

China: Deng Works to Make His Policies Survive Him

Deng Xiaoping remains the dominant, driving political force in China. At 77, his first priority is to ensure that reliable successors will continue his work after he dies. In the last eighteen months, Deng has engineered the removal of Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng, from his top jobs and replaced him with a party chairman and premier of Deng's own choosing. To keep his designated heirs in power, Deng is spearheading efforts to reform the bureaucracy and economy and to reduce further the political influence of the army.

Resistance to Deng's Reforms

There is strong resistance to Deng's personnel appointments and reform program. Party conservatives object to the pace and scope of the changes in China's economy and society since 1979, fearing they will threaten the party's grip on power as in Poland. To a certain extent, Deng shares these concerns himself.

"Leftist leaders," who <sup>advocate</sup> ~~were beneficiaries~~ of Mao's radical policies of the late 1960s, are fundamentally opposed to Deng's reforms, but they are relatively few in number ~~and getting smaller all the time~~. Millions of mid-level officials who feel threatened by Deng's changes are a far greater obstacle to Deng's policies.

In order to win key jobs for his own men, Deng compromised on his more controversial policies with his critics, particular party conservatives. This limits Deng's freedom to maneuver.

### The Military

The military poses special problems. Elements within the army leadership are unhappy with <sup>the</sup> choice of Hu Yaobang to be Party Chairman. Because of Hu's low standing with the military, Deng has had to take charge of the party's military commission himself. Armymen have argued with the reformers on some bread-and-butter issues, including cuts in defense spending, and accommodations have been made. The military would also like to see more emphasis on ideology, and many are unhappy with the criticism of Mao that has occurred since 1980. While it requires special attention, the army at present does not constitute a dangerous, unified opposition.

Deng is also trying to upgrade the quality of the military, a program that has considerable military support. Bloated units of the army are being pressed to meet higher performance standards, retire elderly commanders, and demobilize excess and unskilled troops.

### Mixed Results in the Economy

The party's leaders have resigned themselves to another year of low growth and a sizeable budget deficit. Economic policymakers had originally hoped to complete a readjustment of the economy by next year, but they now realize that it will take significantly longer. The emphasis will remain on consumer-oriented programs, but economic leaders agree that the large cuts made in heavy industry investment were too great. This slow-growth scenario leaves little cushion for exigencies and will make restructuring the economy more difficult. Attempts to

restrict the size of bonuses or to raise the price of some staples to reduce the deficit run the risk of worker unrest.

#### Government Reorganization

With his men in place at the top, Deng is moving to reduce opposition to his program in the middle levels of the bureaucracy. Beijing has announced its intention to reduce the size of the bureaucracy and the number of ~~its~~ agencies. Essentially a purge of political enemies in the guise of disinterested reform, this will be a major test of Deng's group. Given the compromises Deng has made to get this far, it is extremely unlikely he will reach his maximum goals.

By pressing ahead, Deng nonetheless retains political momentum. With his opponents on the defensive, Deng intends to divide and neutralize enough of them to reduce the threat to his chosen successors.

#### What if Deng Leaves the Scene?

Deng needs the next several years to accomplish his basic objectives. If he departs in the next few years, party Chairman Hu Yaobang may have a hard time hanging on. Should the reform coalition fall apart, the outlook would not necessarily be drastic for the US. Beijing's fundamental anti-Soviet orientation appears firm. The Chinese appear more determined than ever to expand their trade and technology transfer with the West, although they are concerned about the social consequences of such contacts.

The lack of a coherent coalition to step into the breach, however, would complicate China's dealings with the US. As leaders struggled for dominance, US-China relations would encounter indecision, delay and increased caution.

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