
Edward Friedman
Liberation Army. Selection methods have become increasingly competitive, consisting of written and oral examinations evaluated by cadres drawn from different departments in order to avoid personal collusion. "Informal" practices are resorted to at the candidates' pre-selection stage, when only three are considered for each post. Personal links become crucial, as candidates need to be recommended by an officer. According to You Ji, officers conveniently pick those in their own combat units or from the same province.

The next two contributions deal with provincial elites. Bo Zhiyue charts the careers of 31 provincial Party secretaries and governors as of November 2012, showing that the tendency is towards a relatively strict adherence to age limits as well as qualification levels for posts as heads of provinces. He notes the need for varied experience in different sectors in order to be named a provincial secretary. While Bo also describes the cadres' supposed factional attachments, he fails to explain what effect they could have in practice, or possible changes.

In the second chapter devoted to provincial elites, S. Philip Hsu and Jhih-wei Shao evaluate the level of meritocracy in the cadre promotion system. Their analysis relies on dates, including all provincial Party secretaries and governors between 1993 and 2010. Contrary to previous studies, they show that work experience at the central level is generally not a good indicator for promotion to the top rung in a province, but rather is a sign of approaching retirement. At the same time, the authors show that provincial chiefs are evaluated via a complex system taking into account their short-term economic performance in deciding whether they can keep their post, but also their cumulative results over the long term, compared with their predecessors, in considering them for promotion.

The book's last two chapters are devoted to specific elite types: state enterprise managers and cadres rising through the CCP Youth League. In each case, the authors seek to measure the effect of this experience on their future careers. Chih-shian Liu and Chung-min Tsai describe the CCP's control over major state enterprises via the selection and promotion of their managers and find that those who are aligned with the Party-state's agenda are promoted. In their view, the effects on future careers vary according to industrial sectors. Liu and Tsai, for instance, show that in electrical industry, promotions take place mainly within the sector, but that in the more strategic oil sector, managers can hope for political posts with great responsibility following their industrial careers.

In the last chapter, Chien-wen Kou deals with the careers of cadres who worked in the Communist Youth League after 1978. Charting the careers of 293 individuals, he notes the importance of this promotion channel, pointing out its two main features. First, few former Youth League cadres hold technical or economic ministerial posts, indicating that the League consists of generalists. Then again, League experience gives them an age advantage, helping them get important posts while still young compared to other cadres – a major career advantage. Apart from these two factors, Kou notes that the rapid and numerous promotions of former League cadres is also due to the organisation's strong links with key Party figures such as Hu Yaobang in the 1980s, then with Hu Jintao and later Li Keqiang. While the argumentation seems sound, might Kou not have overplayed the role of the organisation's internal network and by extension the unity of the faction at issue? As he has himself notes, the selection of the League's cadres at all levels rests with CCP organs and not with the organisation itself, calling into question the homogeneity of its recruitment.

To conclude, Choosing China's Leaders should interest all readers curious about the process of selecting Chinese political elites. It has the classical lacuna of collective works in that issues raised in the introduction are only partially addressed in the chapters that make up the book. More generally, while the book has on the whole focused on the interaction between the Party's growing institutionalisation and the persistence of entrenchable factions, this separation between policies seen as "formal" or "informal" has not been addressed. The question might well arise whether their constant interaction does not challenge this dichotomy. Personal relations also tend to be treated as a given, without proper questioning of the mechanisms explaining their development and persistence. A more dynamic approach to these networks would thus be welcome for a clearer understanding of promotion mechanisms in the Chinese Party-state.
Tucker reveals that Ike was more worried about war prone forces in the Chiang Kai-shek government on Taiwan than by such forces in the PRC. Eisenhower ‘worried about Chiang Kai-shek’s ability to plunge the United States into an unwanted war’ (p. 15); Dulles believed that Chiang would not hesitate to incite World War III... (p. 29); Dulles ‘blunted Nationalist efforts to provoke Beijing’ (p. 30). In contrast, Mao was ‘extremely cautious’ (p. 21). Although Dulles ‘collaborated with Dean Rusk to drive the Generalissimo from power’ in 1950 (p. 26), Tucker concludes that the Ike-Dulles administration did not try to topple Chiang. But part of the resolution to the 1958 crisis in the Taiwan Strait may have been Chiang Kai-shek pulling way back from provocative incursions into the PRC in return for the USA ending its efforts to replace Chiang.

Tucker finds that by 1953, the Mao leadership no longer saw the U.S. as a military threat (pp. 57-58). She dismisses Mao’s language welcoming nuclear war as the “rhetoric” of “self-protection” (p. 59). Nehru experienced Mao’s declarations as madness. In fact, Mao recklessly self-isolated China, alienating Russia, India, and numerous others.

Tucker offers rich data on the two 1950s crises in the Taiwan Strait. Her data persuades me that the CCP leaders, after a century of war and chaos, had somehow re-united China and that the Han who resisted the invaders of these peoples. The post-Mao myth that the Mongol and Manchu invaders were splitists is a rhetoric that legitimates Chinese revanchism, as does the narrative about a century of humiliation.

For Mao, the nation stealing the most land hitherto conquered by the militarily expansionist Qing was Tsarist Russia and their heirs, the New Tsars of Soviet Russia, not the West. The invader that killed the most Chinese was Hirohito’s Showa era Imperium, not the West. Sun Yat-sen’s nationalists took as the people who had long humiliated the Han to be the Manchus, not the West. It is the domestic political purposes of an anti-liberal CCP that leads to a historical myth that demonises “the West.”

Tucker shows how important it is to comprehend what governments get wrong and why, such as missing early opportunities for the normalisation of Washington-Beijing relations. While Mao’s China increasingly fixated on the Soviet Union as Enemy Number One, the Eisenhower administration, goaded by Chiang and the Republican Right, greatly “exaggerated the Chinese menace” (p. 177). In contrast, Mao, by 1961, the year Eisenhower left office, wanted to make overtures to Washington for an entente, according to the director of the CCP archive, Hu Hua.

Tucker’s study brilliantly explores how American domestic politics shaped and delimited Eisenhower’s foreign policy choices. She seeks similar data on China. She is wise to do so. To fill out the picture of USA-PRC relations, analysts need access to Chinese archives that would reveal the forces at work inside of CCP politics. Without that data, it is natural and misleading to underestimate how domestic Chinese politics were, and still are, central in shaping and informing CCP foreign policy choices.

But Tucker errs when she forgets Mao’s domestic and international agenda and places the crises in an alleged context of “China’s yearning for unification” (p. 157). There is no data on such “yearnings.” In fact, Mao never fixated on Taiwan, an island that was not part of Chinese nationalist consciousness before 1942.

The author similarly errs in lending credence to the CCP narrative that “The Chinese understood the humiliation of exploitation by the West, having endured a century of semicolonialism and near national extinction” (p. 47). Actually, the last dynasty, the Qing, more than doubled the size of territory controlled by the Sinicized Ming, annexing huge swathes of non-Sinicized territories. Subsequently, the Han CCP has threatened national extinction for Manchu, Mongol, Tibetan, and Uyghur communities. The Han, through a policy known as “settler colonialism,” now pervade the territories of these peoples. The post-Mao myth that the Mongol and Manchu invaders had somehow re-united China and that the Han who resisted the invaders were splitists is a rhetoric that legitimates Chinese revanchism, as does the narrative about a century of humiliation.

Edward Friedman is professor emeritus in the Department of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he teaches Chinese foreign policy (efriedm1@wisc.edu).