Towards a Non-zero-sum Interactive Framework of Spatial Politics: the Case of Centre–Province in Contemporary China

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This paper proposes an interactive, non-zero-sum framework to understand an important facet of spatial politics in contemporary China: the central-provincial relationship. The 'conventional wisdom' of the field, it is argued, confuses the role of coercion in the exercise of power, and assumes a static, zero-sum central-provincial relationship. Changes are merely cyclical, and hopes for genuine changes are pinned on *ad hoc* factors such as the arrival of 'enlightened' leaders. Drawing on Parsons' insights on the concept of power, the article outlines a new approach which sees the forces of genuine changes as residing within the institutional system. It interprets the central-provincial relationship as a non-zero-sum, interactive process of conflicts and compromises, whereby genuine changes to the relationship are made.

What degree of power does the provincial government command within the Chinese political system, and what is the nature of this power? This is the fundamental question which runs through the literature of central-provincial relations in contemporary China. In trying to understand this power relationship, analysts have often dwelt on the roles of provincial leaders and the nature of the political system within which they operate. This paper examines how the existing literature has addressed and answered the following questions. To what extent do provincial leaders act as the loyal agents of the Centre, and, conversely, as representatives of their province? How can we make sense of the prevalence of bargaining behaviour between the Centre and the provinces, and the intensity of conflicts in their interactions? Do the instances of China's previous disintegration, and the emergence of separatist movements in some provinces, signal a movement towards independence by the provinces, or do they represent the reaction of provincial forces to a weak Centre? How should these tensions between the Centre and the provinces be interpreted? Moreover, by what approach may changes in the balance of power between the Centre and the provinces be better understood?

The paper argues that the literature has, by and large, failed to reconcile the co-existence of two apparently contradictory phenomena: on the one hand, complex bargaining activities between the Centre and provinces, with the latter often winning concessions from the former; on the other hand, the undeniable superior power of the Centre as witnessed during occasional 'crackdowns'. The

major shortcoming of the existing literature stems from its interpretation of the concept of power. A recurring problem has been whether the asymmetrical relationship between the Centre and the provinces is of a zero-sum nature.

The Development of Central-provincial Studies

The development of Western studies on China's post-1949 central-provincial relations has been heavily influenced by Western studies on the Chinese political system in general.[1] This was true of the 'totalitarian' literature of the 1950s and 1960s, the 'pluralist' and 'conflict' approach of the late 1960s and 1970s, and the reform studies of the 1980s.

Totalitarian Literature: Provincial Leaders as Agents of the Centre

From the 1950 to early 1960s a model of totalitarianism derived from studies of the Soviet Union dominated China studies and resulted in a three-fold image of the post-1949 political system: the pervasiveness of Marxist–Leninist–Maoist ideology, great centralization of political power and an unprecedented penetration of the state into society. This early literature attempted to explain the success of the Chinese revolution in terms of ideology, leaders and organization. The central-provincial relationship was seen as one between superordinate and the subordinate. The provincial government, as the major intermediate level between the Centre and the vast rural expanse, was perceived as the Centre's agent.

This literature did not, however, deny that the intermediate level of government was granted some discretion in policy decisions. Barnett, for instance, when describing the post-1949 Chinese system as totalitarian, admitted that the degree of autonomy granted to provincial departments by central ministries was at times substantial.[2] Similarly, Schurmann recognized the importance of decentralization between the central and lower levels of government even when power in the 1950s was generally considered to be highly centralized.[3]

The nature and extent of provincial power as envisaged in the totalitarian model was, however, pretty limited. The literature assumed a hierarchy in the formulation and implementation of policy.[4] Policy formulation was *by definition* the job of the Centre, with provinces allowed to exercise initiative and innovation only when implementing these policies. Analysts argued that accusations of localism in Chinese politics often merely camouflaged changes within the

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[1] In this discussion, for practical reasons the coverage will mostly be on studies conducted in the United States, Britain, and to a lesser extent Australia. The discussion on the China studies literature draws heavily from D. Shambaugh (ed.), *American Studies of Contemporary China* (Armonk NY, Sharpe, 1993); Victor Nee and D. Stark, 'Towards an Institutional Analysis of State Socialism' in Nee and Stark (eds), *Remaking the Economic Institutions of Socialism: China and Eastern Europe* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 1–31; M. Oksenberg, 'Politics Takes Command: an Essay on the Study of Post-1949 China' in J. K. Fairbank and Roderick MacFarquhar (eds), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 14* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 543–90; H. Harding, 'The study of Chinese politics: towards a third generation of scholarship', *World Politics*, 36, no. 2 (1984), 284–307.

[2] A. D. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China* (New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 72.

[3] F. Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press, new, enlarged ed., 1968).

[4] Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization*, p. 216; Barnett, *Cadres*, p. 74.

Centre.[5] According to this argument, provincial leaders accused of 'localism' often only fell prey to the 'house-cleaning purges' of the new central leadership, having implemented the central policies of an earlier time. In the final analysis, since the source of power was at the Centre, the provinces were seen as completely at the mercy of the Centre, enjoying 'no inviolable autonomy'.[6]

Pluralist Literature: the Province as a Coerced and Responsive Entity

The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution revealed the vast mix of interests within the Chinese political system. The experience of the Cultural Revolution demonstrated that actors outside the Centre could influence events. In order to explain the new phenomenon a new theory was needed. In the pioneering steps of Soviet studies, China scholars turned to pluralist theory for new tools to understand the dynamics of the Cultural Revolution.[7] Provincial leaders were analysed as groups with interests of their own to advance.[8] Others disagreed with the notion of interest groups,[9] and a wide range of models developed in the search for an explanation of central-provincial relations.[10]

This search for an explanation focused on the question of whether provincial officials acted on behalf of the Centre or the provinces. To what extent did provincial leaders work with the Centre on a basis of mutual support within an insecure and volatile political environment? To what extent were provincial leaders advocates and spokesmen of provinces advancing provincial interests? If the various provincial leaders possessed similar interests, did they undertake collective actions similar to a typical interest group in the West?

Some studies in this period emphasized the success of provincial manoeuvres against central demands,[11] the existence of provincial 'autarchical' tendencies,

[5] See for instance F. Teiwes, The purge of provincial leaders, 1957–1958', *China Quarterly,* 27 (1966), 14–32.

[6] Barnett, *Cadres,* p. 73.

[7] For a pioneering Soviet study using the pluralist theory to analyse the Soviet political system, see Franklyn Griffiths and Gorden Skilling (eds), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1971).

[8] The first explicit attempt to borrow the analytical tools of pluralism and interest group literature on the Western political system in China political studies is D. S. G. Goodman (ed.) *Groups and Politics in the People's Republic of China* (Armonk NY, Sharpe, 1984); followed by V. C. Falkenheim (ed.), *Citizens and Groups in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor, Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987).

[9] A notable opponent is Lucian Pye, who maintained the inappropriateness of trying to understand Chinese politics, and therefore central-provincial relations, as bureaucratic politics. Provincial leaders formed part of the vertically organized factions, instead of part of the horizontally organized interest groups. See L. Pye, *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge MA, Oelgeschlager, Gunn, and Hain, 1981).

[10] The search for appropriate conceptions of the role of provincial leades in the political system was part of a larger search for appropriate conceptions of the classification and alignment of actors when the homogeneous image of totalitarianism broke down. For a discussion of the models, see H. Harding, 'Competing models of the Chinese communist policy process: towards a sorting and evaluation', *Issues and Studies,* 20, no. 22 (1984), 13–36; and J. Bryan Starr, 'From the Tenth Party Congress of the Premiership of Hua Kuo-feng: the significance of the colour of the cat'. *China Quarterly,* 67 (September 1976), 98–114.

[11] See for instance Parris H. Chang, 'Provincial Party Leaders' Strategies for Survival during the Cultural Revolution' in R. A. Scalopino (ed.), *Elites in the People's Republic of China* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1972), pp. 501–39; D. Shambaugh, *The Making of a Premier: Zhao Ziyang's Provincial Career* (Boulder CO, Westview, 1984); and D. S. G. Goodman, 'The Provincial Revolutionary Committee in the People's Republic of China, 1967–1979: an obituary', *China Quarterly,* 85 (March 1981), 48–79.

and the limits of central control.[12] Most works, however, argued for central dominance over the provinces, where the balance of roles between central agent and provincial spokesman weighed in favour of the former.[13] Teiwes, for instance, claimed that provincial leaders were purged during the 1950s because, as a result of the ascendancy of different groups of central leaders, the policies at the Centre had changed too rapidly for provincial leaders at a distance from the power centre to follow.[14] Teiwes found a lower level of élite turnover in richer provinces and interpreted this as a possible confirmation of the view of a predominant Centre over the provinces. Provincial leaders were 'basically' responsive to the Centre, because 'the rules of the game stressing provincial responsiveness to the center are clear'.[15] Those that could more successfully respond to central demands enjoyed a better chance of political survival.

Similarly, in his case studies of Sichuan and Guizhou at the period preceding the Cultural Revolution, Goodman found little evidence of provincial power.[16] Provincial variations were often centrally mandated flexibilities and policy experiments, rather than an 'exercise of provincial political power'.[17] Provincial conditions might have affected the form of these variations, but their effect was primarily either to *constrain* or *facilitate* the ability of provincial leaders in responding to central policies. Therefore, according to Goodman, Guizhou's provincial first secretary, Zhou Lin, was removed in 1965 because he had been ineffective in carrying out the expected job of a central agent. The poverty and lower degree of social integration of Guizhou constrained the ability of provincial leaders to act as a central agent; whilst Sichuan's relative wealth and social homogeneity enhanced its leaders' ability to respond to the demands of the Centre.[18]

The unanswered question is: why were provincial leaders 'responsive' to the Centre? What led these studies to conclude that central predominance prevailed, when the ability of provincial leaders to engage in various strategies of self-protection and enhancement against unwelcome central control had been so thoroughly exposed during the conflicts of Cultural Revolution? Why should provincial responsiveness be a sign of provincial weakness, as the 'central predominance thesis' implied, rather than of provincial strength?[19]

[12] G. W. Skinner, 'Marketing and social structure in rural China', parts I–III, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 24 (1964–65); A. Donnithorne. 'Central Economic Control in China' in Ruth Adams (ed.), *Contemporary China* (London, Peter Owen, 1969); Donnithorne, 'China cellular economy: some economic trends since the Cultural Revolution', *China Quarterly*, 52 (1972), 605–19.

[13] In D. M. Lampton's case studies of six upwardly mobile leaders, half of which had strong territorial power bases, it is concluded that the six secured their advancement in the political system by largely serving as followers. See D. M. Lampton, *Paths to Power: Elite Mobility in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor, Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1986), p. 294.

[14] Teiwes. 'The Purge of Provincial Leaders'; 'Provincial Politics in China: Themes and Variations', in John M. H. Lindbeck (ed.), *China: Management of a Revolutionary Society* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1972), pp. 116–89.

[15] Teiwes, 'The purge of provincial leaders', p. 177.

[16] D. S. G. Goodman, *Centre and Province in the People's Republic of China: Sichuan and Guizhou, 1955 1965* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[17] Goodman, *Centre and Province*, p. 23.

[18] Goodman, *Centre and Province*, p. 20.

[19] An alternative view favouring an interpretation of provincial strength was put forward by P. Chang, 'Decentralization of power', *Problems of Communism*, 21, no. 4 (1972), 67–75; but this is a relatively lone voice. An example of the 'mainstream' opposing view is found in V. C. Falkenheim, 'Continuing central predominance', *Problems of Communism*, 21 no. 4 (1972), 75–83.

An explicit answer was given by Falkenheim, who argued that '(t)he case for provincial power ... requires that it be shown to be autonomous. This case is difficult to make in the face of the historically clear ability of the central government to exact compliance ... and to remove (provincial leaders) from office when necessary.'[20] Therefore, the Centre's command of coercive force, in the form of the power to hire and fire provincial leaders, and, as a last resort, the ability to deploy the military to suppress opposition, prescribed clearly the 'rules of the game' under which provincial leaders were seen to be responsive to the Centre in order better to advance their self interests.

The dominant view was, therefore, of an authoritarian unitary state where the Centre could freely impose its command of coercive force to extract compliance. Provinces were in an inherently inferior and disadvantaged position. Local requirements would affect the behaviour of provincial leaders only because provincial leaders could not ignore local conditions in their efforts to implement national policy. The dominance of the Centre was, therefore, a foregone conclusion. According to this view, the ability of provincial leaders to engage in a wide range of self-preservation strategies in conditions of conflict merely demonstrated the responsiveness of provincial leaders to shifts in both policy and power configurations at the Centre. The literature did not deny the existence of 'parochical' provincial interests. Those could be the personal interests of provincial leaders for political advancement and physical survival, or provincial leaders' perceptions of the interest of the province.[21] But these 'local requirements' were not considered as constituting autonomous provincial power. They were no match for the coercive power commanded by the Centre. The emergent dominant image of provincial leaders was, therefore, of a group of agents responsive to the Centre, albeit through coercion.

Reform Implementation Studies: Province as the Unequal Bargaining 'Partner'

The 1980s saw an unprecedented relaxation of restrictions on field research as a concomitant to economic liberalization. The move towards 'new institutionism' in the discipline of political science renewed interest in the effect of state structures on the formulation and implementation of policies. As a result, China scholars turned to studying the importance of institutions, adding this to their previous emphasis on leadership and élite preferences. The resultant

Similarly, Donnithorne's view of a cellular socio-economic structure with decentralized political authority in the provinces was disputed by other economists. See N. Lardy, 'Centralization and decentralization in China's fiscal management', *China Quarterly*, 61 (March 1975), 25–60; 'Reply', *China Quarterly*, 66 (1976), 340–54.

[20] Falkenheim, 'Provincial Leadership in Fukien: 1949–66' in Scalapino, *Elite in the People's Republic of China*, p. 202.

[21] For an insightful discussion of the meaning of 'provincial interest', see P. Ferdinand, 'Interest Groups and Chinese Politics' in Goodman (ed.), *Groups and Politics in the People's Republic of China* (Armonk NY, Sharpe, 1984), pp. 18–9. Ferdinand argues that since it is impossible to determine with any certainty the motives of any individual's action, it is immaterial to attempt to limit the definition of provincial interest to the 'self-interests' of individual leaders, or to the subjective perception of leaders of what should be in the 'public interest' of the province. In other words, provincial interest simply means a *conscious* desire on the part of provincial leaders to have public policy move in a specific direction. The motives of the leaders, whether they are acting for self or public interest, are irrelevant because the two are often mixed and indistinguishable in real terms.

literature has highlighted the complex and multifaceted relationships between bureaucratic actors in the political system in the formulation and implementation of policies.[22] Not only did analysts find it necessary to account for the obvious gaps between reform policies as formulated and the results of their implementation; they also found it difficult to define exactly what constituted 'failures of implementation'.[23] Indeed, if there is no clear chain of command in the political system, any clear distinction between policy formulation and implementation is inevitably elusive.

The literature, nevertheless, persevered with the traditional separation of policy formulation and implementation, albeit with multiple qualifications and redefinitions. The Centre was considered to be the point of policy formulation, and the provinces that of implementation. Central-provincial relations were pictured as involving intense inter-agency bargaining. The image was one of 'a center forced to bargain with very powerful localities',[24] who were able to distort central policies to their advantage. Naughton described the Chinese system as characterized by a strong 'implementation bias', as central policies were distorted in ways advantageous to their implementors.[25] Similarly, when discussing tax policy reforms, Bachman noted the rule of an 'iron law of autarky' as local authorities deliberately withheld revenues that should, in theory, have gone to the central coffers.[26] The prevalence of bargaining behaviour and the propensity of lower level authorities to abort and distort central reform policies led Lieberthal and Lampton to characterize Chinese politics as a 'fragmented authoritarianism' model.[27] While the Chinese system was portrayed as necessarily authoritarian, such authority was nevertheless seen as highly fragmented in the 'no man's land' between the very top and the very bottom.

This model of 'fragmented authoritarianism', with its picture of powerful provinces, has to a large extent opposed the previously dominant 'central predominance' model. Indeed, Lieberthal regarded the model of 'fragmented authoritarianism' as an attempt to synthesize two competing models: one focused on élite preferences and offered a centralized and top-down view, the other argued for a decentralized and 'cellular' socio-economic

[22] Major works taking the institutional approach include: D. M. Lampton, 'Chinese politics: the bargaining treadmill', *Issues and Studies*, 23, no. 3 (1987), 11–41; Lampton (ed.), *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1987); K. Lieberthal and M. Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1988); Zhao Suisheng, 'The feeble political capacity of a strong one-party regime – an institutional approach toward the formulation and implementation of economic policy in post-Mao mainland China', *Issues and Studies*, Parts I and II, 26, nos. 1–2 (1990), 47–80, 35–74; Lieberthal and Lampton (eds), *Bureaucracy, Politics and Decision-Making in Post-Mao China* (Berkeley CA, University Press, 1992); and S. Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1993).

[23] See D. M. Lampton, 'The Implementation Problem in Post-Mao China' in Lampton, *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, pp. 5–7.

[24] S. M. Goldstein, 'Reforming socialist system: some lessons of the Chinese experience', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 21, no. 2 (1988), p. 228.

[25] B. Naughton, 'Decline of Central Control over Investment in Post-Mao China', in Lampton, *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, pp. 52–3.

[26] Bachman, 'Implementing Chinese Tax Policy', in Lampton, *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, p. 144.

[27] Lieberthal, 'Introduction: The "Fragmented Authoritarianism Model"' in Lieberthal and Lampton, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 8, 20.

structure.[28] 'Fragmented authoritarianism' drew on both of these earlier approaches, by retaining the authoritarian view of the state whilst emphasizing the fragmented nature of power distribution *within* the state. As Vivienne Shue has shown, the central state never had an effective reach over the vast rural expanse at the periphery, before or after 1978.[29] The socio-economic-political structure of Maoist China was 'honeycombed and cellular'; and in the post-Mao period, it has been 'fragmented'. The continuity is obvious.

This continuity applies also to actors' behaviour. The wider policy context differed in Maoist China and post-Mao China: there was a shift from class struggle to economic reform. However, the manner in which ostensibly disparate actors tailored their behaviour so as to maximize their perceived interest was remarkably similar.[30] Provincial leaders during the Cultural Revolution and during the post-Mao reforms were equally 'Machiavellian'. During the Cultural Revolution, provincial leaders emulated the revolutionary rhetoric of the Centre, cultivating 'royalist' rebel groups whilst suppressing those hostile to them. They 'waved the red flag in order to oppose the red flag'. During the reform period, provincial leaders have both supported and opposed reforms. They supported those reforms which advanced their perceived interests and opposed those working against them. Moreover, when opposing unwanted reforms, provincial leaders manipulated the language of reform in the same way as their predecessors had manipulated the language of political struggle. They would stress for example, the adverse effects of the unwelcome reforms on the 'enthusiasm' of subordinates to increase production. During the Cultural Revolution, provincial leaders had suppressed 'hostile' rebel groups by declaring them 'counter-revolutionaries'. The events of both periods show that provincial leaders were not passive actors. Rather than merely responding to central demands, provincial leaders mobilized substantial resources for their own use. Their lower status in the state hierarchy might have made them the weaker partner of the bargaining relationship with the Centre. However, despite the disparity in theoretical power, the provinces have shown themselves to have no small measure of power in their own right.

Unresolved Questions

Indeterminacy of Provincial Power

Through the successive models of 'central agent' to 'responsive province', to asymmetrical bargaining with the Centre, Western China scholars have deepened their understanding of the position of the provinces within the Chinese political system. It has been recognized that provinces did, in fact, wield power. However, this conclusion was often based on observations of discrepancies between pronounced central policy objectives and the outcome of implementation, as well as on the frequent expositions of 'localistic behaviour'

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[28] Lieberthal, 'Introduction: The "Fragmented Authoritarianism" Model', pp. 10–1.

[29] V. Shue, *The Reach of the State* (Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 1988).

[30] Reference about the framework of bargaining in post-Mao China is found in S. Shirk, 'The Chinese Political System and the Political Strategy of Economic Reform' in Lieberthal and Lampton, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 59–91. Details of the Machiavellian strategies of provincial leaders and how they usurped the language of Maoist leadership in the effort of self-preservation during the 1966–1968 period are found in the illuminating article of Chang, 'Provincial Party Leaders' Strategies for Survival'.

of provincial and lower level officials by central officials during the post-Mao reform period. While discrepancies *of some kind* undoubtedly existed, a suitable approach regarding the interpretation of the *meaning* of such discrepancies has remained elusive. How should we assess the significance of the prevalence of provincial bargaining behaviour in the context of central-provincial power relations? What is meant when provinces are described as powerful *but* unequal bargaining partners? Did the implementation literature and, in particular, the 'fragmented authoritarianism' model, imply that provinces were *in the process* of gaining more power, *but still had not approached a level* which would make them equal bargaining partners with the Centre?

The fact that these important questions are as yet unanswered suggests an indeterminate element in the understanding of central-provincial relationship. On the one hand, the implementation literature has made a strong case for provincial power. Provincial leaders were undoubtedly not *merely* central agents. On the other hand, the literature maintained that the central leadership continued to play a dominant role. It found that, in many instances, 'higher-level leaders were able to impose their will on lower levels without serious institutional constraints'.[31] Therefore, the power of the provinces during the reform period might still only amount to another form of 'delegated provincial flexibilities'. The decline of central control, according to this argument, was but the result of voluntary self-restraint by the Centre in its exercise of power over the provinces. For instance, Naughton argued that the central leadership 'have shown themselves *willing* to accept a dramatic decline in their own control over investment resources in the pursuit of the elusive goals of "reform". The struggles between the Center and locality for control ... thus remain funda-mentally unequal because the Center fights with one hand tied behind its back' (emphasis added).[32] The apparent conclusion on the central-provincial relationship was that the substantial power which the provinces were seen to have enjoyed was merely a result of central policy. As and when the Centre decided otherwise, and as long as the central leadership was not weakened by divisions among its own ranks, the will of the Centre should invariably prevail.[33]

It is, however, unconvincing entirely to attribute the power of provinces to the decision of the central leadership not to impose its will. To suggest such immediately leads one to ask: why have the central leaders not acted sooner and more decisively in curbing the 'power' of the provinces about whom they frequently and openly complained?

It is ironic that after the documentation of numerous instances of 'localistic' behaviour, and subsequent rejection of the earlier view of a highly centralized political system (at least for politics within the state bureaucracy below the apex), the understanding of central-provincial relations has turned full circle. The difficulty is that, apparently, either way of understanding central-provincial relations – central predominance or provincial power – stands on similarly slippery ground. A conclusion acknowledging provincial power disputes the

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[31] Lieberthal, 'Introduction: The "Fragmented Authoritarianism" Model', p. 16.

[32] Naughton, 'The Decline of Central Control', p. 78.

[33] In this connection see D. Zweig, 'Context and Content in Policy Implementation: Household Contracts and Decollectivation, 1977–1983', in Lampton, *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, pp. 255–83. Zweig argues that élite constancy, commitment, and attention were crucial factors to successful implementation of agricultural responsibility policy.

obvious superiority of central power, particularly taking into account the Centre's capacity to appoint and dismiss provincial leaders, and when necessary, to deploy the army to obtain compliance. However, a conclusion arguing for continued central predominance is equally unsatisfactory. It is unsatisfactory because it is almost tautologically true, other than in the extreme case of secessionist movements and the break-up of China as a unified nation. Moreover, if one concludes that provincial discretion makes no substantive difference to the central-provincial relationship, it is still necessary to state precisely what differences discretion does make. There is obviously a need to explain the *meaning* of the discretionary behaviour.

The Inability to Explain Change

As a result of this failure to make sense of the meaning of bargaining activities and increasing provincial discretion, the secondary literature has been unable to account for changes within the central-provincial relationship. It may reasonably be surmised that bargaining activities have significance, and they do make some difference. But the question is: what kind of difference? Some scholars have attributed the difficulty of identification and explanation to data deficiency.[34] It has been argued that inadequate access to information on the pre-reform period (before 1978) has disabled analysts from assessing the full extent of continuity and change before and after post-Mao reform. However, data deficiency is not the only problem, and is certainly not the sole source of the difficulty in accounting for change. The problem lies more in the literature itself. This can be shown by imagining a hypothetical situation. Suppose it were possible to obtain enough data on the Maoist period to compare the extent of provincial power during both periods. Two crucial problems would remain unresolved. First, by what yardstick can we compare the power of provinces and the power of the Centre, and thereby arrive at a view of the relative balance of power? The root of the question is: what constitutes 'power'? The literature on central-provincial relations has so far tended to be ambivalent on the question of what constitutes the power of the provinces, whilst being unanimous in stressing the importance of the coercive power of the Centre over the provinces. With this predisposition, the balance of power will inevitably tilt in the Centre's favour. The second problem is that comparison is likely to show variations over different periods. The question is how to make sense of the variations. Does this mean that the development of provincial power may be conceived on some sort of continuum? If there is a higher occurrence of provincial discretion during the reform period, does this then amount to an incremental accumulation of provincial power vis-à-vis the power of the Centre? The implementation literature has apparently answered in the affirmative, and the assumption of some kind of unilinear, evolutionary framework of central-provincial relations is evident within that literature.[35]

The simplicity of a linear model is disturbing. It is disturbing because it suggests, implicitly at least, that as fragmentation forces accumulate, the forces

[34] Lieberthal, 'Introduction: The "Fragment Authoritarianism" Model', pp. 25–7.

[35] This is pointed out by Goldstein, 'Reforming socialist systems', p. 231. Lieberthal was clearly thinking in unilinear terms when he wrote, 'The fragmentation (of the political system) has not reached the point where its constituent parts have the legitimate autonomy characteristics of a pluralist system.' Lieberthal, 'Introduction: The "Fragmented Authoritarianism" Model', p. 12.

of centralization will *in due course* be overwhelmed. The unanswered question is how this 'overwhelming' can be effected. On this the evolutionary model remains silent. As Lieberthal himself rightly noted, the gap between fragmentation and legitimate autonomy is huge. More fragmentation will *not* automatically bring about legitimate autonomy.

Towards an Interactive Framework

The failure of the central-provincial relations literature to explain the meaning of provincial discretionary behaviour and to account for change are the result of theoretical confusions over the conception of power. First, confusion has arisen over the role of coercion within a power relationship. This is behind the tautology of the thesis of 'continued central predominance'. Second, most studies of central-provincial relations see power as zero-sum and adopt a centrist perspective. The result is a static picture of central-provincial relations where the Centre and the provinces are in a seemingly endless cycle of conflict. We need to identify the implicit concept of power within the central-provincial literature, and to suggest an alternative concept to provide a better analytical tool through which to understand central-provincial relations.

Coercion and Power

A central question in this discussion is: what is the relationship between coercion and the concept of power? Scholars writing on China's central-provincial relations have generally avoided explicit discussion of their specific concept of power. In most cases when explicit reference has been made to the sources and bases of power of the Centre or the provinces, it has been based on Dahl's notion of power 'between the lines'.

It should be recalled that Dahl understands 'power' in terms of its four aspects: the base of power, means of power, amount of power, and scope of power.[36] The base of an actor's power 'consists of all the resources, acts, objects, etc. – that he or she can exploit in order to affect the behaviour of another'.[37] A major characteristic of the base of power is that it is 'inert, passive'. To activate the base, therefore, an actor has to engage in some actions. Such actions engaged are the 'means of power'. For instance, while the ability to exercise patronage and the option of a veto are amongst the bases of power available to the President of the United States over the Senate, the President has nevertheless to pledge *promises* of patronage, or indicate a *threat* of veto in his attempt to influence the Senate. Therefore 'the means is a mediating activity by A between A's base and B's response'.[38] Meanwhile, the 'scope' of A's power refers to the reach of A's means of power, and what possible responses B might make. The resultant ability of A to bend B to its will constitutes the 'amount' of A's power.

The similarity between Dahl's concept of power and that employed by the central-provincial relations literature is obvious. In the literature, the sources of

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[36] Robert A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', originally in *Behavioral Science*, (1957), 201 15, reprinted in Bell, Edwards, and Harrison (eds), *Political Power: A Reader in Theory and Research*, (New York, Free, 1969), p. 80.

[37] Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', p. 81.

[38] Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', p. 81.

central control are often identified as: (1) the power of the Centre to appoint and dismiss provincial leaders, (2) the Centre's effective control of physical forces of coercion, specifically the military, (3) the Centre's control over the propaganda apparatus, and (4) the Centre's control over key economic resources.[39] Meanwhile, the sources of provincial autonomy are (1) the sheer size of the country, (2) the cumulative result of temporary grants of authority by the Centre in the past, and (3) its intermediate position within the state hierarchy, which makes the province 'the gatekeeper guarding and providing access (of the Centre) to local levels'.[40] A shift in terminology reveals that these 'sources of power' are actually Dahl's 'bases of power' by another name.

The strength of Dahl's concept of power lies in its distinctions between the different aspects of power. Since the 'base of power' is inert and passive, it is *irrelevant* to the 'amount of power' A is able to exert on B unless it is effectively activated by some 'means of power'. Therefore, while the 'base of power' encompasses *all* resources A may *potentially* employ in order to effect the behaviour of B, the extent of power A eventually exercises over B depends very much on what 'means' of power A possesses, and how effective these are. There is hence a significant gap between one's *bases* of power and the *amount* of power one actually has over others, the gap depending on the *means*, which is the mediating process, and the variables which affect it.

The danger of employing Dahl's concept of power is greatest when one is not sensitive to these distinctions. This is the major problem in the literature on central-provincial relations.[41] In such cases the base of power is often confused with the amount of power actually exercised. The lists of sources of central and provincial power noted above include all identifiable sources of *potential* power upon which the Centre and provinces may draw in their interactions with one another. However, analysts have neither identified nor explained the mediating process by which the sources of power are mobilized in particular circumstances. Rather than being identified as the dependent variable in accordance with Dahl's concept, the base of power has been taken as the independent variable through which to understand the meaning of bargaining activity between the Centre and the provinces. On taking the base of power as the *actual* power in force, the literature tends to compare two 'lists' of power, one of the Centre and one of the provinces, and somehow arrive at a judgement on the balance of power between the two.

Mistaking the base of power for actual power has serious implications for understanding the central-provincial relationship. Provincial governments are by definition in a subordinate position; the Centre commands greater formal control over vital resources through its superior organizational status. As a result, an empirical analysis of the process of bargaining behaviour and policy making appears immaterial to an understanding of central-provincial relations. A simple calculation of the balance of military and other resources between the Centre and provinces should suffice.

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[39] Lieberthal and Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China*, pp. 347–8.

[40] Lieberthal and Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China*, pp. 349–50.

[41] For an example of analyst focusing on the analysis of the 'bases of power' of political actors in attempting to explain their success and failure in political survival, disregarding the gap between the *potentiality* of such power and the actual power wielded, see L. Dittmer, 'Bases of power in Chinese politics: a theory and an analysis of the fall of the "Gang of Four"', *World Politics*, 31 (October 1978), 26–60.

Yet that is plainly unsatisfactory. A solution is found in Parsons' concept of power. The major difference between Parsons and Dahl is that while coercion is clearly one of the resources forming the base of power in Dahl's concept, according to Parsons, 'securing compliance ... simply by threat of superior force is not (in itself) an exercise of power'.[42] This does not mean that coercion has no place. Power for Parsons is a phenomenon of *both* coercion and consensus, but coercion is not the crucial feature in the exercise of power in a complex society. Coercion in *any* exercise of power, according to Parsons, is the 'ground', or the basis, of power.[43] It is akin to the role of gold within a gold-based monetary system. The value of the precious metal gives some kind of security to the exchange value of money, but the value of money as a medium of exchange is not reducible to the total value of gold in the market. Likewise, while any exercise of power by A over B embodies coercion as the 'ground' of power, the amount of power, in Dahl's terminology, is not reducible solely to the amount of coercion A wields. For power to be assessed solely in terms of coercion potential, the system would need to be very primitive, 'just as a monetary system resting entirely on gold as the actual medium of exchange is a very primitive one'.[44] Given the limited amount of coercion in any system, possessed by any actor, it is the ability of the actors to obtain compliance via symbolic means which reflects the power of the actor.

Parsons' concept of power carries significant implications. Unlike Dahl, and others, who treat coercion as one of the bases of power, and see the exercise of power as *sometimes* relating to the use of coercion, and *at other times* to consensus, Parsons insists that power is a phenomenon which essentially integrates both coercion and consensus. By seeing power as oscillating between different 'forms of power', Dahl's concept when applied to China posits an indeterminate picture of power relations between the Centre and the provinces. As the literature on China's central-provincial relations has shown, provinces are sometimes portrayed as powerful actors, and at other times as passive and virtually helpless. The 'superiority' of the coercive form of power has also cast doubt on the significance of other forms of power, for instance economic power in economic policy bargaining. By rejecting this eclectic concept of different forms of power, and by specifying the role of coercion as the ground of power, Parsons has successfully clarified the essence of a power relationship as well as the focus of power analysis.[45] Parsons' concept of power has particular utility in the analysis of power relationships where the distribution of coercive resources is inherently unequal, as in the central-provincial relationship. As the national level of government, the Centre is in a superior organizational position. By specifying the role of coercion and focusing on the manipulation of 'symbols' in the study of power, therefore, Parsons avoids the tautology in Dahl's concept, which leads analysts to conclude that the Centre is powerful *because it is the Centre*.

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[42] T. Parsons, 'On the Concept of Power', in Bell, Edwards, and Wagner (eds), *Political Power*, p. 257.
[43] Parsons, 'On the Concept of Power', p. 260.
[44] Parsons, 'On the Concept of Power', p. 260.
[45] Parsons, 'On the Concept of Power', p. 251, 256–7, 280.

Power as a Non-zero-sum Game

The dominant assumption in central-provincial relations literature is that power between the Centre and the provinces is a zero-sum game.[46] This assumption predates the post-Mao reform period, but has been reinforced by the concentration of research attention on the fiscal system in the reform period.[47] The simplicity of the fiscal relationship, as expressed in percentage terms of provincial remittance and retained revenue, easily projects a 'zero-sum' image of central-provincial relations.[48] However, the implications of these fiscal changes in relation to the respective powers of the Centre and the provinces over policy formulation and implementation have been largely overlooked.

The prevalence of the zero-sum perception of the central-provincial relationship is attributable to the dominance of the centrist perspective in the literature. Central-provincial relations have been studied primarily as a phenomenon of declining central control and weakening state capacity.[49] This is especially the case in the more recent literature focusing on the post-Mao period. The focus of these works is invariably one: the factors and process which lead to the apparent decline of central control over policy implementation by the provinces. The insistence on posing the explanandum of research as an implementation problem leads researchers to view the relationship between the Centre and the provinces as an issue of central control and provincial compliance. Moreover, this image of a zero-sum game of politics has been reinforced by the absence of a regularized system of conflict resolution within the Chinese political system. As Tang Tsou has noted, political conflicts throughout Chinese history have been characterized by 'total victory versus total defeat' in which the winning side retained 'all real power to make decisions, whereas the other side (wa)s totally defeated'.[50] Because of the weak institutionalization of power and the absence of a regularized system to resolve conflicts within the system, political struggles in China have been notable for their ferocity. If there was a prospect of total victory, it was often argued, the actor with the upper hand in the conflict

[46] See Jae Ho Chung, 'Studies of central-provincial relations in the People's Republic of China: a mid-term appraisal', *China Quarterly*, no. 142, (June 1995), 487–508.

[47] This concentration on one aspect of central-provincial relations – the *fiscal* relationship – is largely led by the course of events during reform. Some examples of these works are: M. Oksenberg and J. Tong, 'The evolution of central-provincial fiscal relations in China, 1971–1984: the formal system', *China Quarterly*, 125 (March 1991), 1–32; J. Tong, 'Fiscal reform, elite turnover and central-provincial relations in post-Mao China', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 22 (July 1989), 1–28; S. Shirk, 'Playing to the provinces: Deng Xiaoping's political strategy of economic reform', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 23 no. 3 (Autumn/Winter 1990), 227–58; Wang Shaoguang, 'Central-local fiscal politics in China', and Lin Zhimin, 'Reform and Shanghai: Changing Central-Local Fiscal Relations' in Jia Hao and Lin Zhimin (eds), *Changing Central-Local Relations in China: Reform and State Capacity* (Boulder CO, Westview, 1994), pp. 91–112, 239–60; Christine P. W. Wong, 'Central-local relations in an era of fiscal decline: the paradox of fiscal decentralization in post-Mao China', *China Quarterly*, no. 128 (December 1991), 691–715; Reeitsu Kojima, 'The growing fiscal authority of provincial-level governments in China', *The Developing Economies*, 30, no. 4 (December 1992), 315–46; and Bachman, 'Implementing Chinese Tax Policy'.

[48] Chung, 'Studies of Central-provincial relations in the People's Republic of China'.

[49] Two works which explicitly employed the state capacity paradigm are: Jia Hao and Lin Zhimin, *Changing Central-Local Relations in China*; Zhao Suisheng, 'The feeble political capacity of a strong one-party regime'.

[50] Tang Tsou, 'The Tiananmen Tragedy: the State-Society Relationship, Choices, and Mechanisms in Historical Perspective' in B. Womack (ed.), *Contemporary Chinese Politics in Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 266.

would not hesitate totally to smash its opponent. The target was total victory, and the defeated opponent would be totally 'eliminated' from the scene. In Tsou's words, although 'at times there were compromises, concessions, admissions of defeat, negotiations, and even co-operation with ... opposing forces, ... those were tactical measures' in search for a better opportunity to strike the final blow.[51] Actors might temporize but not compromise. The tradition of political authoritarianism from imperial times has forestalled the development of 'a politics of compromise' in China.[52]

Trying to understand central-provincial relations as a zero-sum game posed insoluble problems. It disabled the analyst from envisaging the *circumstances* whereby the rules of the game might be changed. While analysts agreed that the ferocity of previous political struggles in China was due to the authoritarian nature and the low level of institutionalization of the political system, their zero-sum analysis of the central-provincial relationship suggested a static picture of power in which centralization and decentralization occurred in an endless cycle. As a result they have been unable to discern any possibility of change within this cyclical pattern, other than through the mutual goodwill of central and provincial leaders to reach between themselves a 'historical compromise'.[53] While analysts recognized that successive decentralizations had resulted in a dispersion of authority and resources from the Centre, and felt intuitively that the system *might* evolve towards genuine autonomy for the provinces, the literature was silent about the possible circumstances under which this 'qualitative' change in the nature of the central-provincial relationship could come about. The Chinese system, it would seem, has been stuck in its historical tradition of authoritarianism and in endless cycles of decentralization and centralization. The only possible way out, as the literature has implicitly suggested, is through the emergence of 'enlightened' leaders.

To escape from such pessimistic determinism it is necessary to depart from the centrist perspective and the state capacity paradigm. Instead of posing the research question in terms of the decline of central control over unruly provinces, there should be a reconceptualization of central-provincial relations as an interactive process in which both the Centre and the provinces struggle hard in order to attain their respective objectives. The asymmetry of the relationship means that changes in institutional rules have to be agreed to and formally laid down by the Centre. However, the Centre does not have 'carte blanche' in this respect. Nor is it the case that that which is laid down by the Centre is invariably subverted by the provinces. It is rather pressure from the provinces which leads the Centre to prescribe the rules in such a way that they protect its interests as well as those of the provinces.

An illustration of this interactive process between the Centre and the provinces is found in Susan Shirk's study of economic reform.[54] In examining the decision made in 1979 to implement nationwide fiscal reform, Shirk found that reform was a means employed by the central bureaucracy to 'divest (themselves of) responsibility', as opposed to being a preconceived plan to

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[51] Tsou, 'The Tiananmen Tragedy: the State-Society Relationship, Choices, and Mechanisms in Historical Perspective' p. 319.

[52] J. Fewsmith, *Dilemmas of Reform in China: Political Conflict and Economic Debate* (Armonk, NY, Sharpe, 1994), pp. 10-2.

[53] See Jia Hao and Lin Zhiman, *Changing Central-Local Relations in China*, p. 10.

[54] Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform*.

decentralize fiscal autonomy to the provinces, as had previously been assumed by Western scholars.[55] The Centre was constrained in the options available. Given the dispersion of resources in the early 1970s, central officials at the Ministry of Finance concluded that the only way to replenish the central coffers at that time was through the further step of decentralization. The 1980 nationwide fiscal reform was thus the result of a compromise between the Centre and the provinces. It was then considered impossible to recentralize enough resources from the provinces and to reimpose the centralized fiscal regime of the early 1950s. However, the Centre, with its shrinking share of resources, could not discharge its share of responsibility. The major fiscal problem of the Centre on the eve of fiscal reform was thus one of arresting the decline in central revenue, whilst delegating more spending responsibility to the provinces. By signing a multiple-year contract with provinces guaranteeing a fixed share of central revenue, the Centre therefore 'clarified the responsibilities as well as resources of each tier of government and *guaranteed central income at current levels*'[56] (emphasis added). Shirk's account reveals, therefore, a dynamic picture of central-provincial relations. Rather than seeing the relationship as one between a weakening but 'all-powerful' Centre and the subordinated, responsive, yet 'undisciplined' parochial provinces, Shirk saw the Centre responding to powerful provinces whilst seeking to strike the best deal to enhance its interests. Power between the Centre and the provinces is therefore not one of control versus disobedience, but one of calculated compromise on both sides.

But how could a politics of compromise be possible at all if, according to the 'conventional wisdom' in the prevailing literature, most political struggles in Chinese history have taken on a zero-sum nature? Is the fiscal reform decision of 1980 merely an exception to the general rule? If not, and if as a general rule the Centre has to compromise with the provinces, from where do the provinces derive their strength? If the ground of the Centre's power, in Parsons' terminology, lies in its superior command of coercive force, what is the ground of provincial power? Why should the Centre feel compelled to reach a compromise with the provinces? Why does the Centre not 'smash' all provincial resistance and emerge as a 'total victory' winner?

The answer to these questions is found in the intermediate position of the province in the state hierarchy. The existing literature also stresses the power of the province as the intermediary. But in such studies the power of the intermediary is always double-edged. On the one hand, it gives the province substantial discretion and control over resources, whilst, on the other, making it the object of central manipulation and control. So if the ground of provincial power lies in its intermediate position, in what does this strength of the intermediary consist?

At this point it is important to note that Tang Tsou, when commenting on the zero-sum nature of political struggles in Chinese history, also noted that there were limits to which the logic of total victory versus total defeat could apply. In Tsou's own words, political conflicts acquire a zero-sum nature only 'if one side

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[55] Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform*, p. 163.

[56] Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform*, p. 163. The fact that the Centre had *subsequently* felt that it, again, was losing out to the provinces after the implementation of the 1980 fiscal reform is, however, a separate story. It tells the success of the provinces to outmanoeuvre the Centre and the *shifting perceptions* by both the Centre and the provinces regarding their interests.

believes that it can win in a final confrontation and is willing to pay the necessary price'.[57] In other words, where there is a 'mutual perception that a stalemate will continue indefinitely into the future, ... the expectation that there will be a final confrontation and settlement of accounts' will gradually change.[58] With no prospect of total victory for oneself, one is therefore forced to compromise with one's opponent.

Herein lies the strength of the intermediary. It is impossible for the Centre to win a total victory over its intermediary. Provincial governments are an indispensable ally of the Centre in governance. The Centre has to rely on provincial leaders and lower level officials to govern society. As individuals, provincial leaders may be purged and replaced, but as a group and an institution, provincial leaders and the provincial-level government are there to stay. Tsou's thoughts on the limits of the zero-sum nature of political conflicts is set out in the context of state-society confrontation in the Tiananmen tragedy of 1989. In that case, the state could still rely on coercive power as the last resort in order to achieve an apparent 'total victory', although the use of naked force to extract compliance revealed its weakness and illegitimacy.[59] The hands of the Centre in its struggles with the provinces are, as a rule, more tied. As power holders, provincial leaders possess more resources which they can use to protect themselves against the encroachment of the Centre, than are normally available to private individuals in a state-society confrontation. The Centre may consequently win in specific instances of confrontation, but the necessity to rule *through* an intermediary dictates that its victory is short-term and incomplete. An ideal example are the cycles of centralization and decentralization since 1957. Each round of recentralization reclaimed only part of the power and resources which had been decentralized earlier, and each subsequent round of decentralization brought the provinces control over more resources and a broader room for manoeuvre.[60] The organizational position of the province guarantees, therefore, that it cannot be 'totally eliminated' by the Centre in any central-provincial conflicts. As the stalemate persists, the Centre is forced to compromise with the provinces, as in the case of the 1980 fiscal reform decision. Rather than seeing the course of economic reform as a process through which central policies were distorted by provincial implementation, this new picture of central-provincial relations shows a process of accommodation and compromise. As neither the Centre nor the provinces could decisively win over and eliminate the other, *both* were forced to accommodate the interests of the other and to compromise.

The implication of the non-zero-sum nature of central-provincial power is significant. It envisages change. In a zero-sum framework, any possibility of change awaits the wisdom of the victor after all accounts have been settled and

[57] Tsou, 'The Tianenmen Tragedy', p. 320.

[58] Tsou, 'The Tienenmen Tragedy', pp. 320–1.

[59] Tsou, 'The Tienenmen Tragedy', p. 316. On this point, Tsou's remark bears remarkable affinity with Parris Chang's over the Cultural Revolution, and Parson's over the role of coercion in the concept of power in general.

[60] For discussions on the 'diminishing returns of repeated recentralization' and the cumulative effect of successive decentralization-recentralization cycles in the province's favour, see Zhao, 'The feeble political capacity of a strong one-party regime', Part 2, p. 55; Lieberthal and Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China*, p. 349; C. Riskin, 'Neither Plan nor Market: Mao's Political Economy' in William A. Joseph, Christine P. W. Wong and D. Zweig (eds), *New Perspectives on the Cultural Revolution*, (Cambridge MA, Harvard University, Council on East Asian Studies, 1991) p. 143.

its opponent eliminated. This suggests a heavy reliance on *ad hoc* factors of an idiosyncratic nature for changes ever to occur. In a non-zero-sum framework, the forces of change are built in to the system through the power of the actors over one another The amount of power at the disposal of the Centre and of the provinces differs, but their interdependence and long-term co-existence requires both parties to compromise. A strong Centre during the 1950s, for instance, still found it necessary to decentralize power to the provinces in order better to implement its policies. Something has to be given out in order that something can be won in return. Consequently, as provinces gather more and more resources as a result of successive decentralizations, their bargaining power vis-à-vis the Centre increases. With increased power, the provinces are in a position to demand more concessions from the Centre. The result is the increased central-provincial conflict as manifested during the reform period.

Conclusion

This paper argues that existing literature on China's central-provincial relations, despite its detailed documentation of centralization and decentralization, has failed to give a definitive interpretation of the central-provincial relationship. The failure, it is argued, stems from a theoretical flaw in the conceptualization of power, as well as from the dominance of a top-down, centrist approach in interpreting what is essentially an interactive relationship.

One possible counter argument is that the adoption of a zero-sum framework merely reflects the dominant perception of the situation by Chinese leaders themselves. It is undoubtedly true that many Chinese leaders saw, and still see, power struggle as a zero-sum game. This characteristic has rightly led scholars to stress the ferocity of political struggles in China. The literature only mirrors the thinkings and behaviour of the Chinese political actors. But it is not enough to mirror the perceptions of Chinese leaders. The fundamental flaw of existing literature on China's central-provincial relations is its failure to *anticipate* change. The consequence is that central-provincial relations since 1949 have been interpreted as alternating unpredictably between a high degree of centralized control and a high degree of fragmentation. Moreover, the *observable* changes which become manifest at one time are actually embedded in the apparently 'stable' pattern of an earlier period. The failure to anticipate change at the next point in time thus means that some important if only less manifest elements in the relationship go unnoticed.

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