of a GO, a case analysis of the Central Committee GO is made here. The Central GO, usually shortened as zhongban in Chinese, is the most powerful and important in the Chinese mishu system. The current director of the Central GO is Zeng Qinghong.<sup>18</sup> Unlike a provincial GO, the Central GO is composed of bureaus (ju), which in turn contain divisions. China watchers in the West have been aware of the importance of the Central GO, as for example, Barnett observes that, "The Central Committee bureaucracy run by the Secretariat is extensive and includes a sizable number of departments, committees, small groups, and research units, all presumably coordinated by the Central Committee's General Office."<sup>19</sup> But so far scholars have been unable to delineate its exact organizational structure and functions, largely because the Office was, and still is, shrouded in deep secrecy.<sup>20</sup> To date the only publicly available official description of its

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18. Gao Xin, "Wen Jiabao dang guan pang luo zhi mi" ("The Mystery Surrounding Wen Jiabao's Loss of Power in the Party"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 73 (1993), p. 73.

19. A. Doak Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy in China: Structure and Process, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1985, p. 42.

20. Our interviewees in the State Council were reluctant to answer any questions about the structure and functions of the Central GO.

functions is found in The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia, published by the Center-run publishing house, Dangan Chubanshe (Archive Publishing House). The entry about the Central GO goes as follows.

The Central General Office is one of the organs directly under the Central Committee and is the Center's working body (banshi jigou) for daily operations. It was first founded in the formative years of the Party and originally called the Central Mishu Office.<sup>21</sup> Its major responsibilities include: providing secretarial services, organizing and servicing conferences, conducting research and investigations, processing and synthesizing information, and providing advice and information for the Center in making major decisions; handling classified mail and electronic communications; collecting, classifying, and utilizing Central archives; conducting communication and coordination among Central departments in their work; and taking care of Central Party and state leaders in terms of security, personal life, medical care, etc.<sup>22</sup>

Although there are still many mysteries surrounding the Central GO, the general description in the foregoing part about the GO institution should be basically applicable to its structure and functions, and from the pieces of evidence

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21. According to Xu Ruixin, head of Mishu Bureau of the Central GO, the Central GO, as it is called today, was first established in 1941 -- its predecessor was the Central Committee Secretarial Division (zhongyang mishu chu) -- and its basic organizational contours have remained largely unchanged over time. The CCPCC Secretarial Division was first brought into existence by a Central document, "The Resolution Concerning the Organizational Issues," which was passed at the Third Plenum of the Fourth Party Congress in July of 1926. (Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 76-79.) It is not clear what influence, if any, the Soviet Communist Party or the Comintern had over the formation of the Central General Office. Answer to this question depends on further research.

22. Zhang Feng et al., eds. Dangdai Zhongguo Baike Dacidian (The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1991, p. 85.

gleaned from the recent outpouring of mishu xue literature, the Central GO is known to consist of at least the following bureaus or sub-units to perform the above-mentioned functions.<sup>23</sup>

**Mishu Bureau.** It is one of the most important components of the Central GO. It was formerly called "Confidential Section" and then "Confidential Office," which was once headed by Ye Zilong, one of Mao's five major personal mishus.<sup>24</sup> The Bureau's current head is Xu Ruixin, who is also a deputy director of the Central GO.<sup>25</sup> The Bureau has a highly important role to play in policy formation and implementation in terms of processing information, conducting research, providing advice, drafting and editing Central documents, and supervising subordinate departments and units. Its Synthesizing Division constantly monitors and stays in close touch with various subordinate departments and units to press for timely and faithful fulfillment of tasks assigned them by the Central leaders.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the Bureau is responsible for providing and

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23. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 121.

24. Ibid. p. 41; Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 80.

25. Shi Liuzi, "Zhonggong 'mishu bang' qunxiang" ("A Group Portrait of the Chinese Communist Secret Secretaries"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11, August, 1992, p. 24. The author used to be a journalist in China.

26. Wang Zhaoguo, "Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices," pp. 78-79.

managing personal mishus for Central leaders. Although working directly for individual Central leaders, most of those personal mishus are known to organizationally belong to the Bureau, and so are at least partly accountable to it.<sup>27</sup>

**Confidential Bureau.** It is responsible for printing, distributing, transmitting, storing, retrieving, and destroying all classified and top-secret materials and documents of the Center. These materials include highly sensitive (even damaging) historical records about Central leaders. If the following source is to be believed, the confidential materials being kept by the Bureau include:

the resumes of Party and state leaders, and the record of each promotion and penalty they have received; the original minutes of the Politburo meetings to criticize certain leaders, and the records of their oral or written self-criticisms; the letters of repentance and self-incrimination addressed to Chairman Mao and the Center by capitalist roaders with ranks above provincial and army levels; the original minutes of the thirteen Politburo standing committee meetings held before 1966 to help Comrade Mao Zedong realize [the sin of] the philandering acts he had committed repeatedly, and Mao's several oral self-criticisms; the transcripts of Comrade Mao Zedong's self-criticizing speeches during the 1960-61 period regarding [his responsibility for] the nation-wide famines following the Great Leap Forward; Premier Zhao Enlai's twelve self-criticizing reports addressed to Chairman Mao and the Center regarding his mistakes of rightist conservatism; Premier Zhao Enlai's many written self criticisms and pledges addressed to Chairman Mao and Vice Chairman Lin [Biao] during the initial period of the Cultural Revolution; state president Liu Shaoqi's letter of repentance addressed to Chairman Mao and the Center at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution; Deng Xiaoping's letter written to Chairman Mao and the Center pledging "never to reverse the verdict on the Cultural Revolution" during his exile in Xinjian county, Jiangxi province in 1972;...<sup>28</sup>

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27. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 133.

28. Zhong Guofeng, "Zhongnanhai juemi wenjian shiqie an" ("A Case of Top Secret Documents Stolen in Zhongnanhai"),

Regardless of the reliability of the above information, one thing that is for sure is the fact that the top leaders put the most trusted mishu in charge of this Bureau. The Bureau has an extensive electronic communication network and a courier system of its own across the country. It is also responsible for providing professional guidance for, and exercising supervision over, its counterparts in lower level bureaucracies.

**Bureau for Handling Letters and Visits (xin fang ju)**. Acting as ombudsmen of sorts, the mishu personnel in this Bureau are responsible for receiving visits and letters from bureaucrats at lower levels and from the general public. Those letters and visits involve primarily complaints about poor quality of government services, exposures of corruption or other evil-doings, petitions for redressing wrongs or reversing past verdicts, reports on policy violations, and the like. The Bureau is supposed to look for serious problems or tendencies from those visits and letters and bring them to the attention of Central leaders. It also has the authority to refer them to the relevant bureaucratic departments or units for solutions or to conduct investigations on its own. The Bureau is considered as an important "window" for letting in formation from below in order for the Central leaders to keep an eye on the bureaucracy. The Bureau, first established at Mao's instructions in 1951,<sup>29</sup> was organized from scratch

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Cheng Ming, May (1993), p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>. An Outline of the Work of the Chinese Government, p.

by Mao's top mishu, Tian Jiaying.<sup>30</sup>

**Information Center.** It is responsible for collecting, analyzing, distributing, and storing information and data for Central policy making. The Central GO is said to have an extensive and elaborate information network across the country, so as to provide the Central leadership with timely and adequate information about the bureaucracies at all levels and about the society at large. It was reported that the Information Center was responsible for co-developing the computer software for servicing the Fourteenth Party Congress convened in 1992, an indicator of its strong in-house computer capacity.<sup>31</sup>

**Administrative Affairs Management Bureau (jiguan shiwu guanli ju).** This Bureau looks after Central leaders with respect to housing, food, recreations, transport, office equipment and supplies, etc. It is interesting to note that it is also the responsibility of this Bureau to take care of the funeral services of all Central leaders. Moreover, it is its job as well to look after the livelihood of those top leaders who have fallen out of power due to political defeats or even criminal

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30. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying" ("Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying"), in Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying (Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1989, pp. 7-13.

31. People's Daily, overseas edition, October 12, 1992, p. 3.

prosecution. For example, when Jiang Qing was released from prison on probation to receive medical treatment, her personal life was arranged and taken care of by this Bureau.<sup>32</sup> It is reported that the fallen general secretary Zhao Ziyang's vacation in 1993 at the summer retreat of Chengde Mountain Village was also organized and taken care of by the Bureau.<sup>33</sup> In short, once a person becomes a Central leader, he or she will be permanently under the care of the Bureau, living or dead, in power or out of power.

**Health Care Bureau.** The bureau is responsible for providing medical care for Central leaders and their mishus. In addition to the facilities and medical personnel directly at its disposal, it is entitled to commission any outside experts and equipment from anywhere in the country for discharging its duty.<sup>34</sup>

According to one source, this Bureau has eight permanent "comprehensive health care expert groups," which are located respectively at Zhongnanhai, the People's Great

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32. An Gongren, "Jiang Qing zai Qingcheng de zuihou rizi" ("The Last Days of Jiang Qing in the Qingcheng Prison"), Xinwen Ziyou Daobao (Press Freedom Guardian), April 16, 1993, p. 3.

33. Ming Heng, "Zhao Ziyang bishu Chengde Shanzhuang" ("Zhao Ziyang Retreats from Summer Heat at Chengde Mountain Village"), Cheng Ming, August (1993), p. 20.

34. This Bureau was once abolished in 1964 at Mao's order, and its function was taken over during the Cultural Revolution by a special department of the Beijing Hospital, which was called "General On-Duty Office." Cheng Hua, Zhou Enlai he tade mishumen (Zhou Enlai and His Mishus), Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992, pp. 516-517.

Hall, Beijing Hospital, Hospital Number 301, Jingxi Hotel, Xiangshan (Fragrant Mountain), Xiehe Hospital, and Air Force Hospital, where Central leaders reside or sojourn. In addition, the Bureau has medical expert detachments at key locations across the country, such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, Zhongshan, Qingdao, Dalian, Beidaihe, and Xian, so that prompt and first-rate medical support is available wherever Central leaders go. The beneficiaries of the Bureau's services include "political elders," as well as those Central leaders, retired or still in office, who hold the ranks equivalent to, or above, "vice premier, Politburo member, state councilor, vice chairman of the National People's Congress, member of the Central Military Affairs Commission, and vice chairman of the National Consultative Conference of Political Affairs."<sup>35</sup> It is reported that the Bureau suggested in June 1993 to the Politburo standing committee that Deng Xiaoping should no longer swim in the sea considering his health condition.<sup>36</sup>

**Special Accounting Office.** One of its responsibilities is to provide special funds for top leaders. For example, the Office managed Mao Zedong's royalties on his publications, which amounted to about one million yuan in the 1950s, an astronomical figure at that time. The office gave

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35. Luo Bing, "Zhengzhiju zhu Deng hai yong" ("The Politburo Tries to Dissuade Deng from Swimming in the Sea"), Cheng Ming, August (1993), p. 8.

36. Ibid. p. 6.

some of them in 1981 to Mao's daughter, Li Min, and his former wife, He Zhizhen, as their inheritances.<sup>37</sup> It is noteworthy that it is a common practice for Chinese top leaders to have their speeches and writings published through the government publishing houses regardless of whether there is any market demand and then receive handsome royalties. This is an important source of their personal wealth.

**Security Bureau.** It is usually called "Central Security Bureau." It is noteworthy that the Central Security Bureau is the same institution as the Central Guard Regiment, also known as Unit 8341.<sup>38</sup> The Central Security Bureau may be headed either personally by director of the Central GO, as was the case with Wang Dongxing,<sup>39</sup> or by a senior deputy director of the Central GO, as was the case with Zhang Yaoci,<sup>40</sup> and is now the case with Yang Dezhong. Since the

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37. Qiu Xiaolong et al., eds., Zhongguo de da beiju renwu (The Great Tragic Figures of China), Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1989, pp. 9-10.

38. He Pin, "Jiang Zemin de tebie zhuli: Zeng Qinghong, Yang Dezhong" ("Jiang Zemin's Special Assistants: Zeng Qinghong and Yang Dezhong"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 101 (1993), p. 73. The Regiment is estimated to be equal in size to an army. "Wang Tung-hsing - The Head of Peiping's Undercover Agents," Issues & Studies, August (1976), p. 95.

39. Wang Hebin, Ziyun Xuan zhuren: wo suo jiechu de Mao Zedong (The Master of the Purple Cloud Compound: Mao Zedong I Knew), Beijing: the CCP Central Party School Press, 1991, p. 38. The author used to be Mao's personal physician and administrative mishu.

40. Ruan Jihong, "Mao Zedong he tade jiyao mishu Zhang Yufeng" ("Mao Zedong and His Confidential Mishu Zhang Yufeng"), in Zhang Yufeng et al., eds., Mao Zedong yishi (Anecdotes About Mao Zedong), Changsha: Hunan wenyi

late 1970s and up to now, Yang Dezhong, a member of the Party Central Committee, has been head of the Central Security Bureau.<sup>41</sup>

Head of this Bureau is personally responsible for the security of the paramount leader, and the deputy heads of the Bureau are personally in charge of the security of the other key Central leaders including the general secretary, premier, chairman of the Central Military Affairs Committee, and state president.<sup>42</sup> In addition to providing security services to the Central leaders, it is also the responsibility of the Bureau to arrest them if they are purged, as happened to the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi clique, the Lin Biao faction, and the Gang of Four. The Bureau's task is so important and sensitive that it is known to be under the dual leadership shared between the Central GO and the Public Security Ministry.<sup>43</sup> Also worth mentioning is a peculiar new development in the leadership arrangement of the Central Security Bureau: On the one hand, head of the Bureau, Yang Dezhong, is the first

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chubanshe, 1989, p. 28. Zhang Yufeng was Mao's confidential mishu during his last years.

41. He Pin, "Jiang Zemin's Special Assistants," p. 73.

42. Zhang Yunsheng, Maojiawan jishi: Lin Biao mishu huiyi lu (The Eyewitness Accounts of Maojiawan: Memoirs of Lin Biao's Mishu), Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1988, p. 243.

43. See Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 121; John Buron and Robert Pack, The Claws of the Dragon: Kang Sheng - The Evil Genius Behind Mao - And His Legacy of Terror in People's China, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp. 331-332; Wang Hebin, The Master of the Purple Cloud Compound, p. 39.

deputy director of the Central General Office, thus being officially subordinate to Zeng Qinghong, the current director of the Central GO; on the other hand, Zeng is deputy head-cum-deputy commissar of the Central Security Bureau, thus being subordinate to Yang.<sup>44</sup> Confusing as it appears, this arrangement is obviously intended as a measure of checks and balances to guarantee the reliability of the Bureau.

It should be pointed out that at present China watchers' eyes are focused on the "king-making" role of the Chinese military in the succession struggle likely to follow Deng's death, but the Central Security Bureau's role in this regard is equally critical, and, perhaps, even more directly relevant and indispensable. For one thing, the Chinese military is not a united political force but is divided for historical, institutional, and factional reasons, while the Central Guard Regiment is one coherent and tightly controlled unit. For another, it would be politically too disturbing and unorthodox to call in troops from outside for a showdown within the Zhongnanhai compound, while the physical propinquity makes the Central Security Bureau an ideal instrument for quietly twisting arms or breaking necks in court politics behind a facade of calm and normality.

From the above discussion of the Central GO's subunits, it is clear that they each perform services that are crucial

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44. Zi Zhi, "Zeng Qinghong liexi Zhengzhiyu huiyi" ("Zeng Qinghong is Allowed to Attend Politburo Meetings as a Nonvoting Participant"), Cheng Ming, October (1993), p. 19.

and indispensable for the Central leadership squad. With respect to the overall powers of the Central GO, its director is usually a full or alternate member of the Politburo and/or of the Secretariat. Although the Central General Office has officially the same bureaucratic rank as the other Central departments, it seems to be in fact superior to them. According to Gao Xin, a well-informed Chinese political observer, "the Central General Office not only wields command over the various departments directly under the Central Committee but also is in control of the Party committee systems within the State Council and the National People's Congress."<sup>45</sup>

The actual power of the Central GO is reflected in the fact that one of its deputy directors usually doubles as the chief personal mishu to the paramount leader, as was the case with Mao's top aide Tian Jiaying,<sup>46</sup> Deng Xiaoping's chief personal mishu Wang Ruilin,<sup>47</sup> and Jiang Zemin's chief personal mishu Zeng Qinghong,<sup>48</sup> who has recently been

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45. Gao Xin, "The Mystery Surrounding Wen Jiabao's Loss of Power," p. 74.

46. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying," p. 83.

47. He Pin, "Deng Xiaoping Beidaihe cehua shisida" ("Deng Xiaoping is Planning the Fourteenth Party Congress at Beidaihe"), Zhongguo zhi chun (China Spring), No. 119 (September 1992), pp. 15-16.

48. Zhang Changgong, "Jiang Zemin bu gan zai Zhongnanhai la bang jie pai" ("Jiang Zemin Does Not Dare to Form His Own Faction in Zhongnanhai"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 46 (1992), p. 17. Moreover, Zeng accompanied Jiang as one of his two "special assistants" when Jiang came to Seattle in November 1993 to attend the APEC

promoted to be the current director of the Central GO.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, it is even believed by some well-informed China watchers that one of the key factors leading to Zhao Ziyang's downfall was the fact that he had never been able to put the Central GO under the charge of someone personally loyal to him. As a result, Zhao's "every word and act was closely controlled and restrained by the Central General Office."<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, the Central GO is known to be responsible for maintaining constant contact and conducting continuous information coordination with all the provinces, directly-governed municipalities, and autonomous regions; with all Central departments, commissions, and ministries; and with the Central Military Commission, its departments and the various military district commands.<sup>51</sup> In the post-Mao era, the Central GO has had the added important duty of conducting communication and coordination between the Politburo and the political elders, or the "Ancient Ones," Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Peng Zhen, Li Xiannian, et al.<sup>52</sup> These political elders

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conference. The other "special assistant" was Yang Dezhong, the current head of the Central Security Guard. (He Pin, "Jiang Zemin's Special Assistants," pp. 72-73.)

49. Zhong Xingzhi, "Jiang Zemin quanmian jieban" ('Jiang Zemin is Taking Over the Supreme Power'), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 77 (1993), p. 10.

50. He Pin, "Jiang Zemin's Special Assistants," p. 73.

51. He Pin, "Zhonggong dui Tai gongzuo diyixian zhujiang" ("The Front-line Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Communist Party's Taiwan Affairs"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 68 (1993), p. 71.

52. Ibid.

may hold no formal leadership positions and live a highly secluded life, but they enjoy greater personal prestige and de facto authority than ordinary current Politburo members. There is no exact information about the size of the Central GO, but it is probably over a thousand, excluding the security forces at its disposal.

#### The State Council General Office

Evidence suggests that in terms of political/administrative support the State Council General Office (usually shortened as guoban in Chinese) perform basically the same staff services for the State Council leadership squad as the Central GO does for the Central Party leadership squad. The State Council leadership squad consists of the premier, vice premiers, and state councilors. The major responsibilities of the State Council GO are: 1) "to process incoming and outgoing electronic communications, draft and edit documents, organize conferences and meetings, keep watch around the clock, conduct communications and liaisons, and collect and transmit information;" 2) "to distribute and keep track of State Council documents, reference documents and other materials, compile and edit The State Council Bulletin, and compile the chronicle of major events of the State Council;" 3) "to conduct investigations and research and offer policy suggestions, according to the current primary task and leaders' instructions, and conduct

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preliminary censorship on major news releases;" 4) "to handle letters and visits from the public;" 5) "to carry out tasks assigned by leaders, which do not fall into the jurisdictions of any commissions or departments; and" 6) "to take charge of personnel work and logistical support for the [State Council] apparatus."<sup>53</sup>

The State Council GO apparently differs, however, from the Central GO in several aspects, and these differences should serve as a reminder that the GO system contains significant complexities and variations in actual practice which cannot be fully explored in this study. First, the head of the State Council GO is called the "chief mishu" (mishu zhang) instead of "GO Director." The current chief mishu of the State Council GO is Luo Gan, who is also a state councilor. Second, according to one of our interviewees, the State Council GO is considerably smaller in size than the Central GO, largely because it does not contain a counterpart to the Central GO's Administrative Affairs Management Bureau. In the State Council, the Administrative Affairs Management Bureau used to be a component of the GO until 1954, when it was separated to form an independent unit.<sup>54</sup> When asked why in the State Council the GO and the Administrative Affairs Management Bureau are two separate units, a Chinese official explained:

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53. An Outline of the Work of the Chinese Government, p. 212.

54. Ibid. p. 253.

All the State Council leaders are also Central leaders, and their personal life is already taken care of by the Central GO. So, it would be redundant for the State Council GO to do the same. The State Council's Administrative Affairs Management Bureau looks primarily after the administrative and personal life needs of ordinary people working in the State Council. Relieved of the responsibility of logistical and personal life support, the State Council GO can better concentrate on policy affairs.

Third, the State Council GO has an additional responsibility of managing foreign experts who work in China; it is known that the State Bureau for Managing Foreign Experts (guojia waiguo zhuanjia ju) is directly under the jurisdiction of the State Council GO.<sup>55</sup> Fourth, it seems to be more visibly involved in the operational responsibilities of the line ministries and agencies. It is defined as "the comprehensive administrative body (bangong jigou) of the State Council,"<sup>56</sup> whereas the Central GO is defined as "the working body of the Center" (banshi jigou).<sup>57</sup> The distinction between the two definitions seems to be important for the Chinese. The wide scope of the State Council GO's operational responsibilities is exemplified in the following documents that were issued in its name.

"A Notification from the State Council General Office Regarding Several Issues in Stabilizing Commodity Prices," which specified measures to be taken to control price

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55. Zhang Feng et al., eds., The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia, p. 115; An Outline of the Work of the Chinese Government, p. 21.

56. Zhang Feng et al., eds., The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia, p. 115.

57. Ibid. p. 85.

hikes.<sup>58</sup>

"A Bulletin from the State Council General Office Regarding the Three Major Accidents Causing Multiple Casualties in the Commune or Brigadier-Run Coal Mines of City X, Province Y," which spelled out precautions to be taken to prevent more of such accidents.<sup>59</sup>

"A Bulletin from the State Council General Office Regarding the Recent Illegal Activities of Poaching, Selling and Purchasing Wild Animals," which stipulated steps to be taken to fight the wave.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, the State Council GO has a de facto status superior even to those powerful supra-ministerial commissions. This fact is reflected in our well-informed interviewee's observation: "So far as the State Council GO is concerned, those Commissions are just like regular ministries. It doesn't treat them any differently, even though they are comprehensive organs and have some authority over the relevant ministries."<sup>61</sup>

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58. Wei Keyi et al., Mishu gongzuo tongshu (A General Guide for Mishu Work), Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1992, pp. 65-66.

59. The names of the city and provinces were omitted in the original. Ibid. pp. 74-76.

60. Ibid. pp. 76-78.

61. According to our well-informed sources, officially the commissions (wei) have exactly the same status as regular ministries (bu) in terms of the bureaucratic rank. Their de facto supra-ministerial stature derives primarily from the fact that they are often headed by vice-premiers or state councilors, or members of the State Council leadership squad. Evidence suggests that the routine operation of these commissions is in fact managed by their first deputy heads, who refer only major decisions up to the double-hatted chiefs. But the actual level of involvement by such chiefs may vary from individual to individual and from time to time. In this regard, the Chinese arrangement is different from that of the Soviet Union, where the Gosplan (State Planning

So far as the daily operation of the State Council is concerned, the most important subunit of the State Council GO is its Mishu Bureau, which contains specialized divisions or sections for such issue areas as finance and economy, agriculture, education and culture, foreign affairs, industry and transportation, laws and regulations, science and technology, etc. In a word, it has the capacity to handle and process all incoming information from every commission, ministry, and directly-administered bureau of the State Council. From our well-informed sources, all the members of the Mishu Bureau of the State Council have been "selected after a strict scrutiny check," and they are "politically reliable" and in general "competent" and "well-educated." They are mostly young, between thirty and forty years of age. It is said that anyone under thirty is considered "too young" and anyone above forty "too old" for the position. The vast majority of them hold at least bachelor degrees in their specialized fields and many have more advanced degrees.

The functions of the GOs for provincial Party committees and provincial governments are illustrated in Appendices A and B at the end of this chapter. At the provincial level, it also seems to be the case that looking after personal life of both Party and governmental leaders is primarily the responsibility of the Party Committee GO, while the government GO is more visibly involved in operational

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Committee) was, for instance, officially superior to all the ministries, with any of its branch departments holding the same bureaucratic rank as a ministry.

responsibilities of the line departments and bureaus. This arrangement, at both the Central and provincial levels, is obviously an important factor contributing to the Party's domination over the government, given the indispensability of GO support for the personal livelihood to every Chinese leader, Party or governmental.

### Part III. The Relationship of the GO with Other Key Organs and Actors

As a comprehensive staff unit, a GO's scope of responsibilities is extensive, being conterminous with that of the leadership squad it serves. Although the GO's functions apparently overlap with some other key organs and actors, some division of labor is still discernible. Although a great deal of confusion and functional overlapping does exist in practice, as is inevitably the case with all large, complex organizations, some clarification is possible with regard to the following four relationships: 1) chief mishu and GO director; 2) GO and research centers; 3) GO, leadership squad, and leadership small groups; and 4) GO and leaders' personal mishus.

#### Chief Mishu and GO Director

In China every political organization has a "chief of staff" to take overall charge of all staff work and daily operations of the leadership squad. The title for such a

person may be either "GO director," as is exemplified by the CCP Central Committee, or "chief mishu," as is exemplified by the State Council. In many other cases, however, the two positions may exist simultaneously, as is the case with the Central Military Affairs Commission, which, unlike the Central Committee and the State Council, has both the chief mishu and the GO director. These three arrangements cover all the possibilities in this regard at the Central and provincial/ministerial levels.

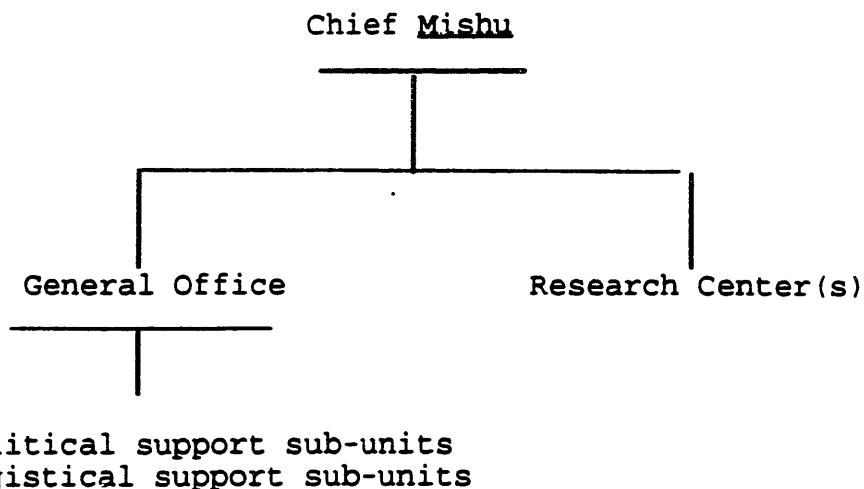
If the two positions co-exist, the GO director is usually a deputy chief mishu, and the typical division of labor between the GO director and the chief mishu is illustrated in the following table.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>. This table is provided in Wei Keyi et al., A General Guide for Mishu Work, p. 7. Also see Liang Buting, "Zai quan sheng shi di wei mishu zhang bangongshi (ting) zhuren zuotanhui shang de jianghua" ("Speech at a Provincial Symposium of Chief Mishus and GO Directors of the Levels of Province, Municipality and Prefecture"), in The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work, pp. 100-101; Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, pp. 53-54.

Table 5.2: Relationship Between Chief Mishu and GO Director

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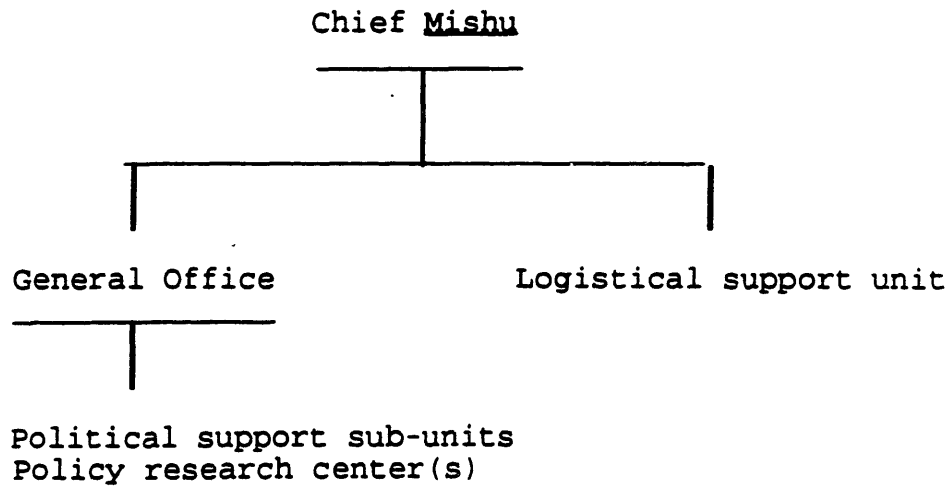
In other words, the chief mishu is superior to the GO director in the authority structure, and has an additional portfolio of the policy research center(s).<sup>63</sup> It is also known that there exists another configuration, which is as below:<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>. In some provincial level units, it is known that the research centers belong directly to the GOs, instead of being independent organs. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup>. Personal interviews.

Table 5.3: An Alternative Chief Mishu-GO Director Relationship.



General Office and Research Centers

Every government at nearly all levels contains both a general office and one or more research centers, and both of them conduct policy research. For example, the Party Central Committee is known to have had the following research centers:<sup>65</sup>

- The Party History Research Center
- The Central Document Research Center
- The Central Secretariat Research Center
- The Rural Policy Research Center
- The Political Reform Research Center

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65. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo dang zheng jun qun lingdaoren minglu (Who's Who in the Party, Army, Government, Popular Organizations of the People's Republic of China), Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1990; People's Daily, overseas edition, October 20, 1992, pp. 22-23.

The Central Policy Research Center

Moreover, Nina Halpern's research has revealed that several research centers were established under the State Council during Zhao Ziyang's tenure as premier in the 1980's. They include the following:<sup>66</sup>

The Economic Research Center

The Technical Economic Research Center (TERC)

The Price Research Center

The Economic Legislation Center

The Rural Development Research Center

The Center for International Studies

The National Research Center for Science & Technology  
Development.

According to Halpern's analysis, these research centers were brought into being out of two factors: policy considerations and power considerations. In terms of power considerations, by sponsoring such centers and staffing them with researchers who are sympathetic and enthusiastic toward his policy goals, a Central leader can thus enlarge his own power base. With regard to policy considerations, Halpern suggests that the centers work to promote policy coordination in three ways:

1) by increasing the leadership's information on policy externalities (through independent research and the pooling of ministry-collected data and analysis, the organizing of

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66. Nina P. Halpern, "Information Flows and Policy Coordination in the Chinese Bureaucracy," in Kenneth G. Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China, California: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 130-131.

interagency discussions of policy choices, and long-term planning procedures) so that coordinated policies could be formulated; 2) by shifting the balance of informational authority between the leadership and the ministries (by diminishing the latter's relative monopoly of expertise) so that coordinated policies could be implemented; and 3) by altering the environment of researchers and ministries so as to produce both new capacity and new incentives for coordinating behavior (causing the ministries either to take account independently of the impact of their policy proposals on other policy spheres or to reach accommodation through bargaining with other units).<sup>67</sup>

Our research reveals that although both the GO and the research centers conduct policy research, there exists observable division of labor between them. The GO is typically responsible for handling information processing and policy advising with regard to "short-range" issues, while the research centers are responsible for conducting research on "long-range" policy issues.<sup>68</sup> The Chinese make a distinction between "hot-line" issues and "cold-line" issues. The former refer to the temporary tasks that are currently being tackled by the leadership squad, and the latter refer to those issues which are lasting or which have long-term consequences but are only under consideration or debate at present.<sup>69</sup> A typical example of the long-term research issues taken up by a Central research center is "a thirteen-volume report on 'China to the Year 2000' produced over a three-year period under the overall supervision of the TERC (later the

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67. Ibid. pp. 146-147.

68. Personal interviews; Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of Mishu Work, pp. 76-77.

69. Ibid.

ETSDRC).<sup>70</sup>

General Office, Leadership Squad, and Leadership Small Groups

The Chinese distinguish clearly, at least in theory, between the leadership squad (lingdao banzi) and the mishu squad (mishu banzi) with regard to their respective roles in policy making and implementation: only the former is entitled to make decisions while the latter is to assist the decision making process and monitor and supervise the decision implementation.

Again, take the Central Committee for example. The Central leadership squad comprises three types of leadership bodies: the Politburo, the Secretariat, and some major leadership small groups (lingdao xiaozu). There is a great deal of overlapping in terms of membership among the three. For example, many Central leaders are concurrently members of the Politburo and the Secretariat and heads or deputy heads of one or more of the major leadership small groups.

The Politburo, the Secretariat, and the various leadership small groups are all policy-making bodies, but have different weights of authoritativeness and different scopes of competence. Composed of twenty to thirty full or alternate members, the Politburo is "the leadership core and the supreme policy-making body,"<sup>71</sup> and is responsible for

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70. Halpern, "Information Flows," p. 136.

71. According to the new Party constitution, People's Daily, overseas edition, October 22, 1992, p. 2; Zhang Feng et al., eds. The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia, p. 85.

making major policies of wide-ranging and far-reaching impact. However, the Politburo meets in plenary sessions only three to five times every year.<sup>72</sup> The Politburo has a standing committee made up of about 5 to 7 members, who meet only irregularly. During his interview with Doak Barnett, then premier Zhao Ziyang admitted that the Politburo standing committee did not hold regular meetings, and that the Politburo itself "does not have regular meetings."<sup>73</sup> The Politburo "only holds meetings when there are some major issues to be discussed."<sup>74</sup>

The Secretariat meets more frequently -- about twice a week.<sup>75</sup> The Secretariat is composed of about ten members, who are usually younger and more energetic than regular Politburo members, and who are more often than not also on the Politburo as full or alternate members. The Secretariat is led by the General Secretary, who is without exception also a member of the standing committee of Politburo. The Secretariat is formally defined as "the working body of the Politburo and its standing committee," in the new Party Constitution.<sup>76</sup> In practice, the Secretariat is more

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72. Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy in China, p. 13.

73. Quoted from ibid. p. 10.

74. Quoted from ibid.

75. Ibid. p. 33.

76. People's Daily, overseas edition, October 22, 1992, p. 2.

appropriately perceived as "the leadership organ (lingdao jigou) in charge of daily operation [of the Center]."77 As Zhao Ziyang explained, "The daily functioning of our government machine (structure) rests with the Secretariat and the State Council."78 As such, the Central Secretariat is responsible for making decisions with regard to the overall work of the Party and state (with a focus on the former), but these decisions are of a more routine nature than those reserved for the Politburo. Although in theory the Secretariat is subordinate to the Politburo, the actual allocation of power between the two has varied drastically from time to time. At times, the Secretariat has been de facto, if not de jure, the more powerful of the two. For example, during the first five years or so since the founding of the Communist regime in 1949, the Central Secretariat, consisting of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Chen Yun, and Zhu De, worked as the de facto standing committee of the Politburo and thus represented the highest policy making body in the country.79 When headed by Hu Yaobang, the Secretariat wielded more decision-making power than the Politburo, which was at the time peopled mostly by aging and frail elders. The

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77. Zhang Feng et al., eds., The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia, p. 85.

78. Quoted from Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy, p. 10.

79. Yan Huai, Understanding the Political System, pp. 19-20.

Politburo regained the upper hand, however, at the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1987.<sup>80</sup>

Leadership small groups (LSG) are specialized decision-making bodies in charge of specific policy areas or issues, such as agriculture, industry, foreign affairs, education, legal affairs, ideological work, united front work, etc., which typically straddle the jurisdictions of both the Party and the government systems.<sup>81</sup> The actual membership of a LSG is typically kept secret. According to our well-informed interviewees, there are two types of LSGs. The first type may be called "squad-level LSGs," in that they contain one or even several members of the leadership squad. Take the Central "squad-level" LSG for example in this regard. Such a LSG is typically composed of one or more Politburo/Secretariat members or key Central leaders, who serve as its head and deputy head(s), as well as of leading officials of relevant line departments, commissions, and ministries. A typical example is provided by the Foreign Affairs Leadership Small Group during the mid-1980s. Its head was the then state president Li Xiannian, and its core members included: Premier Zhao Ziyang; First Vice-Premier Wan Li; State Councilor and former foreign minister, Ji Pengfei; Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian; Minister of Foreign Economic

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80. Ibid.; Carol Lee Hamrin, "The Party Leadership System," in Lieberthal and Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making, p. 121.

81. A detailed study of leadership small groups at the Center is provided by Hamrin, ibid. pp. 95-124.

Relations and Trade Chen Muhua; and head of the Party's International Liaison Department.<sup>82</sup> Another example is the current Agriculture LSG, which has Zhu Rongji, the senior vice premier and a member of Politburo standing committee, as its head, and Wen Jiabao, a member of the Central Secretariat, and Chen Junsheng, a state councilor, as its deputy heads.<sup>83</sup> A Central "squad-level" LGS is typically in charge of coordinating several departments, ministries, agencies or bureaus, which are involved in the issue area under its jurisdiction. The Central LSGs do not have regular schedule for meetings and meet about once a week or more irregularly.<sup>84</sup>

The second type of LSGs may be called "departmental level" LGS, in that they have a lesser status, which is equivalent to a subordinate department or ministry under the leadership squad. These LSGs are usually formed to deal with specific issues or ad hoc tasks. Containing no members of the

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82. Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy, p. 44.

Another example of the makeup of a Central "squad-level" LSG is the current Central LSG for Taiwan Affairs. Its head is the Party General Secretary and State President Jiang Zemin; its deputy head, Foreign Minister and Vice Premier Qian Qichen, a Politburo member. Other members include the director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office Wang Zhaoguo, and the nation's chief spy master, Minister of State Security Jia Chunwang. Chinese News Digest (e-mail network), July 4, 1993; originally reported by Japan Economic Newswire, July 3, 1993 (no page number given).

83. Gao Xin, "The Mystery Surrounding Wen Jiabao's Loss of Power," pp. 72-73.

84. Personal interviews. Also see Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy, p. 44.

leadership squad, the lower-ranking LSGs consist of leading officials of the subordinate departments or ministries. These lesser-ranked LSGs are often subordinate to the more comprehensive and more powerful "squad-level" LSGs. As Hamrin observes: "Obvious examples are the Foreign Investment LG [leadership group] and Electronics LG; directors of both were also members of the Finance and Economics LG, responsible, respectively, for foreign economic relations and for industry and communications."<sup>85</sup> Other likely lower-ranking LSGs in the State Council are as follows:<sup>86</sup>

The LSG for Settling Demobilized Army Officers

The LSG for Fighting Counterfeit and Inferior Quality  
Commodities

The LSG for Nation-Wide Sanitization of Books,  
Magazines, and Audio/Video Tapes

The LSG for Coordinating Adaptations to Climatic  
Changes

Although a lower-ranking LSG may be made up of leaders from several departments or ministries, it is typically headed (guashuai) by the leading official of one of the interested units, and its staff assistance is primarily provided by the GO of this host unit.

According to our interviews, the LSGs mostly do not

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85. Hamrin, "The Party Leadership System," p. 120.

86. Gao Xin, "'Fei changshe jigou' yin weiji sifu er changshe" ("Temporary Organs' Turned into Permanent Ones Amidst the Crisis Situation"), Xinwen zivou daobao (Press Freedom Guardian), No. 132 (June 11, 1993), p. 2.

have permanent mishu squads, or staff offices, of their own, but their staff support is provided primarily by the relevant GOs.<sup>87</sup> Our interviewee in the State Council GO explains:

For us, those major [squad-level] LSGs are just like the State Council leadership squad itself. They don't have their GOs and we provide all the mishu services for them in terms of processing information and providing advice, drafting, editing, printing, and distributing their documents, supervising the implementation of their decisions, and organizing and servicing their meetings and conferences. When it comes to those minor [departmental level] LSGs, we treat them no differently from regular ministers. Their mishu services are provided by the ministerial GOs concerned.

Constituting the Central leadership squad, the three types of leadership bodies -- Politburo, the Central Secretariat, and the Central "squad-level" LSGs -- have one feature in common: they are composed basically of Central leaders and that their members meet only at certain intervals. During the time in between, Chinese leaders are not supposed to contact each other in private too frequently. A primary reason for this arrangement is that factionalism is supposed to be an absolute taboo in Chinese elite politics, as was analyzed in Chapter Four. In contrast, the Central General Office is composed of staff members, who are constantly in touch with each other, with the Central leaders, and with the line departments and subordinate units involved.

The Central GO is, technically, not a decision-making body, but a "comprehensive" and "constant" "working body for

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<sup>87</sup>. This is also Michel Oskenberg's understanding (personal correspondence).

the daily operation of the Central Committee."<sup>88</sup> In practice, the Central GO also makes decisions, but they are typically "administrative decisions" dealing with very concrete and detailed issues.

In the process of policy making, the role of the Central GO and that of various leadership bodies are different, too. The Central GO's role is typically confined to collecting and processing information and formulation of policy options, leaving final decisions up to the other three organs. It is noteworthy that the "squad-level" LSGs are sometimes also referred to by the Chinese leaders themselves as the "advisory bodies" for the Secretariat or the Politburo<sup>89</sup> and that their decisions are often issued in the name of the Secretariat or the Politburo rather than in their own right.<sup>90</sup> But those leadership small groups may bring finished policy packages to the conference table of the Secretariat or the Politburo,<sup>91</sup> whereas the Central GO is supposed only to provide information and policy options for

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88. Zhang Feng et al., eds. The Contemporary Chinese Encyclopedia, p. 85; Xu Ruixin et al., eds., The Essentials, p. 81.

89. Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy, p. 44.

90. According to our interviewee, the "squad-level" leadership small groups also issue orders and instructions directly to line departments and units from time to time, and these decisions "have to be obeyed and implemented."

91. In many cases, such policy packages are submitted for pro forma confirmation, particularly if they deal with technical or specialized issues.

the political principals to choose from. Reality is, of course, more complicated than is outlined here. In practice, information, advice, and decision are inseparably intertwined, and thus the GO's role in the decision process may be in effect much more than just providing information and options, as the findings presented in Chapter Three regarding mishus' control role may suggest.<sup>92</sup>

#### GO and Leaders' Personal Mishus

The Central document stipulates that only leaders above a certain rank are entitled to have personal mishus and the number of personal mishus allowed is in accordance with his rank. For example, leaders with the ranks of vice minister, minister, deputy governor, governor and their equivalents are entitled to have one personal mishu; state councilors, vice premiers, members of the Secretariat and their equivalents are entitled to have two or a few more personal mishus; and key national leaders, e.g., general secretary, premier, chairman of the Central Military Affairs Commission, state president, and so on are entitled to have their personal mishu offices, which are simply named after the leaders they serve. For example, Zhou Enlai's personal mishu office was usually shortened as "Zhou Ban (Zhou's Office)," Deng

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92. It is not inconceivable that the Central GO may take a strong position of its own on a certain policy issue, as does the White House staff vis-a-vis an executive department in American politics, though evidence is lacking to prove that. This possibility was suggested by Harry Harding and Michel Oksenberg in personal correspondence.

Xiaoping's as "Deng Ban," Zhao Ziyang's as "Zhao Ban," and so on and so forth.<sup>93</sup> According to the PRC materials we have consulted, the number of mishu in a personal office ranges from five to over twenty in most cases. For example, according to one source, the personal mishu office of Li Xiannian, the later chairman of the National Consultative Conference of Political Affairs, had 31 staff members; that of Wang Zhen, the late vice state president, 41; that of Yang Shangkun, former state president, has 32; that of Song Renqiong, former vice chairman of the Central Advisory Commission, 32; and that of Peng Zhen, former chairman of the National People's Congress, only 8.<sup>94</sup> It is noteworthy that in addition to their regular staffs, Central leaders can enlarge their personal mishu manpower almost at will simply by "borrowing" people from elsewhere. At times, there can be much more such detailees than regular staffers in a top leader's personal mishu office, as was the case with Lin Ban (Lin Biao's Office).<sup>95</sup> A noteworthy new development is that the personal mishu offices for younger top leaders, like

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93. An Outline of the Work of the Chinese Government, p. 213. Also see Jiang Zhifeng, Wangpai chu jing de Zhongnanhai qiaojiu (The Last Card of the Game of Zhongnanhai), San Francisco, CA: Minzhu zhongguo shulin chubanshe, 1990, p. 143.

94. Yue Shan, "Chen Yun pai you tiaozhan Deng Xiaoping" ("The Chen Yun Faction Challenges Deng Xiaoping Once Again"), Cheng Ming, January (1993), p. 18.

95. Zhang Yunsheng, The Eyewitness Accounts, p. 21.

Premier Li Peng and senior Vice Premier Zhu Rongji, are much smaller in size, while they rely more upon collective mishus in the General Office for staff assistance.<sup>96</sup> Altogether there are reportedly more than 8,600 personal mishus working in the Party Central Committee and the State Council.<sup>97</sup>

It is noteworthy that Chinese leaders' personal mishus organizationally belong to the general office of the leadership squad.<sup>98</sup> So they are under the "dual leadership" of both the individual leaders whom they serve and the general office, its mishu division (or bureau) in particular.<sup>99</sup> It is not uncommon for personal mishus to concurrently hold key positions in the GOs.

Leaders with lower ranks are not, theoretically, allowed to have personal mishus, but they are to be served collectively by organizational mishus working in the general offices. According to interviews, however, this stipulation is often circumvented in practice. A lower-level leader can simply designate a particular GO member to work exclusively

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96. Personal interviews.

97. Yue Shan, "The Chen Yun Faction," p. 18.

98. The general office's authority over personal mishus is reflected in the remark of Wu Shaozu, Minister of State Commission for Physical Culture and Sports: "I have left selecting and changing of my personal mishus entirely to the general office. I only let it know my general requirements but never impose detailed specifications or interfere with its decision." ["Shouzhang mishu gongzuo zongheng tan" ("Extensive Observations on the Work of Leaders' Personal Mishus"), in The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work, p. 112.]

99. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 133, 144.

for him, thus turning him into his de facto, if not de jure, personal mishu. This practice is said to be wide-spread at the level of prefecture and municipality.

Personal mishus perform basically the same services to individual leaders, namely, political/administrative services and logistical/personal services as do the organizational mishus, only to a greater degree of thoroughness and comprehensiveness. There are a huge variety of personal mishu types to take care of virtually every need of leaders, as has been discussed in Chapter Two. Following are the official definitions of some of the most common types of personal mishus and their responsibilities.<sup>100</sup>

**ADMINISTRATIVE MISHU.** "An administrative mishu is one of the most important assistants to the leader. His major work is to assist in...administration and management, such as keeping track of and summarizing information, handling administrative affairs, organizing conferences, and drafting documents and correspondence....An administrative mishu has an extremely close working relationship with his leader and the quality of his work performance has direct impact on the leadership work."

**CONFIDENTIAL MISHU.** The major responsibilities of this type of mishu include 1) "management of confidential documents and fulfillment of other tasks assigned by the

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100. The information about the following mishu types is provided in Chen Hongbin et al., eds., A Concise Handbook, pp. 130-133.

leading comrade;" 2) "keeping the official seals and letterheads of the danwei (work unit) and ensuring their legitimate use;" and 3) "maintaining secrecy and confidentiality."

PERSONAL LIFE MISHU. "A personal life mishu is to take care of clothes, food, housing, transport, and other needs of a leader...so that he can concentrate on leadership work."

POLITICAL MISHU. "A political mishu is a special position designed to provide advice for high ranking leaders in forming directives and making policy for important political events." He is responsible for "keeping track of developments of domestic affairs, providing timely and reliable information, drafting speeches, and arranging the schedule for a leader's daily activities."

FOREIGN AFFAIRS MISHU. He or she is "to provide advice for high ranking leaders in foreign affairs activities, to collect and summarize the information about the important events that have happened during the day or recently and about their background, and to explain the measures that have been taken to cope with them. They are also responsible for arranging meetings and handling various affairs in international activities."

SECURITY MISHU. It is "an extremely important position specially designed to absolutely ensure the safety of a high ranking leader. He must accompany closely the leader whenever he goes out....A security mishu must possess

not only a high sense of duty but also the courage and readiness to sacrifice himself."

WRITING MISHU. His responsibilities are "to manage documents, to initiate, revise, and finalize a document, and to draft important speeches and directives for a leader." However, a writing mishu's realm of duty also includes 1) "running errands assigned by a leader on a regular basis and going out to implement a plan on the leader's behalf;" 2) "passing directives downward and getting feedback from below;" and 3) "providing advice" and "suggesting options" for the leader to choose from.

It is significant to note that for all the nominal classification, personal mishus are supposed to be generalists performing multiple functions, so as to take care of miscellaneous personal needs of the leaders whom they serve, as was explained in an earlier chapter.

## Summary

This chapter describes the formal structures and functions of the Chinese mishu system. The system consists of two categories of mishu personnel: 1) organizational mishus who work in general offices and serve and assist leadership squads at various levels collectively; and 2) personal mishu, who, organizationally belonging to the general offices, provide services and assistance to individual leaders directly. Chinese mishus, both organizational and personal, provide two basic types of staff support to political leaders: 1) policy/administrative services; and 2) logistics/personal services. Efforts are also made to clarify the relationships between general offices and other key organs and actors. In order to help the reader better understand the organization of the Chinese mishu system, case analyses are conducted of the Central Committee General Office and the State Council General Office.

Appendix A: The Functions of a Provincial Party Committee General Office<sup>101</sup>

1) To draft, edit, and censor documents of the provincial Party committee (hereafter, PPC); to receive, distribute, and process (piban) incoming documents and urge for timely fulfillment of the tasks stipulated in them; to print or reprint, and distribute documents of the Center or the PPC; to manage, circulate, and sift documents for the leading comrades of PPC; to maintain confidentiality of documents and ensure their safe; to classify and file documents; to keep and manage the official seals; and to draft or help draft work reports and speeches for chief leading comrades of PPC.

2) To organize, arrange, and service plenary PPC conferences, conferences of the PPC standing committee, executive meetings of the PPC standing committee, and other conferences convened by the PPC; to arrange and service official or social activities of the PPC leaders; and to edit the minutes of conferences and executive meetings of the PPC standing committee.

3) To be responsible for passing down the instructions and opinions of the PPR leading comrades and supervising their implementation; to assist the PPC leaders in coordination with their superiors, subordinates, and equals; to supervise the implementation of the decisions and instructions made by the PPC leaders and urge for timely fulfillment of them; and to investigate and handle cases assigned by Central or PPC leaders.

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101. Translated from An Outline of the Organization and Functions, p. 5.

4) To collect and process information and feedback about major tasks in various periods of time; and to report the information to the PPC and the Center in a prompt and timely manner, and suggest work plans accordingly.

5) To be responsible for receiving and dispatching correspondence for the PPC organs; to be responsible for managing or handling codes, telegrams, enciphering telephones, and confidential correspondence for the departments directly under the PPC.

6) To be responsible for organizing and directing the work of handling letters and visitors from the masses across the province and for handling letters and visitors from the public to the PPC.

7) To be responsible for providing guidance for mishu work, confidentiality-maintaining work, and the work of handling letters and visitors from the masses across the province, and for training workers in these fields.

8) To be responsible for receiving and accommodating leading comrades and senior comrades (lao tongzhi, meaning retired senior cadres) from the Center and other provinces and municipalities.

9) To be responsible for handling administrative affairs, which includes construction and maintenance of buildings, installation and service of electronic equipment, needs of personal livelihood, planting of trees and grasses, management of motor vehicles, procurement and supply of various materials, financial management, health care, etc.; and to look after personal life of the current and retired leading comrades of the PPR and other provincial departments.

10) To ensure and maintain safety, security, and orderliness of the PPC and its departments.

11) To conduct work in ideological and political affairs, management of cadres and ordinary workers, and political education of Party members, and discipline inspection, within the GO itself.

12) To carry out other ad hoc tasks assigned by the leading comrades of the PPC.

Appendix B: The Functions of a Provincial Government General Office<sup>102</sup>

1) To be fully acquainted of the guidelines and policies laid down by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (hereafter, CCPC), the State Council (hereafter, SC), the Provincial Party Committee (hereafter, PPC), and the Provincial Government (hereafter PG); to be fully informed of the work plans of these leadership organs and the progress in their implementation; to be fully informed of the major tasks and the progress of their implementation in all the prefectures and departments under the jurisdiction of the PG; and to report the major information in those regards to the PG in a timely manner.

2) To assist the responsible comrades of the PG in their daily routine work, and to conduct coordination among the prefectures and among the departments.

3) To handle assignments from the SC and the PPC and the reports from the departments under the jurisdiction of the PG; to draft, process, classify, print, distribute, and circulate general documents, telegrams, and conference reports of the PG.

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102. Ibid. p. 15.

4) To organize Party leading group meetings, administrative meetings, and plenary meetings of the PG and small conferences sponsored by the responsible comrades of the PG; to take notes and write the minutes for the meetings and conferences; to press for timely implementation of the decisions made in these conferences; organize and arrange major activities of the PG; and to process applications for convening conferences submitted by the provincial departments.

5) To receive, dispatch, print, distribute, return, circulate, file, and classify documents and telegrams; to keep and manage the official seals; to maintain security and confidentiality; and to collect, manage, and provide books and materials.

6) To handle the suggestions, criticisms, and comments made by representative of the National People's Congress (hereafter, NPC) and the Provincial People's Congress (hereafter, PP Congress) or by the members of the standing committee of the PP Congress concerning the work of the PG; and to handle the motions submitted to the PG by the National Consultative Conference of Political Affairs (hereafter, NCCPA) or by the Provincial Consultative Conference of Political Affairs.

7) To keep track of the movements of the leaders of the PG and PG GO; and to arrange the major activities of the leaders.

8) To conduct research, investigation, analysis, and summarization in order make policy suggestions to the PG and assist in policy making in accordance with the strategic blueprint of the Center and with the current focal task of the PPC and the PG.

9) To collect and process information and materials from various channels concerning major economic activities, reforms, and problems,

and provide them to the provincial leaders.

10) To handle letters and visits to the PG or its leaders from the masses, from compatriots of Hongkong, Macao, and Taiwan, and from foreigners; and to handle the issues reflected in such letters and visits, which are forwarded from the CCPCC, the SC, the NPP, and the NCCPA.

11) To study and make local economic laws and regulations, and supervise the drafting of such laws and regulations by other related departments, if necessary.

12) To receive and accommodate persons coming on official business from governmental organs of various provinces, prefectures, cities, counties, and the Central government.

13) To take charge of the management of administrative affairs, security, and orderliness of the compound where the PG is located.

## Chapter Six

### HISTORICAL ROOTS

After surveying the structures, functions, and dynamics of the mishu system of today, this chapter shifts to a comparison between the mishu system with its historical predecessors, in order to further enrich our understanding of the mishu phenomenon in terms of continuities and changes from a longer historical perspective.

China has the longest history of bureaucratic administration in the world, and it has been a long tradition for political leaders of various times to depend on their personal staffs to help control their formal subordinates. Michel Oksenberg points out in personal correspondence:

...the General Office and mishu are not new phenomena on the Chinese bureaucratic landscape...The endemic problems that any Chinese ruler faces -- no matter at what level -- are coordination, securing information or acquiring intelligence, and monitoring and control. The leader must surround himself with [staff] people loyal to him, lest he become a captive of those he seeks to lead. This is the classic problem of the inner versus outer court.

Oksenberg further suggests that the Grand Council<sup>1</sup> at the center and the mufu institution in the provinces during the Qing dynasty can be regarded, in a sense, as precursors

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1. The best study of the Grand Council institution in English literature is no doubt Beatrice S. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723-1820, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, which provides most of the information for the subsequent discussion of its practice.

to the mishu system of today.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the historical comparison in this chapter is primarily between the mishu in contemporary Chinese politics and those two staff systems of the Qing dynasty, although the conclusions thus drawn should have broader relevance for other historical times.

#### The Mufu System at the Regional Levels

Mufu, literally meaning "tent government,"<sup>3</sup> referred to a privately hired staff working for an official at the provincial or county level. A member of a mufu was usually called muyou (tent friend).<sup>4</sup> Like their modern-day successors, there was a variety of muyou to assist a host official in the various aspects of his work. The following were the common types.<sup>5</sup>

THE LEGAL MUYOU. He was responsible for all cases involving "fighting, fraud, marriage, disputes over

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2. The best study of the mufu system is probably Kenneth E. Folsom, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues: The Mu-Fu System in the Late Ch'ing Period, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. The information about the mufu system for this comparison is largely derived from this book.

3. The same two characters are used by the Japanese for the term "bakufu" to refer to the military government of the Shogun. The principal difference between the Japanese and the Chinese usages was that the former was a military staff serving the central government, while the latter could be a civilian or military staff working for provincial-level governors or generals. (Ibid. fn. 1, p. 33.)

4. A mufu staffer could also be called mubin or muke (tent guests), or muliao (tent colleagues).

5. The following discussion is based on Folsom, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues, pp. 50-52.

graveyards or the designation of an heir, and other cases in which family members were involved," as well as more serious ones involving homicide and larceny. It was the duty of this muyou to receive the initial complaint, study the case carefully, and write up for the official's approval a rescript, in which he explained whether or not the complaint would be accepted for trial. If the case was accepted, then the legal muyou was responsible for setting the dates of the hearing, advising the official before and after the hearings, and preparing a detailed report to be sent to the superior officials for review and approval, if the case involved penal servitude, banishment, or death.

TAXATION MUYOU. He was responsible for determining the total amount of taxes required from the area of jurisdiction, keeping track of what taxes had been paid, and in general supervising their collection. In addition he had jurisdiction over cases involving disputes over property, loans, and business transactions. He was also responsible for expenditures and the delivery of government funds.

Since the primary functions of the traditional government were just to keep order and collect revenues and taxes, "the most important muyou were the legal muyou and taxation muyou."<sup>6</sup> In addition to these two major muyou types, there were some other minor ones, which are as follows.

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<sup>6</sup>. Ibid. p. 50.

CORRESPONDENCE MUYOU. He was responsible for preparing draft letters for the official's approval and for either copying or supervising the copying of the letters in their final form.

REGISTRATION MUYOU. His duty was to register all incoming and outgoing documents, official notices, and warrants, and keep a check on the status of each document.

BLACK-BRUSH MUYOU. His duty was to copy in black the documents and rescripts prepared by the legal and taxation muyou.

RED-BRUSH MUYOU. He used red brushes to write the key words and add the red signs and flourishes to documents.

BOOKKEEPING MUYOU. He handled the actual receipt and disbursement of cash and kept track of gifts sent and received, of fees paid to gate porters of superior yamen (government compound), and of various expenses involved in entertaining visiting officials.

LITERARY MUYOU. He was responsible for drafting memorials to the throne and other major documents.

In the late Qing period when the Western civilization penetrated the Chinese society, the scope of government was expanded. As a result, some new muyou types were added to a provincial level mufu, such as education muyou, military affairs muyou, and foreign affairs muyou.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>. Pao Chao Hsieh, The Government of China, 1644-1911, New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966, pp. 297-298.

Like a mishu of today, a muyou was expected to handle multiple responsibilities in spite of the nominal classification. Therefore, "The muyou, in addition to his regular duties, would also assist the host official in any one or all of his multifarious duties, such as suppressing pirates, administering disaster relief and water transport, and reading the preliminary examination papers which a magistrate set before candidates for the provincial examinations."<sup>8</sup>

As is universally the case with staffs, a major function of a mufu was to help the host official to control his formal subordinates or bureaucrats. The leader-staff-bureaucrat nexus was played out in the provincial politics of imperial China in the form of official-muyou-clerk triangle relationship. The officials were mostly Confucianist scholars (shi), and as such they were generalists or amateurs in government,<sup>9</sup> with their training for government service consisting primarily of literary knowledge and style as well as Confucianist morality. Nevertheless, scholar-officials were generally regarded as moral exemplars, enjoyed greater social respectability, and were placed in the leadership position over the clerks. The clerks (li) "were the experts in government who had learned their trade through practical experience."<sup>10</sup> For one reason or another, the clerks did not

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8. Folsom, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues, p. 52.

9. Ibid. p. 39.

10. Ibid. p. 38.

have a chance to pass the civil service examinations, and so had a lower social status. But they managed to make their service indispensable and accumulate a great amount of de facto power by becoming specialists in one skill or another in handling legal affairs, taxation, bookkeeping, commerce, modern weaponry, and foreign affairs.

In imperial China, government politics was plagued by "the perennial conflict between scholar-officials on the one hand and clerks with practical knowledge on the other."<sup>11</sup> On the strength of their superior practical knowledge, clerks presented a serious problem of uncontrollability, as is stated:

Everywhere the Confucian civil official found himself surrounded by these clerks and dependent on their knowledge of the region he governed and the technical problems of his administration....the clerks were often in a position to sabotage an official's policies and blackmail the people.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the control problem also arose from the fact that scholar-officials were "temporaries" and outsiders, who were shifted from post to post periodically, but clerks were local people who stayed on as "permanents." In this regard, the basic features of the clerks were as follows:

They were recruited locally and thus spoke the local dialect. Their families, relatives, and friends had lived in the area for generations and had built up a network of connections and vested interests which were the spawning grounds for

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11. Mary Clabaugh Wright, The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957, p. 92.

12. Ibid. p. 93.

corruption in matters related to taxation, labor services, and lawsuits.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast:

The officials were not familiar with the files and the local situation, and usually did not speak the local dialect. In addition they often had little or no connection with the local people....Under the "Laws of Avoidance," the officials were normally shifted every three years, but the clerks stayed on in the local Yamen [government compound].<sup>14</sup>

The mufu personnel shared some features with both categories but were different from them in other aspects. Like the clerks, they were experts and professionals in one skill or another, but unlike the clerks they were temporaries and outsiders hired privately by the scholar-officials and were personally loyal to them. As a result, the mufu's assistance was indispensable for the scholar-officials in controlling the clerks. For instance:

One of the chief functions of all muyou was to supervise the clerks and to try to prevent their corrupt practices. Since the clerks received no salary and were in charge of the files, it was only natural that they would not be above changing a document, dropping someone's name from a tax list, marking someone's taxes paid, and the like in return for a monetary consideration. The muyou were experts in their fields and were much more aware of the ingenuity and multiplicity of clerical manipulations than the officials and were, therefore, in a better position to control them.<sup>15</sup>

If the mufu system played as great a role as the mishu system of today in amplifying political leaders' control over their subordinates, then the cushioning/integrating role

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13. Folsom, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues, p. 45.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid. p. 52.

played by the mufu system was much weaker. The mufu tended to create or intensify tensions rather than soften and mitigate conflicts and clashes. This results from the following structural differences:

- Mishus mostly serve a leadership squad collectively whereas muyous served only one individual official privately.
- Mishus belong to a separate unified subsystem running vertically and horizontally throughout the country, whereas a mufu was a privately hired staff without any organizational affiliation with any other organs or offices.
- Mishus and muyous have different career paths. Mishus are groomed for becoming political leaders whereas muyous were mostly to remain outside of formal officialdom.

Because of the above structural determinants, the muyou tended to behave in such a way as to aggravate the tensions and conflicts between an official and his superior, colleagues, and subordinates rather than play the role of cushion, and reconciliator, and moderator.

For instance, as a privately hired assistant serving one single master, a muyou tended to create troubles with the other government workers. When an official arrived in a new post, the first thing his taxation muyou was supposed to do was "checking all the tax records and determining how much had been embezzled by his predecessor or other yamen personnel."<sup>16</sup> It does not take much imagination to understand

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16. Ibid. p. 51.

the immediate unpopularity the muyou would incur onto himself.

Furthermore, in order to sustain this built-in mutual suspicion and hostility between the mufu and the local clerks, "the muyou were supposed to remain within the yamen [government compound] and within their quarters as much as possible. These restrictions on their movements were to keep them from creating a network of local alliances that could be used for corrupt purposes."<sup>17</sup>

The mishu institution of today is a unified system running throughout the country and working to strengthen centralized control and coordination. In contrast, the mufu were privately hired staffs, which operated separately from one another and independently of the central government. Therefore, "their [muyous'] primary loyalty was to the officials who paid their salaries, and their primary purpose was to protect the officials from the [central] government...."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the mufu system worked in effect as "a greater corrosive of central authority."<sup>19</sup>

As a result, the imperial central government always had an attitude of uneasiness and suspicion toward the mufu system, fearing it "as an added source of depredation"<sup>20</sup> and

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17. Ibid. p. 53.

18. Ibid. p. 56.

19. Ibid. p. 151.

20. Ibid. p. 56.

regarding it more or less as a necessary evil to be tolerated and yet to be guarded against. The central government's ambivalence was best illustrated by a decree of the Qianlong Emperor of the Qing dynasty:

Because the provincial officials' affairs are very heavy, they cannot help but invite some mubin [tent guests] to help them manage. But the mubin are not consistently virtuous. Therefore it is easy for corrupt practices to arise.<sup>21</sup>

The top rulers' suspicions against the mufu practice was not unfounded, since evidence was not lacking to indicate that, "Incapable and ignorant governors left the whole administration to them [muyous]. Wicked ones used them as instruments of corruption."<sup>22</sup>

Although the national government of China today regards the mishu system as a centripetal, integrative force, the center of the imperial times tended to treat the mufu system as a centrifugal force working to undermine the central control. As a result, the Central leadership of today seeks to strengthen the role of the mishu system, but the imperial government tried various measures to restrain the role of the mufu practice.

If the Center today makes great efforts to encourage and strengthen the connection, vertical and horizontal, among mishu personnel themselves and between mishus and other institutions and actors across the country, then the imperial

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21. Ibid. p. 53.

22. Pao Chao Hsieh, The Government of China, p. 298.

central government tried various measures to restrain muyous' relations not only with their host officials, with the yamen clerks, but also with the muyous in other localities. For example:

No official was permitted to hire members of his family, his relatives, or his friends as muyou. No person who came from the province to which the official was assigned, or from the neighboring province within a distance of 500 li, was allowed to be hired as a muyou, nor were the muyou permitted to follow the host official from an old post to a new one; moreover, anyone who had been in a mufu for five years had to be replaced, and a newly appointed official was not allowed to take over a muyou of his predecessor.... The officials were not permitted to recommend muyou to their subordinate officials, or to allow members of their family to recommend muyou.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, various special precautions were taken to limit the contact of the muyous with the local populace and prevent them from creating alliances with it, as has been mentioned earlier. They were barred from marrying people from the local area, from setting up private businesses, from giving friends and other officials privileged information, and in general from becoming too friendly with the local populace. An imperial decree explained:

The muyou's friendliness causes corruption, and this is the beginning of injury to the government, so we must find ways to clear it up and severely prohibit it.<sup>24</sup>

Another reason for the conflict-prone behavior pattern of the mufu personnel was that they followed a different career path from scholar-officials. Muyous mostly did not

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23. Folsom, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues, pp. 53-54.

24. Ibid. p. 54.

become officials and were actually forbidden to do so.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, muyous' primary ambitions were not to become officials or be promoted to higher ranks, but instead to gain recognition of, and respect to, their skills and talent and get greater access to material benefits.<sup>26</sup> Thanks to the fact that they were specialists in important skills and so their services and assistance were indispensable, muyous enjoyed great de facto respect for all that their social status was generally perceived as lower than that of Confucianist scholar-officials. For example:

When the muyou was hired, ...he was referred to as "laofuzi" (old master), a term of respect conventionally used for teachers....Colloquially, the muyou were referred to as shive (teacher-master), and it was the host who humbled himself to receive their instructions. It was not an uncommon occurrence for the host to go to the rooms of the muyou to seek their advice and teaching.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, although muyous were hired privately by the host official and were paid out of his own pocket, they were paid

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25. This interdiction was largely abandoned in practice during the late Qing period, when many muyous of important leaders like Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang were appointed to be high-ranking officials, because of their much-needed skills or talent in coping with the national crisis.

26. It is noteworthy that although mishus of today desire the same things, their different career path inclines them to defer immediate gratification for the benefit of future promotions and other rewards, whereas such incentives were much weaker for muyous.

27. Folsom, Friends, Guests, and Colleagues, pp. 48-49.

very generously and handsomely. Their salaries were almost as high as the host officials'.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, muyous refused to become officials even when the central government once attempted to incorporate the mufu system into the official bureaucratic structure. The center proposed that:

Muyou who had been working for a governor-general or a governor would be assigned to the 7th rank; those who had worked for a provincial treasurer or judge, the 8th rank; and those who had worked in a fu, zhou, or xian, the 9th rank.<sup>29</sup>

Muyous resisted the implementation of this plan because they felt that "the ranks assigned would have degraded the position of the muyou in relation to the host official, and the muyou would have suffered a sizable loss of salary."<sup>30</sup>

Since muyous were not motivated primarily to seek higher official ranks, they did not feel it particularly necessary to cultivate good relationships with superior officials or the central rulers. This inclined them to try their best to advance their employing official's interest at the cost of those of higher authorities.

#### The Concept of Inner Court at the Central Government

In the central government of the Qing dynasty, the leadership-staff-bureaucracy model was incarnated in the

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28. Ibid. p. 50.

29. Ibid. p. 56.

30. Ibid.

triangle interaction among the emperor, the inner court, and the outer court. The outer court consisted of regular bureaucracies, such as the six boards (liubu) (e.g., personnel, revenue, war, rites, justice, and works), Censorate, and Grand Secretariat.<sup>31</sup> Although in theory the emperor held absolute authority over them, these bureaucracies frequently proved in practice highly recalcitrant and resistant to the emperor's personal control. In addition to omnipresent self-seeking misconduct of individuals, the very logic of bureaucratic politics was always at play to prevent the outer-court bureaucrats as institutional players from being truly responsive to the emperor's personal desire. As Bartlett explains:

The outer-court agencies of the government were set up under the administrative code and generally ran according to its statutes and precedents....[As a result,] (t)he outer-court government thus ran more by a combination of law and consensus than by the imposition of raw imperial power, even though the rhetoric of governing always strongly implied that such power existed.<sup>32</sup>

Not surprisingly, the outer-court bureaucrats tended to uphold meticulous observation of precedents, rituals, routine procedures, and written regulations and statutes, down to "minute and sometimes exasperating detail,"<sup>33</sup> in order to preserve or enlarge their power and protect themselves against the vagaries and arbitrary interventions of the

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31. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, pp. 18-19.

32. Ibid. p. 6.

33. Ibid. p. 29.

emperor. And the best strategy for them to thwart the emperor's any new policy that might harm their bureaucratic interests was "to call on other precedents to dismiss one of his [emperor's] cherished proposals" or even to "manufacture a precedent from any imperially authorized government action." Moreover, relying on their greater familiarity with administrative knowledge, details, and expertise, the outer-court bureaucrats were never short of means "to run the gamut of obstructionism at both the central and the provincial government levels" in the process of implementation "once an approved proposal was returned to the outer court."<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, as members of the inner court "the imperial assistants and staffs were regarded as the emperor's own men: his to appoint, his to command." As a result, "(i)n the inner court no statutes could be summoned to confound the monarch's desire. The sovereign's will was law."<sup>35</sup> Thus, the inner court was much more responsive or sensitive to the emperor's personal wishes and needs.

In the Qing dynasty the so-called inner court was composed, roughly speaking, of two staff bodies -- the Grand Council and palace eunuchs. Both Grand Councilors and eunuchs resided or worked within the walls of the imperial palace, as in contrast to the outer-court bureaucrats whose offices were located outside of the Forbidden City. The physical proximity

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34. Ibid.

35. Ibid. p. 6.

was no doubt an important factor contributing to the inner court's greater personal loyalty and reliability than the outer court.

The Grand Council (junii chu, literally "military affairs division") was first set up to handle affairs related to military affairs, such as strategic planning, logistical supplies, and rebel suppressions, but it soon became a personal staff office entrusted with "the all-embracing duty of giving general assistance to the emperor on [both] important military and political affairs."<sup>36</sup>

Like a mishu squad of today, the Grand Council was characterized by diffusiveness of role, a characteristics which was personally beneficial and convenient to the emperor. Like a general office in contemporary Chinese politics, the Grand Council's wide scope of responsibilities included both political/administrative matters and logistical/personal life support, such as: "Military planning, financial control, command of the imperial bodyguard divisions, work in irrigation projects and in matters great and small that were connected with the imperial family and the entire imperial household...."<sup>37</sup> The Grand Council's diffusive role in handling "matters great and small" can be glimpsed at in the following episode:

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36. Pao Chao Hsieh, The Government of China, p. 79.

37. Silas H.L. Wu, Communication and Imperial Control in China: Evolution of the Palace Memorial System, 1693-1735, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 90.

In that year [1784], at the age of seventy-three, Qianlong achieved the ideal of five living generations in the male line when he became a great-great-grandfather for the first time. The councilors were ordered to find out how many other similarly blessed great-great-grandfathers were living in the celestial empire. Their investigation (limited to members of the gentry class) ranged over all the provinces of China proper and turned up twenty-seven men in their seventies, ninety-nine in their eighties, sixty-two in their nineties, and four over the age of one hundred. The council presented its findings to the emperor in a listing tabulated by province, and the individuals were celebrated for their achievements.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, the Grand Council's routine work concerned matters of a far more serious nature. In helping control the outer-court bureaucracy, the Grand Council played a primary role in amplifying the throne's information-processing and decision-making capacities. The Grand Councilors read almost all incoming information to the throne, conducted deliberations, offered advice, and drafted imperial instructions. Significantly, the Grand Council had a large part to play in operating the palace memorial system, a confidential internal communications network, which is generally regarded as a mainstay that sustained the imperial authority over the far-flung empire throughout the Qing dynasty.

Under the palace memorial (zhouzhe) system, the emperor hand-picked one or only a few people in each of the local governments and the central departments, whom he could trust personally, and authorized them to write secret reports directly to him from time to time. The information passed

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38. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, p. 190.

upward through this channel concerned a wide scope of matters, ranging from administrative irregularities, corrupt behavior, social unrests, local food prices, harvest prospects, and weather conditions.<sup>39</sup>

The memorials were carefully sealed, delivered by special personal messengers, and allowed, theoretically, to be opened and read only by the emperor himself in order to guarantee the absolute confidentiality of their content. Then, the emperor would write his replies in vermilion, a color reserved for imperial use, directly on the margins of the memorials, which were sent back so that the memorialists would read his sovereign's responses. In practice, however, almost all incoming palace memorials were in fact first read by the Grand Councilors, who then suggested proper responses, to the extent that on occasion the emperor just copied their recommendations word for word into his rescripts.<sup>40</sup>

The Grand Council and the palace memorial system made it possible for the throne to draw a much wider scope of affairs under its direct supervision and direction. The effectiveness of the Grand Council institution for sustaining imperial control over the bureaucracy is generally recognized by historians. The Grand Council institution is regarded as being largely responsible for enabling the Qing government to

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39. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, p. 50.

40. Ibid. pp. 101, 184.

"run effectively whether or not a strong monarch prevailed in Peking" and even when the empire was reigned by "debilitated and infant emperors."<sup>41</sup> Eventually the Grand Council and the palace memorial system became the primary safeguards that sustained a measure of effectiveness of the central authority, under repeated blows of international humiliations and internal unrests, for "a long time before the spokes [local governments] were finally torn from the shaft [the center] and the umbrella shredded in the wind."<sup>42</sup>

Effective as its control function was, the Grand Council often worked as a major source of conflict in the emperor-staff-bureaucracy interactions, due to some determinants in terms of structural arrangement and career pattern. For one thing, the Grand Councilors were hand-picked by the emperor and was accountable exclusively to him. For another thing, their career pattern provided them with few incentives to carefully cultivate good personal relationships with other officials. Unlike the mishus of today who are mostly young, with low ranks and little seniority, but anxious to climb higher on the ladder of officialdom, the Grand Councilors were typically already at the apex of the civil service system, holding the highest official ranks and, in most cases, occupying concurrent top positions in the outer court bureaucracy.<sup>43</sup> In order to demonstrate their loyalty and

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41. Ibid. p. 278.

42. Wu, Communication and Imperial Control, p. 123.

43. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, pp. 178, 186.

reliability to the throne and to avoid "the slightest appearance of any questionable involvement," they tended to behave in a rude manner toward regular outer-court bureaucrats, who were mostly their inferiors anyway. It was not an uncommon occurrence that ordinary officials' gifts "were unceremoniously rejected" or their visits insultingly refused.<sup>44</sup>

As a result, there existed a condition of perpetual tension, confrontation, and power struggle between the Grand Council and the outer court. The outer-court bureaucrats often perceived the Grand Council as pursuing "relentless aggrandizement of power" "at the expense of the outer-court agencies" and thus disrupting the traditional "checks and balances" between the two courts.<sup>45</sup> As a result, they "petitioned again and again for the curtailment of the Council's power."<sup>46</sup>

At times such confrontation flared up to murderous intensity. For example, He Shen, the long-time powerful ranking Grand Councilor during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, was a notorious victim to this rivalry. He was accused of harboring imperial ambitions for, allegedly, possessing "two hundred pearl bracelets hidden in his residence -- 'several times as many as those possessed by the

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44. Ibid.

45. Ibid. pp. 190, 239. 253.

46. Pao Chao Hsieh, The Government of China, p. 85.

imperial palace' -- with one extremely large pearl 'even larger than that worn by the emperor himself.'"47 The most devastating piece of evidence collected by the outer-court officials against him was perhaps that he allegedly "had possessed a string of pearls of imperial style: at night when he thought 'no one was around,' he would take them out and 'walk to and fro in front of a mirror, laughing and talking to his reflection (as if perceiving a monarch in what he saw reflected).'"48 The intensity of the mutual hostility between the Grand Council and the outer-court bureaucracy was amply demonstrated in the latter's recommended punishment for He Shen after his downfall -- death by slow-slicing.<sup>49</sup>

The inner court also included another important staff institution -- the palace eunuch system.<sup>50</sup> Although the palace eunuchs' responsibilities usually centered around the logistics/personal life support for the imperial household, it was by no means uncommon for them to assume critical roles in controlling the outer-court bureaucracy and even the Grand Council at times.

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47. Bartlett, Monarchs and Ministers, p. 234.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid. p. 239.

50. The information about the traditional Chinese palace eunuch system is based on Mary M. Anderson, Hidden Power: The Palace Eunuchs of Imperial China, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1990.

Significantly, like muyous in the provinces, eunuchs served only one single master -- the emperor; they did not form a national system; and they were forbidden to enter officialdom. Consequently, the political function that the palace eunuchs performed was more that of controlling than that of cushioning and smoothening.

In order to help amplify the emperor's control over the state bureaucracy, palace eunuchs were frequently sent out as the emperor's personal representatives or "imperial supervisors," armed with imperial seals and special detachments of troops, to collect taxes, spy on and oversee field army commanders and outlying governors. They were at times authorized to be in charge of the palace guards and parts of the military, operate the secret police, run their separate prisons, and investigate and impeach government officials.

As a result, like the mufu and the Grand Council, the palace eunuch system tended to be a major source of tensions and conflicts within the Qing bureaucratic system, and there existed a perpetual rivalry, deadly at times, between politically active eunuchs on the one side and ministers, generals, and governors on the other throughout China's imperial history.

### Summary

The mishu system can trace its historical roots to the staff practice in the Qing dynasty, which consisted of the

mufu system in the localities and the inner court (e.g., the Grand Council and the palace eunuchs) at the center. The Qing rulers both at the central and regional levels encountered various difficulties in controlling their bureaucratic or organizational subordinates, who usually enjoyed the advantage of being more knowledgeable about procedural details, technical skills, special expertise, and/or local conditions. As is the case with the mishu practice, the Qing staffs played a crucial part in strengthening their leaders' control capability over their subordinates. In contrast with their successor of today, however, both the mufu and the inner court tended to focus their efforts primarily on the role of controlling at the cost of the function of cushioning and reconciling. Some factors in structural arrangements and career patterns were found particularly salient in limiting the cushioning/integrating role of the Qing staff personnel. Unlike mishus who serve multiple masters all wielding some clout over their career advancement, the muyous, the Grand Councilors, and the palace eunuchs attended to the needs of only one master, who solely wielded the power of reward and punishment over them. In contrast to the unified national organizational framework of the mishu system, the Qing staffs were isolated units without formal institutional ties with their counterparts or other government organs elsewhere. If mishus are young, junior people but are being groomed for fast upward mobility within the officialdom, their Qing counterparts were older in age, and were either forbidden to

enter formal officialdom (as in the case of muyous and palace eunuchs) or already comfortably perched at the highest echelon of the bureaucratic hierarchy (as in the case of the Grand Councilors). Either way, the Qing staff personnel found little necessity or incentive to go out of their way to cautiously and patiently forge long-term goodwill and friendships with other officials or institutions than their own masters. Rather, they often felt it necessary to act rudely and insensitively toward others or to actively promote the interests of their own masters at the expense of other officials, in order to convince or reassure their masters of their loyalty and reliability. As a result of all these, the Qing staffs did not serve as a major mechanism for mediating, softening, and reconciling intra-elite conflicts and clashes or for integrating the bureaucratic structure on a nationwide scale, as the mishu institution does in China today.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **COMPARISON WITH THE US STAFF SYSTEM**

After the historical comparison of the last chapter, our understanding of the mishu phenomenon can also benefit from comparing it horizontally with the practice of the American staff system. In order to avoid accusations of oversimplification of which a brief comparison of two immensely complex systems is unavoidably susceptible, readers are advised to bear it in mind that the following analysis is aimed primarily at revealing the different central tendencies of the American and the Chinese staff systems at the cost of complexities and variations that are inevitable in reality. No claim is here made to scientific rigor. Admittedly, the method for this brief comparative venture is that of caricature, and as such the picture so drawn will carry all its strengths and weaknesses, depending on different criteria or tastes. The picture may be perceived as bringing out the kernel of truth in a vivid, interesting, and provocative manner, thus offering some useful heuristic insight; or it may be regarded as leaving out too many significant lines and colors, thus exaggerating to grotesque proportions the contrast in the contours that remain. As a caveat, it should be made clear that in reality the difference between the two staff systems often lies more in degrees than in kinds.

What the following comparison will highlight is the argument that the most striking contrast between the Chinese

mishu and the American staff system is that the former serves primarily as a mediator or reconciliator between leaders and bureaucrats and among the members of the leadership squad, reconciling differences and cushioning clashes, whereas staffs in American organizational environments function typically as a major source of tensions, conflicts, innovations, and changes. While the reconciliatory and stabilizing tendency in Chinese mishus' behavior pattern has already been amply demonstrated in foregoing chapters, the tension-arousing, conflict-provoking penchant in American staffs' conduct is illustrated by the following examples.

According to a Senator, the daily activity in the US Congress is galvanized by "(m)y staff fighting your staff, your staff competing with mine," to the extent that "(e)verybody is working for the staff, staff, staff; driving you nutty."<sup>1</sup> The everlasting fight between the White House and Congress is energized by their respective staffs, too: "A very large proportion -- my guess is three-quarters to nine-tenths -- of the time of the Executive Office staff and of congressional staff is spent in defensive maneuvers against each other,..."<sup>2</sup> Even within the White House staff, strife between key staff aides is a commonplace. As Patterson

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1. Harrison W. Fox Jr. and Susan Webb Hammond, Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in American Lawmaking, New York: The Free Press, 1977, pp. 4-5.

2. Don K. Price, America's Unwritten Constitution: Science, Religion, and Political Responsibility: Louisiana State University, 1983, p. 149.

explains: "The staff...is a nest of brainy and aggressive people....Of most significance, they are brought into the White House from every faction of the president's party -- liberals, conservatives, moderates, and hard-liners."<sup>3</sup> The Truman administration witnessed "warring camps" between Clifford or Murphy and Connelly or Steelman. Kennedy's White House was entangled by infighting between so-called "egg-heads" (Ted Sorensen and Myer Feldman) and "the Irish politicians" (Kenneth O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien). In Nixon's years, "Daniel Patrick Moynihan crossed swords with Arthur Burns on domestic policy while Buchanan jostled with Garment on school desegregation." The Ford administration saw acrimony between Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Hartmann. And during the Reagan term "pragmatists" feuded with his "true believers."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, in the American business world, competition between staff personnel and line executives is equally cutthroat, and the line-staff conflict is a perennial problem in American organizational environments. For example: a large number of companies "are already falling apart at the seams because of conflict between line and staff," and "in only one

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<sup>3</sup>. Bradley H. Patterson, Jr., The Ring of Power: The White House Staff and Its Expanding Role in Government, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1988, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid.

out of twelve companies, recently surveyed, did line and staff relationships appear to be reasonably satisfactory."<sup>5</sup>

It is argued in this chapter that the contrast in the behavior patterns of Chinese mishus and American staff assistants are caused or influenced by the following six pairs of variables:

- Structure of the political game: competitive politics vs. monopoly of power.
- Political process: openness vs. secretiveness.
- Cultural attitude toward politicians: low esteem vs. veneration.
- Restraining mechanism: inner vs. outer constraints.
- Career path: "in-and-outers" vs. groomed successors.
- Technological orientation: techniques vs. human relations.

#### Different Structures of the Political Game

Perhaps the most striking contrast between Chinese mishus and American staff aides lies in the different personae roles they tend to adopt vis-a-vis their bosses. Chinese mishus tend to be easy-going, self-effacing, and accommodating, whereas American staff aides act typically as persons who are tough, aggressive, and pushy. This results largely from the fact that under the pressures of elective

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5. Robert C. Sampson, The Staff Role In Management: Its Creative Uses, New York: Harper, 1955, p. 174. Although this source is apparently outdated, the basic pattern for line-staff conflict seems to remain basically unchanged today.

politics, American political principals prefer to reserve for themselves the role of being nice and popular while letting their staff assistants play the role of being tough taskmasters.

The contrast is best exemplified by a comparison of a typical general office director, which is the Chinese version of chief of staff, and the White House chief of staff. The White House chief of staff is typically a tough taskmaster who constantly cracks the whip and presses the deadlines ruthlessly. He tends to act like a drill sergeant or "an abrupt and arrogant martinet."<sup>6</sup> For instance, President Eisenhower's Chief of Staff Sherman Adams was called "the great stone face"; President Nixon's, Bob Haldeman "the Iron Chancellor," who had "a gaze that would freeze Medusa"; and President Ford's, Donald Rumsfeld the "Praetorian."<sup>7</sup> By contrast, a typical Chinese GO director is a "nice man" (laohao ren), who is popular and acceptable to all members of the leadership squad. In terms of personality and behavior pattern, Yang Shangkun, who was director of the Central Committee General Office for over twenty years, is representative of Chinese GO heads. From his extensive interviews inside China, including some with Yang himself, Harrison Salisbury formed the following picture of Yang's behavior pattern as director of the Central GO:

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6. Patterson, The Ring of Power, p. 306.

7. Ibid.

There was...no one of consequence in the Party with whom he was not on familiar terms....Yang liked people and people liked him....In Zhongnanhai he was never too busy to pass the time of day or do a favor. Children [of the top leaders] adored him.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, Zeng Qinghong, the current director of the Central General Office, shares a similar style, which is characterized by: "remaining strictly neutral" among clashing leaders, "being nice and friendly in handling his work," "never being rough-mannered and demanding toward his subordinates," and "spreading his network of friendships as widely as possible."<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to the White House chief of staff, popularity is not a highly valued quality. Rather, as a tough taskmaster, the White House chief of staff is expected to do all unpopular "dirty work" in behalf of the President. As a former White House staff assistant explains about the division of personae roles between President Carter and his chief of staff Hamilton Jordan, "It's time Jimmy Carter kicked ass, and Hamilton is his chief ass-kicker."<sup>10</sup> President Nixon's chief of staff Haldeman himself remarked

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8. Harrison E. Salisbury, The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Publishers, 1992, pp. 201-202.

9. He Pin, "Jiang Zemin de tebie zhuli: Zeng Qinghong, Yang Dezhong" ("Jiang Zemin's Special Assistants: Zeng Qinghong and Yang Dezhong"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 101 (1993), p. 72.

10. Michael Medved, The Shadow Presidents: The Secret History of the Chief Executives and Their Top Aides, New York: Times Books, 1979, p. 363.

even more bluntly: "Every President needs a son of a bitch, and I'm Nixon's. I'm his buffer and I'm his bastard. I get done what he wants done and I take the heat instead of him."<sup>11</sup> Haldeman was responsible for handling all the chores of firing and reprimanding Nixon's subordinates and thus "spared the President the unpleasantness."<sup>12</sup> For example, when Secretary of State William Rogers, Nixon's longtime personal friend, was going to be fired, "it was Haldeman -- and not the President -- who gave him the bad news that he would ultimately be replaced by arch rival Henry Kissinger."<sup>13</sup>

What is more, at the celebration party on the next morning of Nixon's election victory for his second term in office, "the senior staff gathered in the Roosevelt Room of the White House to hear a statement of appreciation from the President."<sup>14</sup> After Nixon spoke briefly, he left and turned the meeting over to Haldeman. The stern-faced chief of staff "went straight to the point" of demanding all present to submit their letters of resignation, with a no-nonsense explanation: "We just want to show we mean business."<sup>15</sup> With

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11. Richard M. Pious, The American Presidency, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979, p. 244.

12. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 315.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid. p. 322.

15. Ibid.

that he turned on his heel, "leaving the assemblage too stunned for protest."<sup>16</sup> Politically, Nixon benefited from his chief of staff "acting the part of the heavy," since "(t)his arrangement allowed disgruntled officials to direct their anger at Haldeman and to continue thinking of Nixon as their friend and protector."<sup>17</sup>

A similar example of the division of personae roles between the American president and his chief of staff is provided by President Eisenhower and his chief of staff Sherman Adams. Adams was so tough and demanding that "(o)ne or another of them [his own secretaries] frequently burst into tears and a newsman once walked into the outer office to find all five sobbing simultaneously."<sup>18</sup> His subordinates often stormed out of the office shouting "that impossible beast!" or "He's a madman -- he's insane!" In contrast, they felt that President Eisenhower was much more personable, as is illustrated by the following episode.

His secretaries unanimously relished those infrequent occasions when Adams left Washington on errands for the President. During one such absence, three of them celebrated by kicking off their shoes, reclining on the boss's private couch and enjoying a leisurely cigarette. Suddenly, the President of the United States walked into the office. Surveying the situation and noting their horrified

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16. Ibid. p. 323.

17. Ibid. pp. 315-316.

18. Ibid. p. 248.

expressions, Eisenhower smiled. "Don't worry, girls," he said. "I won't tell the governor [Adams]."<sup>19</sup>

In sharp contrast, in China where political power is monopolized by a single party, Chinese political leaders do not have to face the pressures of elective politics. In other words, they have to concentrate their attention and efforts more on pleasing their superiors who wield the nonmenklutura (appointment) power than on catering to the general public who wields the voting power. As a result, Chinese leaders themselves like to play the role of being tough, demanding, aggressive, and menacing, while leaving to their mishus the role of being unassuming, affable, and pleasing.<sup>20</sup> It is a general expectation that if the chief leader is a domineering figure, the general office head is supposed to "try every means possible to smooth out tensions and establish interpersonal rapport" in the leadership squad.<sup>21</sup> Chinese leaders are expected to be feared so as to be promptly obeyed. In practice, a dreaded leader is often the only

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19. Ibid. Adams used to be the governor of New Hampshire.

20. Xu Ruixin et al., Zhongguo xiandai mishu gongzuo jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, pp. 131-132.

21. Gao Yang, "Zenyang zuo vice chengzhi de mishu zhang he banongting zhuren" ("How to Be a Qualified Chief Mishu or General Office Director"), in Lingdao tongzhi tan mishu gongzuo (The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work), Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1989, p.123.

effective means to keep bureaucracies functioning properly or get things done in general. Consequently, Chinese chief leaders are generally tough and even ruthless.

For example, senior Vice-Premier Zhu Rongji, the fledgling strongman in Chinese politics, threatened to "chop off the head" of any provincial banking and financial official who would be found dragging his feet on Zhu's austerity measures for cooling off the economic overheat.<sup>22</sup> Mao Zedong's bullying manner was given the fullest play during the Lushan Conference in 1959, where he threatened to go into the countryside once again "to recruit another red army" and "overthrow the government" when facing the strong opposition led by defense minister Peng Dehuai against his "Great Leap" adventure.<sup>23</sup> Deng Xiaoping's tough and ruthless style was well reflected in his notorious "Three Don't Be Afraids" speech during the Tiananmen crisis in 1989, in which "he told the Politburo that they should not be afraid of foreign opinions, public reactions or the shedding of blood."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, even Zhou Enlai, who has been generally regarded as the ultimate paragon of modesty and kindness in

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22. Zhong Xingzhi, "Zanting tiaokong, jinxing tiaozheng" ("Giving Up Overall Control for Piecemeal Adjustments"), in Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 100 (1993), p. 14.

23. Li Rui, Lushan huiyi shilu (The True Record of the Lushan Conference), Changsha, 1989, p. 171.

24. Lucian W. Pye, "An Introductory Profile: Deng Xiaoping and China's Political Culture," The China Quarterly, No. 135 (September 1993), p. 424.

China, was in fact quite a dreaded figure to his subordinate bureaucrats. His mishus have recently revealed: "The Premier was very strict and tough. He was hard even on the ministers. As a result, the ministers of the State Council were all somewhat afraid of him, never daring to act causally or carelessly [in front of him.]"<sup>25</sup> On occasion, he would yell and throw papers at them, when he was unhappy with their work. Consequently, no minister had the nerve to make the same mistake for a second time.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the intimidating quality of a Chinese leader is such that:

It occurs frequently that before going to see a superior leader, a comrade has fully prepared every detail of what he is going to say, down to greeting remarks, its tone and gestures. The moment he sees the leader, however, he forgets everything. All his wits are gone and what is left is nothing but dullness and nervousness.<sup>27</sup>

As a word of caution, Chinese leaders do not have just one personae face; they do have the soft, agreeable side. Nevertheless, although they do not need to be intimidating all the time, it is necessary for Chinese political leaders to assert their bullying or fear-striking power at certain intervals in order to sustain the integrity of the authority structure.

While Chinese leaders are inclined to be tough-mannered and critical, it is their mishus' job to smooth out the

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25. Cheng Hua, Zhou Enlai he tade mishumen (Zhou Enlai and His Mishus), Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi chubanshe, 1992, p. 131.

26. Ibid. pp. 131-132.

27. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, pp. 125-126.

ruffled features or soothe the hurt feelings: "...if a leader is being excessively critical, his mishu should cushion the impact by comforting the person being upbraided; if a leader has uttered something one-sided or inaccurate, his mishu should round it out and touch it up."<sup>28</sup> It is a mishu's important responsibility to preserve his leader's popularity. In handling a leader's publicity, it is the mishu's duty to be cautious, discreet, and watchful, even though the leader himself may be somewhat impulsive and indulgent. For example:

Some leaders hold themselves aloof from the masses, liking to order around subordinates down below,...and rarely going down to the grassroots to solve concrete problems; some go down but for fleeting moments and only for display; some like to be received, wherever they go, with fanfare, a large number of attendants, and extravagant feasts;...<sup>29</sup>

The leaders themselves should bear a part of the blame, but their mishus are also to blame because "they fail to make appropriate arrangements." It is believed that, "If their mishus always keep it in mind to let the leaders go down to the grassroots and keep in close contact with the masses when arranging their activities, the leading comrades in the Party

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28. Wu Shaozu, "Shouzhang mishu gongzuo zongheng tan" ("Extensive Observations on the Work of Leaders' Personal Mishus"), in The Remarks by Leading Comrades, p. 115.

29. Yi Chengjie et al., Zhengwu jiegua yu lingdao huodong anpai (Receiving of Official Visitors and Arranging of Leaders' Activities), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990; p. 55.

and government will surely have fine images among the masses."<sup>30</sup>

Behind the manifest difference in the division of personae roles, Chinese and American politicians have very different mental attitudes toward the character trait of toughness and aggressiveness in their staff assistants. American politicians often appreciate and even admire such quality in their staff aides. For instance, Medved, a historian on the White House staff, detects a strong sense of admiration on President Nixon's part toward his rough-mannered chief of staff Haldeman. Medved wrote:

Haldeman -- the broad-shouldered authoritarian who never registered his emotions -- represented the sort of manly self-sufficiency Nixon wanted for himself. In several revealing diary entries during the Watergate crisis, Nixon expressed his respect for Haldeman's ability to "hang tough." "I marvel at the strength of Haldeman," he wrote....When they finally parted after a dramatic conversation and Haldeman stepped into a waiting car, the badly shaken President told him, "I wish I were as strong as you."<sup>31</sup>

By contrast, Chinese leaders never like an aggressive and assertive mishu. Take Mao for example. "For all that he hurt others' feelings badly in some cases," explains a Chinese biographer of Mao, "he extremely disliked those who would hurt his feelings casually. For all that he was a firm believer in the 'philosophy of struggle,' he liked to have harmonious and relaxed relationship with people immediately surrounding him in daily life."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, "he laid down a

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30. Ibid.

31. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 315.

very important condition for being his mishus: he or she must have a soft, easygoing temperament."<sup>33</sup>

Also related with the division of personae roles is the issue of manner and style. Here, again, there is a vast difference in terms of boss-staff relationship between the American and the Chinese cases. In America, political principals typically have pleasing, polished, and well-studied manners, while their staff aides tend to exhibit more rough edges in their conduct. For instance, President Carter's Chief of Staff Jordan "became a national synonym for boorish behavior. In one memorable cartoon, Jim Berry showed a schoolgirl complaining to her teacher about a naughty classmate beside her. 'He's acting exactly like Hamilton Jordan!' the child whined."<sup>34</sup> A prominent Democrat complained about President Kennedy's top aide Sorensen with regard to his manner: "He is one of the toughest and most ruthless people I have ever dealt with, insulting, belittling, condescending."<sup>35</sup> President Roosevelt's top aide Hopkins was also well known for his highly idiosyncratic and ill-mannered style:

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32. Hai Lude et al., eds., Shenghuo zhong de Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong in the Real Life), Beijing: Hua Ling chubanshe, 1989, p. 301.

33. Ibid. p. 300.

34. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 357.

35. Ibid. p. 272.

He generally received guests with his feet on the desk, a cigarette dangling from one side of his mouth, and dandruff covering his shoulders....His smile was equally lopsided, encouraging his detractors to speak of his "perpetual leer."<sup>36</sup>

President Roosevelt once commented approvingly on Hopkins's no-nonsense, arrogant work style:

He doesn't even know the meaning of the word "protocol." When he sees a piece of red tape, he just pulls out those old garden shears of his and snips it. And when he's talking to some foreign dignitary, he knows how to slump back in his chair and put his feet up on the conference table and say, "Oh, yeah?"<sup>37</sup>

It is a different story when we turn to the Chinese case. Leaders often have idiosyncratic styles and rugged manners. Mao is well known for his biting, sardonic language and rustic manners. Deng feels no embarrassment when he spits noisily and chain-smokes in front of foreign visitors. For that matter, if a leader shows excessive attention to making his manners acceptable and pleasant, he may well be perceived as betraying signs of insecurity and weakness.

Nevertheless, Chinese mishus must make their manners and appearances pleasant and presentable. In their training, a plethora of do's and don'ts are prescribed for this purpose:

\*(H)ave regular hair cuts. Don't have a weird hairdo. Shave your face and groom your nostril hair well. Don't wear clothing that is glaringly out of place. Iron and clean your clothes and let your trousers show two straight line creases. Keep your collar and sleeves clean, and polish your shoes

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36. Ibid. p. 202.

37. Ibid. p. 210. Indeed, Hopkins "received even the most important visitors in his pajamas..." (Ibid. 206.)

until they shine....Don't allow yourself, under any circumstances whatsoever, to receive visitors in shorts or a sleeveless shirt....Don't pick your nose or clip your nails in front of others....Don't eat garlic or other food with offensive odors before receiving visitors. If that cannot be helped, chew some tea leaves to get rid of the odor...."38

The list goes on and on.

#### Political Openness vs. Secretiveness

A word of caveat is in order. The difference in manner and style between Chinese mishu and American staff aides may be exaggerated, in that the lack of political openness and the absence of a free press may keep the misconduct of Chinese mishu from reaching the general public. In America, however, politics is generally played out "in the fishbowl context of American mass communications."<sup>39</sup> Consequently, "(t)he White House is a glass house, shot through with floodlights of scrutiny from a skeptical press and a hostile political opposition, watched by a changeable public. It is expected to be a model for public service and it cannot help but be a target for attack on even the least of peccadilloes."<sup>40</sup> All this contributes to exacerbating the image of American staffs as unpopular trouble-makers.

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38. Wang Qiangong et al., Shiyong mishu gongzuo shouce (A Practical Handbook for Mishu Work), Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1987, p. 85.

39. Fred I. Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency," in Anthony King, ed., The New American political system, Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978, p. 50.

40. Patterson, The Ring of Power, p. 347.

Furthermore, the American mass media will "make sure that anyone next to the center of power will become an instant celebrity,"<sup>41</sup> and news reporters and gossip writers enjoy making sport of political leaders' staff members for the sake of journalist sensationalism. For example, "Shortly after Jordan arrived in Washington, a local gossip columnist scooped the world with the earth-shattering revelation that the President's top aide 'never wears -- in fact, has never owned -- a pair of underwear in his whole life.'"<sup>42</sup> And Playgirl magazine published an interview with President Carter's Press Secretary Jody Powell "alongside full color photographs of male genitalia," making him answer "insinuating questions about his extramarital affairs and the sexual temptations of his office."<sup>43</sup>

A Chinese mishu operates in a much more concealed and protected environment, in that "every aspect of his work and everything he is doing is confidential to a greater or lesser extent."<sup>44</sup> Freed from constant harassment of fault-finding and dirt-digging by the mass media and political opponents, Chinese mishus are in a better position to make themselves popular than their American counterparts.

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41. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 356.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid. pp. 356-357.

44. Zheng Xinghan et al., An Outline of the Mishu Work, pp. 102-103.

### Different Cultural Attitudes Toward Politicians

Another reason for a possibly exaggerated contrast between the styles of Chinese mishus and American staff members is cultural attitude. In China political leaders are generally awed and held in extremely high esteem since social and moral order relies heavily upon their personal authority. It is a cultural norm for leaders to ignore most of the requests for special favors from their subordinates and ordinary people without entailing hard feelings. As a result, any leader's individualized response, no matter how small, tends to be a happy surprise and as such greatly appreciated. Thus, leaders' mishus are in a good position to play the role of delivering good news or favors to grateful recipients, who are often in tears. Indeed, even a leader's granting of audiences is considered as a great favor. For instance, Deng Xiaoping, like Mao before him, is not easily accessible even to the members of the Politburo Standing Committee.

In America, political leaders do not enjoy esteem as high as their Chinese counterparts. Rather, there tends to be widespread skepticism and even antagonism toward politicians among the general public. This is particularly the case with the politically alert, as is best exemplified by journalists. For example:

The working hypothesis almost universally shared among correspondents is that politicians are suspect; their public images probably false, their public statements disingenuous,

their moral pronouncements hypocritical, their motives self-serving, and their promises ephemeral.<sup>45</sup>

In short, until proven otherwise, political figures are generally presumed to be deceptive. In the newsrooms, politicians are habitually called "frauds," "phonies," and "liars."<sup>46</sup> News reporters and analysts see it as their professional duty "to expose politicians by unmasking their disguises, debunking their claims and piercing their rhetoric."<sup>47</sup>

For lack of popular veneration and thus job security, American politicians tend to develop such a psychological make-up as to "want to be nice and want to be liked."<sup>48</sup> Therefore:

Faced with a living, breathing fellow human being who wants something very much...the natural reaction is to be obliging. That's why if you are a lobbyist, just getting through to a high official and presenting your case, using facts, figures, and persuasion -- no favors involved -- gives you a good chance for success. In fact, this is the way most lobbying victories are won.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, the highly individualistic American political culture inclines people to believe that they deserve more than however much their political leaders can

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45. Austin Ranney, Channels of Power: The Impact of Television on American Politics, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1983, pp. 58-59.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid. 58-59.

48. Charles Peters, How Washington Really Works, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1980, p. 7.

49. Ibid. pp. 7-8.

deliver. At least they each deserve the fullest attention of a politician when it comes to their personal problems. As a result, a twelve-year-old Indian boy did not hesitate to write to the President to complain "that his father, a veteran, was out of work," and a street-cleaner felt it only natural to call the White House to report that "someone had stolen his broom," demanding a replacement.<sup>50</sup> And the White House constantly witnesses "the milling of a hungry mob of job hunters working overtime."<sup>51</sup> Americans' general faith in their natural right to full service of their politicians is most vividly illustrated by the following somewhat extreme and yet telling case involving President Adams and a persistent visitor Dr. George P. Todson. The incident was recorded in the President's personal diary.

Todson, recently court-martialed from his post as an assistant surgeon in the Army, first appeared at the White House on December 16, 1826, to ask for a reinstatement. Adams had already reviewed the proceedings twice, declined to reverse the verdict, and learned from the good doctor's attorney "that Todson had come to the most cool and inflexible determination to murder me."....After a lengthy interview Todson left the White House, only to return five days later. This time he announced that his former intention to kill the President had been "absurd" since he now understood that Adams entertained kindly feelings toward him. As proof of those feelings, he wanted the chief executive to give him money for passage to New Orleans....On March 15, Todson made another appearance with the new demand that the government return his court-martial fee of \$47....On the 27th he returned to the President with a joyous announcement: he was close to "forming a matrimonial connection with a young girl." The girl's parents, however, would not approve the match unless Adams agreed to reverse the court-martial

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50. Patterson, The Ring of Power, p. 317.

51. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 65.

conviction....Todson disappeared for two months, only to shatter the President's hopes in May by showing up once again. This time he demanded appointment to a vacant clerkship in the War Department...."<sup>52</sup>

This culturally imbedded belief in individuals' natural right to politicians' service and time places, however, staff members in a difficult position, easily turning them into unpopular figures perceived as blocking the exercise of this inalienable right. When President Lincoln's aide John G. Nicolay attempted to bring some order to the frenzy to get access to the President, he immediately incurred widespread antagonism. He was "soon written down by official Washington as 'snobby and unpopular.'"<sup>53</sup> That was because he "cast his cold, disapproving eye not only on crank and common citizens, but on haughty Congressmen as well." Those "(s)elf-important Senators, who in all previous administrations had been accustomed to striding unchallenged through crowded anterooms and going directly to the President, developed a strong resentment for 'this mere boy from the West' who forced them to await his permission."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, it is "an immutable rule of Washington politics" that "(n)o one likes to believe that he has been denied an audience with the chief executive because his opinion is insignificant or irrelevant; it is

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52. Ibid. pp. 12-13.

53. Ibid. p. 19.

54. Ibid.

much easier to blame a conspiratorial aide for cutting off advice 'the President needs.'<sup>55</sup>

### Structural vs. Moral Constraints

Being close to power centers, staff personnel in both China and America are subject to various intoxicating temptations and character-distorting pulls, which are particularly irresistible and potent for them, given their usual young age and juniority. For example, a position on the White House staff is said to be able to "transform the most sensible person into a power tripper."<sup>56</sup> Jack Valenti, who was a special assistant to President Johnson for three years, provided the following insight to illustrate this point.

You sit next to the Sun King and you bask in his rays, and you have those three magic words, "the President wants." And all of a sudden you have power unimagined by you before you got in that job. And if you don't watch out, you begin to believe that it is your splendid intellect, your charm and your insights into the human condition that give you all this power....The arrogance sinks deeper into their veins than they think possible. What it does after a while is breed a kind of insularity that keeps you from being subject to the same fits of insecurity that most human beings have. Because you very seldom are ever turned down. You are seen in Washington. There are stories in Newsweek and Time about how important you are. I'm telling you this is like mainlining heroin. And while you are experiencing it, it is so blinding and dazzling that you forget, literally forget, that it is borrowed and transitory power.<sup>57</sup>

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55. Ibid. p. 318.

56. Larry Berman, The New American Presidency, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987, p. 114.

57. Ibid.

The character-disturbing power of the position of a Chinese mishu is similar, as for example, "the unique position of a mishu tends to cause a person to have two opposite mental states simultaneously: an inferiority complex and a superiority complex."<sup>58</sup> Toward his boss, he tends to be "submissive," "obedient," and "passive." On the other hand, however, he forms a natural tendency "to be blindly optimistic (manqmu leguan), narcissistically arrogant, and condescending, as well as to enjoy lecturing people and ordering them around."<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the position of a leader's mishu is said to be teeming with "temptations in terms of fame, interests, money, and sex."<sup>60</sup> A former important mishu confesses that, "It is extremely easy to use his leader's position to promote his private interests, if a mishu is so minded."<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, in both countries it is recognized that there must be some constraints to curb staffs' personality disorder and prevent them from abusing their powers. The measures taken are very different, however. In China the emphasis is on inner or moral constraints while in America the primary

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58. Qi Peiwen et al., Zenyang danghao lingdaoren mishu (How to Be a Good Personal Mishu for a Leader), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 191.

59. Ibid. p. 192. This "natural tendency" is something to be curbed with various precautions, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

60. Wu Shaozu, "Extensive Observations," p. 117.

61. Ibid. p. 118.

precaution is an appropriate external structural arrangement in which actors check and balance each other out.

In China, great importance is attached to moral constraints on mishus to fight various temptations inherent in their position. Mishus are encouraged to implant in themselves the will "to sacrifice themselves, to be invisible and hard-working, and to be unsung heroes for the sake of the [Party's] Cause."<sup>62</sup> Personal morality is particularly stressed in the recruitment process. For instance, Li Ruihuan, currently a member of the Politburo standing committee, recently emphasized: "In selecting a mishu, the primary consideration should be morality: rather a [virtuous] mediocrity than a [talented] crook."<sup>63</sup>

What is more, in order to reinforce inner restraints, various disciplinary codes have been laid down and repeatedly rubbed in. Some samples are as follows.

When leaders are having a meeting or a conversation with each other, a mishu is forbidden to "open his mouth or wag his tongue," unless talked to.<sup>64</sup>

Don't comment on a document or issue written instructions in the name of your leader without permission; don't advance your private interests in the name of your leader; don't ask for gifts in the name of your leader; don't answer questions in the name of your leader without permission; and don't

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62. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 113.

63. Li Ruihuan, Wei renmin ban shishi suitan (Casual Remarks by Li Ruihuan While Doing Substantial Things for the People), Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1990, p. 813.

64. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 132.

establish and contact personal connections (la guanxi) or engage in illegal activities in the name of your leader.<sup>65</sup>

The constant efforts at taming the inner drive can produce the following effect on mishus:

...many comrades [mishus] have great internal anxiety, being constantly fearful that they will make mistakes, be criticized, have to make self-criticisms, leave a bad impression on leaders and thus lose their trust and opportunities for promotion. So much so that they are nervous and fidgeting, as if they were walking on a tightrope or on a thin layer of ice. Their hearts beat irregularly, guessing in agony what has gone wrong, whenever a leader wants to have a heart-to-heart talk with them. They lose their spirit and become dull...and in some cases they suffer nervous breakdown, hypochondria, or depression, ruining their health.<sup>66</sup>

Hence, there is a very common saying among mishus that, "Accompanying a leader is like accompanying a tiger" (ban jun ru ban hu).<sup>67</sup>

In America there is not as much faith in inner or moral constraints alone. Rather, the primary concern is how to place effective external restraints on staffs through checks and balances or other structural devices. For example, the White House staff is confronted with constant challenges and scrutiny from the president's institutional opponents. Congress and the White House are engaged in "a kind of administrative arms race"<sup>68</sup> in their efforts to recruit more

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65. Qi Peiwen et al., How to Be a Good Personal Mishu, pp. 198-199.

66. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 124.

67. Personal interviews.

and better quality staff assistants, in order to have sufficient manpower and professional talent to keep a close eye and effective counterbalance on each other.

Mass media are another mechanism of external constraining. The Presidential staff members are continuously "surrounded by the surveillance of an expert and unremittingly skeptical press corps." which ensures that "the White House is a glass house, with both light and heat streaming in."<sup>69</sup> As for the president's political opponents, they all "wait for staff members to get into trouble and then attack."<sup>70</sup> And when they attack, they will "go after them [White House staff members] like a pack of wolves."<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, even within the White House internal rivalry is a commonplace, and such rivalry is generally believed to be a healthy measure of constraint. As President Franklin Roosevelt once explained, "A little rivalry is stimulating, you know. It keeps everybody trying to prove he is a better fellow than the next man. It keeps them honest too."<sup>72</sup> This belief was well reflected in the practice of President Reagan's top staff aides, who formed the "Troika," the

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68. Douglas Yates, Bureaucratic Democracy: The Search for Democracy and Efficiency in American Government, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 57.

69. Patterson, The Ring of Power, p. 5.

70. Pious, The American Presidency, p. 245.

71. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 323.

72. Ibid. pp. 210-211.

"Triumvirate," or the "Three-Headed Monster." This three-way competition between Baker, Meese, and Deaver gave rise to the following situation:

None of the three had qualms about leaking to the press to advance their interests. In effect, they balanced each other's influence -- the American tenet of separation of powers, perhaps, on a smaller scale.<sup>73</sup>

Because the preponderant attention is focused on external constraints, inner or moral constraints on American staffs are relatively relaxed. Some escapades on the part of staffs are generally accepted or taken for granted as long as they can be got away with. A veteran Carter staff aide conceded:

Sure, there's a certain amount of partying and a certain amount of sexual adventure. That's not abnormal. The White House is a very high-pressure place and people need a way to let off steam. In the campaign, we used to have a saying: "It's better to shack up than to crack up." It's like a war when you work in politics. You don't know if you're going to die tomorrow and so you go ahead and have a good time tonight. Everything is temporary and chancy....I don't know if Jimmy [Carter] either knows or cares about what's going on.<sup>74</sup>

The different emphasis on the inner or on the outer constraining mechanisms, as described above, contributes to the fact that Chinese mishus are inclined to be unobtrusive, quiet, and modest figures while American staff members tend to be aggressive, vociferous, and nasty players.

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73. Stephen Hess, Organizing the Presidency, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1988, p. 149.

74. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, pp. 357-358.

## Different Career Paths

The behavior patterns of Chinese mishus and American staff assistants are also influenced by different career paths. In the American political arena, staff assistants rarely become professional politicians in their own right.<sup>75</sup> For that matter, if a person has the ambition to go into politics for a career, the position as a politician's staff member is perhaps the worst starting point. President Kennedy was very frank when he told his top aide Sorensen: "Every man that's ever held a job like yours -- Sherman Adams, Harry Hopkins, House, all the rest -- had ended up in the shithouse. Congress was down on them or the President was hurt by them or somebody was mad at them."<sup>76</sup> Consequently, instead of preparing for their political aspirations, American staff members are typically "in-and-outers,"<sup>77</sup> who treat their staff appointments as short-term jobs or opportunities to build up fast their personal reputation and credibility for the sake of their future careers in private sectors, which are often financially more attractive, or just to temporarily enjoy wielding delegated political authority, which they can hardly obtain on their own. As a result, they

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75. The only exception in the case of the White House staff is perhaps Richard Cheney, former chief of staff of President Ford's administration. Cheney later became a Congress representative.

76. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 273.

77. Price, America's Unwritten Constitution, pp. 106-107.

do not feel it particularly necessary to build up long term goodwill with politicians other than their own bosses. As Nixon's Chief of Staff Haldeman explained: "I was tough because I had to be tough. In the White House you don't have the luxury of time. You're not building for the long haul, the way you are in business."<sup>78</sup>

The desire to build up one's own professional reputation may lead a staff assistant to act in a way that gives rise to tensions even with his boss. For example, the White House staff is often perceived as "a cast of actors more committed to stealing the show from him [the President] than to allowing him to live up to the nation's expectations that his performance be the extraordinary one."<sup>79</sup>

A staff member aggressively pursuing his own professional reputation may even cause his master to treat him as a potential competitor. For example: "Limelight on his aides sometimes brings second thoughts to a president: might there arise a question as to who will be getting the credit for the administration's accomplishment?"<sup>80</sup> Such staff-boss competition occurred in the Nixon-Kissinger White House, as for example Time's "Man of the Year" cover for 1973 was split in two between President Nixon and Henry Kissinger.<sup>81</sup> Nixon

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78. Medved, The Shadow Presidents, p. 312.

79. Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency," p. 79.

80. Patterson, The Ring of Power, p. 125.

81. Ibid.

was so worried about being overshadowed by his own top aide that he felt compelled to install a secret taping system in the White House to record every conversation he had with Kissinger. In his memoirs, he gives reasons for doing so: "Such an objective record might also be useful to the extent that any President feels vulnerable to revisionist histories...from within...his administration...."<sup>82</sup> His chief of staff Haldeman gave a more direct explanation: "It was a final attempt by a frustrated Nixon to pin down the opinions of Henry Kissinger and other advisers who often seemed to come up with their own versions of both their own and the President's positions...."<sup>83</sup> President Carter was faced with a similar competition with his White House staff, and in his efforts of "trying to increase loyalty, [he] had his White House assistants fill out a questionnaire that became an object of public ridicule."<sup>84</sup>

The boss-staff rivalry also arises from the fact that American political principals and their staff assistants tend to have a short-term utilitarian view toward each other. It is tacitly understood between the two sides that one should take care of one's own long-term interests. For instance, some Congressmen admitted frankly their self-interested utilitarian view in hiring staff members: they just want to

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82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Berman, The New American Presidency, p. 114.

"hire them young, burn them out, and send them on."<sup>85</sup> Significantly, this utilitarian view is generally acceptable in the American individualistic culture, and is approved of even by scholars. For example, Medved offers his advice regarding the proper relationship between the president and his top assistants:

Hard-heartedness can be a positive trait for the President of the United States -- he ought to be selfish in using the men who serve him. Yes, there is room for friendship in the White House...but only if the core of the relationship remains essentially ruthless.<sup>86</sup>

When it comes to Chinese mishus, they have a different career path from their American counterparts. Unlike American "in-and-outers," Chinese GO members are groomed successors for higher leadership positions within the Chinese officialdom. Because of this arrangement, Chinese mishus do not feel it in their best interest to aggressively push for their separate professional reputation and interests from those of their leaders. Rather, it is in their best interest to cautiously cultivate long term good relationships with as many leaders as possible, so as to improve their chances for career advancement. Particularly, they need to forge a reliable and enduring relationship with their own bosses. Unlike their American counterparts, Chinese political leaders are not supposed to have a short term, utilitarian view

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85. Michael J. Malbin, Unelected Representatives: Congressional Staff and the Future of Representative Government, New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1979, p. 20.

86. Ibid. p. 359.

toward their mishus, but instead they are expected to look after their mishus' long term career advancement. As an important mishu-turned-leader explains: "Using a mishu on the one hand and cultivating and preparing him for being a [leading] cadre on the other should be combined. It is not appropriate to be interested only in using a mishu to one's own satisfaction without considering his future. His career should be taken care of."<sup>87</sup> Consequently, it is very common for Chinese leaders and their former mishus to remain in close touch, through frequently exchanging gifts and favors, for decades after they left each other.

Moreover, while American "in-and-outers" have their own professional reputation to look after and they like to perceive themselves proudly as "educators" to their bosses in matters within the realm of their specialty,<sup>88</sup> Chinese mishus generally regard themselves humbly as "pupils," "students" or "apprentices" of their leaders.<sup>89</sup>

The career pattern inclines Chinese mishus to be pleasing, dependent, and self-effacing toward their bosses rather than be hasty and noisy self-aggrandizers, like their American counterparts, who are ready to promote their

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87. Wu Shaozu, "Extensive Observations," p. 112.

88. Fox and Hammond observe: "...staff also serve as educators -- tutoring their boss on substantive issues. Hearings, briefing books, conversations, interviews, speeches, are all used by staff in educating members [of Congress]." Congressional Staffs, p. 159.

89. Wu Shaozu, "Extensive Observations," pp. 116-117.

separate career interests even at the expense of their bosses'.

#### Technology vs. Human Relations

Another reason for American staffs to be a major source of tension and conflict is the fact that American culture is characterized by a profound obsession with new technology. Staff personnel are recruited largely for the sake of promoting new techniques to achieve more and better material results and greater efficiency. This is particularly the case with business organizations, but this tendency is also reflected in the staff arrangements in political organizations.

Staff personnel usually have a different career pattern from that of line personnel: line personnel "are far more likely to have worked their way up through their present organization and to have done so on the basis of experience and knowledge of particular jobs or operations rather than on the basis of formal training," whereas staff personnel "are appointed directly to their present job from outside" because of their technical training.<sup>90</sup> So, line personnel are generally regarded as "locals" and staff personnel as "cosmopolitans."<sup>91</sup>

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90. Robert T. Golembiewski, Organizing Men and Power: Patterns of Behavior and Line-Staff Models, Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1967, p. 71.

91. Ibid.

As a result, the two types of personnel face very different incentive structures. American staffs tend to have "a greater propensity to innovate."<sup>92</sup> That is because staff members are "usually more technically oriented than line personnel," since they are "more technically trained, better educated in general,..."<sup>93</sup> That is also because "their freedom from operating responsibility allows them to keep technically better informed than line officials."<sup>94</sup> As specialists in certain new techniques, American staff members are usually hired exclusively to implement those techniques in order to change the existing behavior of the line personnel and squeeze greater efficiency out of their performance. In order to justify their existence and to retain their "existing power, income, and prestige,"<sup>95</sup> American staff personnel tend to advocate "the doctrine of rapid obsolescence for techniques."<sup>96</sup> And they "see themselves as innovators of one gadget after another."<sup>97</sup> As a result, "(n)ew fads...spring up overnight, while the

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92. Anthony Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967, p. 155.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid. pp. 155-156.

95. Ibid.

96. Sampson, The Staff Role In Management, p. 7.

97. Ibid.

comparatively recent...programs are quickly forgotten."<sup>98</sup> What is more, staff personnel "are strongly motivated to criticize the line's behavior and press for changes." The built-in role of "criticizer" makes it particularly easy for staff members to create tensions within the organization, because:

...staff experts work for improvements and we have a situation potentially that of internecine warfare. 'Suggestions for improvements' sound good in theory, but what does it mean in practice? Criticism. Criticism of things, it is true. But what does this mean? Line men who see their things criticized, cannot disassociate their own egos from the things. Therefore, they feel that they are being criticized.<sup>99</sup>

In contrast, "(l)ine officials are normally more inertia prone because they naturally try to justify their existing behavior, they are far more aware of the difficulties of disrupting informal networks, and they must bear the costs of carrying out changes suggested by staff advisors."<sup>100</sup> Consequently, "(t)hese differences between staff and line generate an inherent conflict [emphasis added] between them...."<sup>101</sup>

Staff specialists tend to clash not only with the line officials within the same organization but also with staff specialists in other organizations, as is exemplified by "the

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98. Ibid.

99. Ibid. p. 28.

100. Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, p. 155.

101. Ibid.

now-familiar pattern of policy debate characterized by a clash of expert testimony" between different parts of the American government.<sup>102</sup> Different government organizations "will seek to use their experts and their policy evaluations as political weapons in bureaucratic conflict."<sup>103</sup> As a result, "Policy debates" tend to take the form of "struggles between opposing assumptions, projections, and analyses in the new language of" the theory, model, and technique that are currently in vogue.<sup>104</sup>

Nevertheless, the above technique-related line-staff/staff-staff conflict seems to be much less acute in Chinese organizational environments, where mishus are more preoccupied with skills at properly handling complex human relations than with aggressively promoting new efficiency-enhancing gadgets.<sup>105</sup> In other words, Chinese mishus tend to

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102. Yates, Bureaucratic Democracy, p. 76-77.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. It is noteworthy that for the first two decades or so, "...Communist China also has staff-line conflicts, and for reasons similar to those of the West." As Franz Schurmann explains, "The staff-line conflict in Chinese factories has taken the form of conflict between 'intellectual' staff men and the proletarian line men," that is, between "expert professionals and red cadres." This conflict stemmed from the fact that, "The former hold to values of expertise; the latter hold to values of 'red.'" (Ideology and Organization in Communist China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, pp. 70, 72.) Nevertheless, the Chinese line-staff conflict had a significant difference. In the American case, staff personnel and top executive officers are typically allies and they join hands in pushing line managers for better performance, whereas in the Chinese case, superior leaders and line personnel were both "red" and tended to

be sensitive to various subtle power relationships and personal needs of all the key actors in their immediate milieu while American staff assistants tend to advocate new techniques with single-minded determination paying little regard to their disruptive effect on human relations.

#### Summary

American staff members and Chinese mishus demonstrate very different behavior patterns: the former tend to be aggressive, pushy, and assertive, while the latter tend to be modest, reconciliatory, and accommodating. The contrast arises because the pressures of elective politics incline American politicians to reserve for themselves the role of being nice and popular while letting their staff assistants do the unpopular "dirty work", in the absence of such pressures, Chinese political leaders prefer to make themselves be awed, feared, and promptly and submissively obeyed while leaving to their mishus the task of smoothing out any disruptions or disturbances left behind by their actions. The tendency for Chinese and American staff personnel to play the contrasting roles is also reinforced by the fact that the emphasis on external checks and balances tends to reinforce the personality trait of aggressiveness in American staff people whereas the stress on inner constraints tends to tame and emasculate such instincts in Chinese mishus. Another reinforcing factor for the above tendency is

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share the same attitude of discrimination against "expert" staff people.

general cultural ethos. The cultural preoccupation with new technology inclines American staff members, who are usually specialists of one new technique or another, to aggressively push for changes and technological improvements, which tends to bring them into confrontation with status quo-oriented line personnel. In contrast, cultural preoccupation with human relations turns Chinese mishus into experts at properly handling various subtle and complicated power relationships, a fact which tends to add to their likeability or acceptability to all sides. Moreover, Chinese mishus are in a better position to be popular figures than their American counterparts. The intimidating quality around political leaders causes ordinary people to be grateful for whatever small personal favors that leaders hand down. Any help on the mishus' part in the process will be greatly appreciated. In America, the low esteem toward politicians and the individualistic spirit inclines people to believe that they deserve more than however much politicians can deliver. Whatever staffs can offer tends to be appreciated even less. Another advantage that Chinese mishus enjoy over their American counterparts is the fact that their activities are largely sheltered in secrecy or semi-secrecy, while the political openness subjects American staffs to meticulous public scrutiny and makes them fall easy prey to ruthless attacks of political opponents and sensationalistic ridicules of the mass media. From another perspective, however, the "tough" and "soft" roles suit the self interests of American

staff members and Chinese mishus respectively with regard to their career paths. Playing it tough can attract attention and build up personal reputation quickly, such being beneficial to a more profitable career elsewhere for an American staff member, who is typically an "in-and-outer." Playing it soft helps cultivate long term goodwill with as many key leaders as possible, thus being conducive to career advancement of Chinese mishus, who are in most cases groomed for fast upward mobility within the officialdom.

## Chapter Eight

### CONCLUSION

This dissertation has unveiled a crucial but hitherto neglected hidden structure of the Chinese political system -- the mishu institution. There are about one million mishu personnel in the Chinese political arena, who provide comprehensive staff support and services for political leaders at all levels, individually or collectively. With regard to the functioning of the Chinese political system, mishus perform two roles: 1) amplifying political leadership's control over bureaucracies; and 2) cushioning and moderating disagreements, conflicts, clashes, and arbitrary changes or disruptions.

As is the case with staffs everywhere in the world, a primary function that Chinese mishus perform is to amplify political leaders' control over bureaucracies. Our findings reveal that in this regard, mishus constitute a form of counter-bureaucracy so as to provide political leaders with a permanent countervailing base of expertise and knowledge and an extra channel of information and authority flow vis-a-vis the regular bureaucracies. In China every formal organization is run by a leadership squad composed of only a very small number of leaders, but every leadership squad is assisted and served by a sizable mishu squad, also called "general office." The general office is one of the largest departments under a leadership squad, consisting of counterpart subunits

to virtually all the bureaucratic departments. So structured, the general office provides necessary organizational capacity for leaders to attempt to closely and constantly supervise and monitor all the subordinate departments and units, thus helping strengthen the leadership squad's control over them.

An important part of mishus' controlling role lies in information processing. Mishus are responsible for handling all incoming information, summarizing, condensing, clarifying, and synthesizing it, so as to reduce the informational torrents from the bureaucracies to manageable proportions for the leaders. Furthermore, mishus have the duty and authority to collect and verify information independently. They can either go out to investigate the true conditions and find out facts or receive visitors and letters from below to keep an eye on any misbehavior of bureaucrats. Importantly, the mishu institution is organized as a separate, unified subsystem with each general office having the obligation to report to higher-level GOs and coordinate with other GOs at the same or lower levels. Thus, mishus operate in fact a somewhat independent information network, which apparently connects all bureaucracies vertically and horizontally across the country. Our findings suggest that this mishu-operated information system seems to be generally efficient and capable of providing timely and accurate information to the Chinese political leaders at various levels, particularly with regard to emergencies or crises. Or at least it seems to constitute a sufficiently strong

deterrent preventing subordinate bureaucrats from straying too far away from superior leaders' intentions and instructions. Furthermore, mishus conduct research and investigations and provide extensive advice for leaders in a policy process so that the leaders can make informed decisions to exercise effective leadership over the bureaucracies.

Our research also shows that the mishu institution has some highly unique features in comparison with its counterparts in other countries and even in ancient Chinese history. It is a principal cushioning/integrating mechanism for the Chinese political system, working to facilitate a workable degree of harmony, coherence, coordination, consistency and continuity of it.

So far as interpersonal relationships are concerned, mishus' cushioning role is primarily reflected in these two aspects: 1) performing tension-releasing and conflict-deflecting rituals, and 2) mediating intra-elite communications.

Mishus play a major role in coordinating interpersonal relationships in the Chinese political process by taking care of all rituals, ceremonies, and punctilios, which are indispensable to deflect or diminish tension-provoking uncertainties when leaders come together. Mishus help establish a clear pecking order among the leaders. They "guard the gate" for the leaders so that everything one says and does is strictly in line with his relative status and

importance vis-a-via the others leaders. When leaders of different units gather together, it is the mishus' job to carefully weigh various factors and establish a proper hierarchical order, so as to minimize anxiety-arousing ambiguities and uncertainties. Mishus' skills and care are particularly indispensable for the organizing and servicing of conferences and meetings, which are occasions for leaders to meet with each other and/or with their bureaucratic subordinates for discussions, negotiations, and bargaining. In China, mishus are made exclusively responsible for organizing and servicing all conferences and meetings.

Our research demonstrates that Chinese mishus are in a position to cushion and moderate conflicts and clashes between leaders also by mediating intra-elite communications. It is generally expected and even taken for granted that there exist personality conflicts, policy disagreements, or power struggles among political leaders. Yet it is an official taboo for some leaders to band together to promote a separate interest, regional, institutional, or factional. As a result, Chinese political leaders are not supposed to meet in private too frequently except at formal meetings held at certain intervals. Any two leaders directly contacting each other with any conspicuous frequency in private will arouse suspicion of factional foul play and thus draw fire from their colleagues. Consequently, for all the fact that factionalism does exist and even often goes rampant at different times and different places in the Chinese political

arena, leaders are very cautious in their open interactions with one another, in order to avoid arousing accusation of committing this cardinal sin -- under normal circumstances. As a result, Chinese leaders have to rely heavily upon their mishus, personal and organizational, to communicate with each other in their work and even in their personal communications.

In conducting and mediating communications between leaders, mishu personnel tend, out of self-interest, to remain neutral, nonpartisan, and supportive toward all of the leaders. They usually sift out backbiting comments, dilute personal malice, and gloss over divergent opinions, so as to facilitate a workable rapport among the leaders. In this sense, Chinese mishus perform a function comparable to the institution of civil service in the Western countries, which is supposed to be above partisan politics so as to provide stability and continuity to the political system as a whole. Heads of the general offices are particularly important in reconciling clashes among the leaders.

Moreover, mishus are able to play a significant role in lubricating interpersonal interactions between leaders and bureaucrats, since they work as the go-betweens, passing upward nearly all information and requests and passing down virtually all instructions and commands. This way, chances for friction and direct confrontation between leaders and bureaucrats are reduced.

In addition to lubricating and smoothening interpersonal relationships and interactions, mishus' cushioning/integrating role is also reflected in coordination over policy issues. The mishu system is the principal carrier of institutional memory in the Chinese political process. Virtually all of leaders' past decisions, instructions, and opinions are either memorized and/or recorded and stored by mishus. In this capacity, they are made responsible for researching, drafting, and editing practically all new documents. During the process of composing an official document, mishus enjoy an extraordinary amount of discretion, so that they are entitled and required to consult each other and all the interested leaders and bureaucrats, under usual circumstances. Thanks to the institutional memory mishus preserve and to extensive consultations they are required to conduct, the Chinese decision-making process is able to maintain some measure of consistency and continuity, for all the arbitrary authority that powerful individual leaders possess and apply sporadically.

Our comparative analyses, historical and contemporary, suggest that mishus' cushioning/integrating role is a highly unique phenomenon, compared with the primary functions of staff personnel in other systems or even in ancient China. In the United States and imperial China, staff personnel function typically as major sources of tensions, frictions

and conflicts, whereas the mishu institution of China today serves as a primary cushioning/integrating mechanism.

Our findings suggest that the contrasting behavior patterns are caused or influenced by a combination of structural constraints and cultural attitudes, though any single factor is not sufficient for explaining the difference and its relative weight varies from case to case. When it comes to comparing the American and Chinese cases, the most important structural determinant is probably competitive politics versus power monopoly. Under the pressures of elective politics, political leaders tend to save for themselves the role of being nice, popular, and consistent, while leaving to their staffs the role of being tough, pushy, demanding, and changeable. In the absence of popular elections, Chinese Communist leaders tend to prefer themselves to be awed, feared, and promptly obeyed, while letting their staffs worry about bringing a measure of smoothness, consistency, coherence, and continuity to their often abrupt and arbitrary decisions and actions.

Furthermore, the Chinese mishu system itself is structured differently from its counterparts in other countries or in ancient China. The mishu institution is a unified system organizationally connecting all its units across the country. This arrangement inclines or encourages mishus everywhere to reconcile regional and institutional differences and conflicts and to coordinate with each other. In contrast, the staff systems in imperial China and the US

are privately hired assistance; as such, staff members tend to single-mindedly promote the interests of their bosses at the expense of other individuals or institutions.

Relatedly, mishus typically serve many masters. Even those personal mishus who serve individual leaders belong to the mishu squad, and thus have some obligation to take the interests and opinions of the whole leadership squad into account. In contrast, staff people elsewhere typically serve only one single master, and all they have to be concerned with is to push and fight for his interests.

Another structural constraint is career path of staff personnel. The mishu institution is arguably the most important fast track for upward mobility in the Chinese political arena of today. Mishus are young and junior people but are groomed successors for becoming political leaders. Hence, mishus generally feel it in their best interest to cautiously cultivate long-term friendships and goodwill with as many leaders as possible instead of jumping onto the bandwagon of one single leader -- under normal circumstances. By contrast, staff people elsewhere typically follow a career path different from that of their masters'. They treat their staff positions either as temporary jobs on their way to more profitable employment in other societal sectors, as in the case of American politics, or as a permanent career rather than a mere springboard into officialdom, as in the case of the mufu and the palace eunuch systems in ancient China. Following these career paths distinctive from that of

mishus', staff people tend to care more about gaining their personal reputation and accumulating de facto, not de jure, power and respect onto themselves than cautiously and humbly cultivating long-term goodwill with other political leaders. One exception to this pattern is the Grand Council institution in the Qing Dynasty, in that the Grand Councilors were indeed permanent members of the officialdom. Nevertheless, they found themselves already comfortably at the apex of the bureaucratic rank system for all their staff status vis-a-vis the emperor. This arrangement prevented them from caring greatly about playing the cushioning/lubricating role toward other officials or institutions. In all the cases above, staff members often feel it necessary to deliberately act aggressively, insensitively, and rudely toward other leaders or bureaucrats in order to prove their loyalty and reliability to their own bosses. Thus, the different career paths work to limit the cushioning/ordinating role of staff personnel in other systems and in imperial China.

In terms of cultural determinants, our findings suggest that popular attitudes and expectations toward political leaders have significant impact on the division of personae roles between leaders and their staff members.<sup>1</sup> Readers should be cautioned that the cultural explanation to be offered below may sound tautological without pinning down the

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<sup>1</sup>. The following observation is based on the insights of Lucian W. Pye's book, Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985. .

exact cause-effect sequence in a scientifically rigorous manner, but it is hoped that it can offer some heuristic insight into the dynamics of the respective leadership-staff-bureaucracy interactions under discussion.

In a society where politicians are "expendable" (or replaceable), are expected to fulfill limited utilitarian purposes, promote specific policies, and serve separate interests, and are held in low esteem, the leaders tend to jealously hold on to whatever shreds of respect and support they can amass or retain in order to get elected, stay in office, and advance their specific policies and interests, while leaving their staff members take care of the unpopular jobs and take heat on their behalf. This has been illustrated by the American case. In a society where rulers are "unexpendable" (or irreplaceable), are expected to maintain a static overarching social, political, and moral order instead of pushing for changes in one direction or another or in favor of one interest group over another, and are held in great awe and high esteem and counted upon to possess moral impeccability, the rulers tend to empower their personal staffs to play it tough and take charge of conflict-arousing, mistake-prone government affairs, while they themselves remained detached and aloof, thus minimizing chances for betraying any personal failings. This has been illustrated by the case of imperial Chinese politics.

Put in another way, in traditional China, the most important responsibility for rulers was to maintain social

and political order. Confucianism, or the official ideology, dictated that this order should be based primarily upon morality; rulers should stand at the highest echelon of this moral hierarchy and be perfect moral exemplars for their subordinates and the general populace. If in American political culture people's esteem for politicians is too low, then in imperial China, people's expectations toward the moral conduct of their rulers were unrealistically too high. The result seems to be the same, however. Both American politicians today and Chinese rulers of ancient times need badly the assistance of tough, rough-mannered staff people. "Hanging there" precariously, American politicians cannot afford to lose any more of the little public respect; claiming to be morally impeccable, ancient Chinese rulers could not afford to expose any personal failings and defects. Therefore, both rely heavily on their staffs to take care of the unpopular "dirty work" inevitably associated with politics.

Chinese political culture has, however, undergone significant change in one important respect: traditional rulers were primarily responsible for maintaining social, political, and moral order; whereas political leaders of today take it upon themselves to not only maintain order but also transform and modernize society. Consequently, cultural expectations about political leadership's role have changed significantly. In the past, an ideal ruler was expected to be a benevolent, "do nothing" (wu wei) figure; a leader today is

expected to be an activist, pusher, and taskmaster. Thus, to put it in a generalized statement, in a society where political leaders are "unexpendable" (or irreplaceable), are expected not only to maintain comprehensive order but also to carry out drastic social transformations, and are held in great awe but at the same time expected to possess personal imperfections (e.g. ignorance and ineptitude) and make blunders from time to time,<sup>2</sup> the leaders and their staffs tend to divide the personae roles between them in such a way that the leaders are supposed to be bold, pushing, demanding, experimenting, while their staffs are supposed to be discreet, soft, reconciliatory, and accommodating, thus being ever-ready to remedy any damages and smooth out any disruptions left behind by the leaders. This has been exemplified by the case of temporary Chinese politics.

Significantly, this research demonstrates that as an institution, the mishu is not only beneficial to the functioning of the Chinese political system as a whole but it also brings enormous personal benefits and advantages to individual actors -- leaders, bureaucratic subordinates, and mishu personnel themselves. Leaders enjoy extensive meticulous services and assistance from their state-provided mishus, which virtually cover every aspect of their work and

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<sup>2</sup>. The official excuse for this expected practice of incompetent cadres making foolish blunders is "paying the tuition fees" (jiao xuefei) or "learning from mistakes."

even their private livelihood. In terms of personal life support, mishus take care of their leaders' salaries, food, transport, clothing, housing, medical care, recreation, family affairs, down to funeral services. Mishus are also great beneficiaries of the institution. Young as they are, mishus are allowed into the innermost core of the Chinese authority structure, thus enjoying opportunities to learn all the political tricks, secrets, and skills necessary for success or even mere survival in the Chinese political arena. Being physically closest to leaders, mishus are in the best position to please them and win their personal trust and liking. As a result, they are rewarded with frequent promotions. Subordinate bureaucrats profit from the mishu institution in that mishus' oral communications are a critical source of clues as to the leaders' true intentions, preferences, and feelings behind the usually vague written documents. Besides, mishus' cooperation is indispensable when bureaucrats try to manipulate leaders' perceptions, decisions, and activities in favor of their separate or private interests.

Since every party can gain a great deal from it, the mishu institution has proved highly stable and consistently powerful over time, and has in turn provided to all political actors a personal sense of continuity, coherence, and anchorage or security, for all the political upheavals, drastic policy zigzags, and structural disruptions both in

the Mao times of "uninterrupted revolution" and in the Deng era of sweeping reforms.

When it comes to China's reform movement, the mishu institution provides the Chinese system two advantages: flexibility to cope with uncertainties and ambiguities and a reasonably good concentration of authority to initiate bold measures and still maintain order and stability. These two, as Susan Shirk puts it, are preconditions for success in reforming a soviet-type system: "...the political preconditions for dynamic transformation from plan to market are institutional flexibility and authority."<sup>3</sup>

Heavy dependence upon mishu support and services apparently hinders institutionalization or proceduralization of the Chinese system, causing Chinese political system to be "surprisingly flexible."<sup>4</sup> For instance, the Chinese decision-making procedure is highly fluid: who are let in and who are left out in a particular decision process is often decided on an ad hoc basis, varying from case to case. If a leader is unhappy with the decision reached by a set of participants, another process can be called upon with a different group of participants, so that a different decision can be made. Nevertheless, this flexibility has saved the Chinese top

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3. Susan L. Shirk, The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, p. 22.

4. Ibid. p. 333.

leaders from confronting two highly risky tasks. First, they did not have to drastically reorganize or dismantle a highly institutionalized and rigidified existing bureaucracy, as Gorbachev felt compelled to in the Soviet Union,<sup>5</sup> in order to implement their reform plans. "As a consequence, the Chinese processed economic reforms through the old decision-making channels."<sup>6</sup> Second, the Chinese top leaders did not feel it necessary to follow a "big bang" strategy to carry out the economic reform, but were able to adopt a gradualist approach of "crossing the river by feeling for one stone after another." The mishu institution has probably played a crucial role in making the desired flexibility possible by conducting constant oral communication, continuous adjustments, and comprehensive coordination, thus giving the Chinese system a remarkable degree of stability amidst an overabundance of ambiguities, inconsistencies, contradictions, and reversals.

In addition to flexibility, a reasonably good concentration of authority in the political leadership is indispensable for setting in motion bold reform plans, overcoming bureaucratic inertia and resistance, and maintaining political order. Susan Shirk explains:

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5. Ibid. pp. 11, 348. Although the staff role in the Soviet Union awaits further study, the findings of preliminary research suggests that it played a relatively minor role, particularly with regard to the function of cushioning, smoothening, integrating, and coordinating on a nation-wide scale, as in comparison with the Chinese mishu institution.

6. Shirk, The Political Logic, p. 12.

A second institutional desideratum for achieving economic reform is authority. Reforming an economic system cannot be done without inflicting some pain on the groups who are favored and protected by the status quo. A political system that cannot exert authority over its agents will find economic transformation an impossible task.<sup>7</sup>

In this regard, the mishu role is also highly significant. By constantly monitoring and supervising activities in bureaucracies, mishus make sure that leaders stay well informed and that bureaucrats stay within the boundaries set by the leaders. What the Chinese top leadership aims at in terms of an appropriate concentration of authority was once explained in 1989 by Li Ruihuan, a member of the Politburo standing committee:

What we are trying to do is fly a kite, not set it free. When we are flying a kite, it is still controlled by our hand. We can have many ways to control it. Our controlling ability is expressed by how far and how flexibly we can fly it.<sup>8</sup>

With the assistance of the mishu institution, the Chinese top leadership has, generally, proved capable of alternately decentralizing and recentralizing various powers, as it deems appropriate.

This research has focused on the benefits that the mishu institution brings both to the Chinese political system as a whole and to individual actors. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to regard the mishu institution as a panacea for

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7. Ibid. p. 348.

8. Quoted from Hong Yung Lee, From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 423.

all the control problems and the centrifugal forces inherent in the Chinese political process. It should be pointed out that there exists, for example, some intrinsic tension between the controlling and the cushioning roles, particularly when it comes to the relationship between leadership and bureaucracy. If mishus perform the controlling role too enthusiastically, they will certainly arouse resistance and hostility from the bureaucrats. An effective cushioning and smoothening role requires that mishus overlook or gloss over many minor deviations from leadership's preferences, which means loosening up leaders' control. Although mishus are trained to be highly skilled in striking a delicate balance between the two roles, this inherent contradiction can cause problems from time to time.

Moreover, it is a classical political dilemma everywhere in the world: "How to control the controller?" The same problem exists in Chinese politics with regard to the mishu institution. There is no question that mishus play a crucial part in amplifying political leadership' control over bureaucrats, but Chinese political principals sometimes experience difficulty of varying degrees controlling their mishus. There are occasional complaints about abuses of power by mishus, who are said "to lord it over common people," "to deliver falsified or distorted 'imperial decrees'," "to play leaders off against each other," "to advance their private

interests," and even "to violate the law."<sup>9</sup> Exercise of great de facto power appears to have, in some case, fanned desires for more power, as for example, in the recent years some mishus have advocated openly the principle of "more autonomous mishu power."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, a chronic issue in Chinese politics has been the call to curb the power of mishus.

For instance, Mao warned on many occasions: "Don't let mishus take part in politics. Don't tolerate the dictatorship by mishus (mishu zhuanzheng)."<sup>11</sup> For all his warning to others, however, Mao himself sometimes had some control problem with his own mishus. For instance, his chief personal mishu Tian Jiaying detected three major weaknesses in him. The very first one was that Mao "could manage the universe but could not manage the people around him," namely, his mishus.<sup>12</sup> The problem of controlling mishus is particularly serious when the political leadership itself is divided.

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9. Xu Ruixin et al., Zhongguo xiandai mishu gongzuo jichu (The Essentials of Contemporary Chinese Mishu Profession), Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989, p. 138.

10. Ibid. p. 138.

11. Mei Bai, "Bu yao mishu can zheng" ("Don't Let Mishus Take Part in Politics"), in Guo Simin, ed., Wo yan zhong de Mao Zedong (The Mao Zedong I Saw), Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1990, p. 85.

12. Li Rui, Lushan Huiyi Shilu (The True Record of the Lushan Conference), Changsha, 1989, p. 46.

Moreover, for all its major role in cushioning conflicts and clashes under normal circumstances, its moderating and reconciling effect is limited when infighting between hardened factional rivals heats up,<sup>13</sup> as during the Cultural Revolution. Then, some mishu may abandon their usual position of neutrality and jump onto the bandwagon of some political leaders and become partisan players against other leaders, turning the mishu institution itself into a source of tensions and frictions. The Cultural Revolution during which the entire factional Pandemonium broke loose was, in a sense, engineered in its actual details and directed on a day-to-day basis by the mishu of Mao and the mishu of his staunchest supporters. Some Chinese authors on mishu work regard the Cultural Revolution Small Group as the worst case of mishu power going awry in PRC history.<sup>14</sup>

Normally a major peace-maker and reconciliator, a general office head may at time turn into ferocious partisan figure. For instance, Wang Zhaoguo, then Central General Office director, complained: "During the Cultural Revolution and up to the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress, someone [almost certainly Wang Dongxing<sup>15</sup>] caused great

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13. This is even admitted by the Chinese author himself. See Hou Rui, Zenyang dang bangongshi zhuren (How to Work as Director of a General Office), Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1990, p. 68.

14. Xu Ruixin et al., The Essentials, p. 179.

15. Wang Dongxing was Central GO director throughout the Cultural Revolution.

strains in the relationship between the Central General Office and the various provinces and Central departments and ministries."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, a leader may deliberately place his partisan follower or henchman in charge of a general office, and then use it as his factional power base. It was no accident that in arranging for his son Lin Liguo to take over de facto command of the Chinese air force, Li Biao had the younger Lin first appointed to be a mishu of its Party Committee general office and then had him promoted to be concurrently deputy director of the same GO and deputy head of the Operations Department.<sup>17</sup> Based partly on his special status as Lin Biao's son and partly on his own control of the mishu squad, Lin Liguo was then able to dominate and bully all the leaders of the air force. The Party Committee of the air force decided that "every matter in the air force should be reported to Lin Liguo, and everything should be under his control and command." In addition, the political department of the air force adopted five injunctions: "Think of Lin Liguo all the time, ask him about everything, protect him

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16. Wang Zhaoguo, "Chongfen fahui bangongting de canmou. zhushou zuoyong" ("Give Full Play to the Role of General Offices in Providing Advice and Assistance"), in Lingdao tongzhi tan mishu gongzuo (The Remarks by Leading Comrades on Mishu Work), Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1989, p. 70.

17. Shao Yihuai, Lin Biao wangchao heimu (The Sinister Plot of Lin Biao's Imperial Court), Sichuan: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 1988, p. 23.

everywhere, take him as our leader, sincerely comply with his demands and his every command."<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, a chief leader may deliberately create divisions among the mishus so as to pit them against each other and thus keep checks and balances. This was the case with Mao, who seems to have always divided his personal mishus into two opposing sides. During the Great Leap Forward, Chen Boda, one of his major mishus, was a well-known zealot for the policy of people's communes, regarding the communes as "a new utopia," "a miracle," and "China's Sputnik." Tian Jiaying, another of Mao's major mishus, was known to be critical of the same policy. His investigation report was "as black as Chen Boda's was white," portraying the communes as "an endless list of troubles."<sup>19</sup> During the Cultural Revolution, Mao's two chief mishus were also known to be on the opposite sides of the factional line. Mao Yuanxin, his niece and political liaison mishu, was a supporter of the radical Gang of Four, while Zhang Yufeng, his confidential mishu and probably his mistress, was a sympathizer of Zhou Enlai's moderate faction.

The policy of "divide and rule" may result in ruthless competition among mishus for leaders' attention and favors.

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18. Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, Wenhua Da Geming Shinian Shi (The Ten-Year History of the Cultural Revolution), Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1986, pp. 341-342.

19. Harrison E. Salisbury, The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992, pp. 170-171.

Then, mishus may report on each other to their masters. A former confidential mishu of Mao has confessed: "There were complications in the relationship among those of us [mishus] who worked for Mao Zedong. Sometimes the conflicts could be quite fierce."<sup>20</sup> When a rectification campaign came, they apparently criticized each other relentlessly.<sup>21</sup> In an extreme case, Tian Jiaying, Mao's chief mishu, died from the persecution by Mao's other mishus.<sup>22</sup> One of his persecutors, Qi Benyu, had been reproached and demoted by Tian on an earlier occasion.<sup>23</sup>

Even under normal conditions without cutthroat factional struggles, head of a mishu squad may mean well and try to be faithful to his expected role as a major reconciliator, and yet the conflicting demands on him resulting from the convoluted interpersonal relationships may be just too difficult even for his superb human relations skills. Thus, he may make unpopular decisions that arouse tensions and

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20. Kao Zhi, "Jiang Qing wo zhineng guan bange" ("I Can Control Only Half of Jiang Qing"), in Quan Yanchi, ed., Linxiu lei (The Leader's Tears), Beijing: Qiushi chubanshe, 1989, pp. 92-93.

21. Ibid. pp. 98-99.

22. Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying" ("Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying"), in Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying (Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1989, pp. 81-82.

23. Peng Yaxin, "Tian Jiaying xiaozhuan" ("A Short Biography of Tian Jiaying"), in Dong Bian et al., eds., Mao Zedong and His Mishu Tian Jiaying, p. 329.

conflicts. For instance, considerations about economizing on the administrative budget led Wang Zhaoguo, then Central General Office director, to decide to "confine all the expenses within fifty thousand yuan" when arranging the funeral services for Marshal Liu Bocheng, who had been politically dormant for decades. Wang's decision enraged the military, who expected a much more extravagant "state funeral." As a result, "dozens of ranking army officers filed angry protests to the Center, and Deng Xiaoping had to personally intervene to smooth out the ruffled feathers."<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, the above extreme cases of mishus' misconduct should not obscure the basic fact that under normal circumstances, mishus serve, on the whole, as the primary cushioning/integrating mechanism in the Chinese political process. Even during the Cultural Revolution, a period of the worst factionalism in PRC history, most organizational mishus still managed to maintain a degree of neutrality among the clashing leaders, if only for the sake of self-protection against highly unpredictable outcomes of the political drama. Indeed, even some personal mishus tried to preserve some safety for themselves against their masters' possible fall, by secretly cooperating with their bosses' enemies. Jiang Qing's confidential mishu Yan Changgui, for example, tipped off Marshals Ye Jianying and Xu Xiangqian

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<sup>24</sup>. He Pin, "Zhonggong dui Tai gongzuo diyixian zhujiang" ("The Front-line Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Communist Party's Taiwan Affairs"), Zhongguo shibao zhoukan (China Times Weekly), No. 68 (1993), p. 71.

about Jiang's plan to search their residences and detain them, thus giving them time to make preparations and escape.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, our findings allow us to make some speculations about the prospects for the political development of China. There are three possible scenarios, which are as follows.

First, Chinese politics is moving away from charismatic authority toward legal-rational institutionalization, away from vertical authority relationship toward horizontal exchange relationship, away from the command model toward the bargaining model, away from centralization toward decentralization, away from the Center' omnipotence toward autonomy of provinces, and away from state hegemony toward freedom of society.<sup>26</sup> In the process of this development, the power allocation in the Chinese political arena is increasingly shifting in favor of the bureaucracy at the cost of the political leadership. In other words, the political leadership becomes weaker and weaker while the bureaucracy gets stronger and stronger. As a result, fragmentation and political decay set in. The political process degenerates into something like "the bargaining treadmill," "the rural

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25. Luo Ning, "Chumo yu hongse gongqiang lide renwu" ("The Shadowy Figures behind the Blood-Red Wall"), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), No. 11 (1992), p. 41.

26. A typical example of this general perception is perhaps provided by David Shambaugh, "Losing Control: The Erosion of State Authority in China," Current History, Vol. 92, No. 575 (September 1993), pp. 253-259.

country fair or market,"<sup>27</sup> or "protracted guerrilla warfare,"<sup>28</sup> with self-serving bureaucrats getting increasingly self-assertive and uncontrollable. And the whole country "is becoming an increasingly anarchic society," as "the economy continues to careen out of control," social unrest and political protests intensify, "social order is breaking down," crime rate keeps rising to "unprecedented levels," and "official, institutional, and individual corruption have all reached epidemic proportions."<sup>29</sup> The worst imaginable outcome is a total disintegration of the whole political system (as has befallen the Communist countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union), which may even lead to a civil war.

With the 89-year-old Deng rapidly approaching his death and an inevitable succession struggle already afoot or in the offing, this scenario is particularly inviting. For that matter, this is the dominant view at the present. In this scenario, the cushioning/integrating role of the mishu institution is greatly weakened, and mishus are divided among themselves and become fierce partisan players, fighting with

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27. David M. Lampton, "Chinese Politics: The Bargaining Treadmill," Issues and Studies, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1987), p. 12.

28. David M. Lampton, "A Plum for a Peach: Bargaining, Interest, and Bureaucratic Politics in China," in Kenneth G. Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, eds., Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China, California: University of California Press, 1992, p. 37.

29. David Shambaugh, "Losing Control," pp. 253-259.

each other and supporting different factions of political leaders.

A second scenario is that there emerges a new charismatic strongman, while mishus jump overwhelmingly onto his bandwagon and rally around him. With the firm support of the mishus and some colleagues, he removes his political rivals and smashes the resistance of the bureaucracy, thus establishing another totalitarian regime. This is obviously the least plausible scenario. Unlikely as it may appear, however, this scenario was indeed realized in imperial China, when some emperors came to the throne or acquired domination over the state bureaucracy depending almost entirely upon the assistance and support of palace eunuchs. Even today, given its formidable Central Security Bureau (also known as Unit 8341) and its extensive information, intelligence, and communication networks, the Central General Office is certainly a crucial factor in determining the outcome of the succession struggle, and after that, consolidating the power of the new paramount leader.

Our third scenario is that thanks to the controlling and cushioning/integrating roles of the mishu institution, the Chinese political leadership retains sufficient authority but allows ample flexibility for bureaucracies at all levels to vigorously pursue their separate interests, hence the model of "authority without immobilism."<sup>30</sup>

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30. The term was first used probably by Susan Shirk, The Political Logic, p. 349.

This scenario is supported by the findings of this dissertation, which suggest that the political development in China's leadership-bureaucracy relationship is not necessarily unidirectional -- one way or the other. It is true that the Chinese political leadership has lost much of its arbitrary power over the bureaucracy and the Chinese authority structure is more diversified, diffused, and fragmented today than under Mao. Nonetheless, with adequate and competent staff assistance, leaders can retain, and even enlarge in some aspects, their power to exercise effective control and leadership over their bureaucratic subordinates. And with adequate and competent mishu assistance, Chinese leaders are capable of maintaining a reasonably good degree of coherence, integration, and coordination of the political system as a whole, in spite of apparent fragmentation, contradictions, conflicts, fluctuations, confusion, and reversals.

Harry Harding once wrote: "Thus a veneer of unity, which masks a cauldron of conflict underneath, often characterizes Chinese politics. In short, Chinese politics is usually less stable than it appears."<sup>31</sup> But this study of the mishu role suggests that with the help of the controlling and cushioning/integrating roles of the mishu institution, Chinese politics may turn out to be more stable than it appears.

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31. Harry Harding, China's Second Revolution: Reform After Mao, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1987, p. 289.