
ANATOMY OF REGIME REPRESSION IN CHINA

Timing, Enforcement Institutions, and Target Selection in Banning the Falungong, July 1999

James Tong

On July 29, 1999, a week after the Falungong was outlawed, and the day when the People's Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Public Security issued the warrant for the arrest of its leader Li Hongzhi, the regime had scored a crushing victory against the congregation. At least within China, people at the 28,000 Falungong practice sites in the nation's parks no longer assembled for morning breathing exercises. The group's top leadership was decimated, its publication program terminated and inventory confiscated, its 80 websites went blank. To be sure, occasional demonstrations by practitioners have persisted until the present, but they cannot be compared to the over 300 rallies, including 18 large- and medium-sized protest assemblies, that the movement successfully mounted from 1997 to July 22, 1999.¹ At best, Falungong protests in China after the ban were smolderings, not conflagrations, which were easily contained by the regime within minutes and extinguished within hours. The prairie fire that had spread to China's 29 provinces since 1992 was spent.

This is all the more amazing considering that on April 25, 1999, when over 18,000 Falungong practitioners besieged Zhongnanhai, the Beijing Party and state headquarters for over six hours, President Jiang Zemin had hardly heard

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1. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], August 5, 1999, p. 1.

of Falungong, and did not know the name of its supreme leader.² In less than three months since then, the regime had not only forged a consensus, but also had worked out a comprehensive program for the arrest of the group's top leaders, the conversion and rehabilitation of over 300,000 Party members who renounced Falungong, the reeducation for two million rank-and-file practitioners, and had executed the plan with astounding success. Equally noteworthy is the fact that during these three months, the PRC leadership had to confront three major foreign and domestic policy crises—the bombing of China's Belgrade embassy by NATO on May 8, the challenge from then-Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui on its "One-China Policy" on July 9, and a major flood in the Yangzi River that ravaged five provinces within its basin.

This article will address three sets of related operational questions. First, it investigates whether or not the three-month delayed response to the April 25 action was the result of policy indecision, the Politburo's business calendar, or the requisite bureaucratic response time. Second, the article examines the set of institutions that the regime relied on to formulate and implement its plan of action; whether it entrusted the task to an ad hoc committee or existing law-enforcement institutions (public security versus other bureaucratic actors); and the relative role of Party organizations versus state functional agencies. Third, since the task of handling an unprecedented caseload of 2.3 million Falungong practitioners would overwhelm the criminal justice system, the article addresses the question of which among the Falungong practitioners were to be interrogated and released, which ones arrested and detained, and which ones prosecuted and imprisoned. In focusing on operational questions, the article investigates issues of policy implementation rather than formulation, taking the Politburo decision to ban the Falungong as given, and leaving the decision-making process among the top elite largely unexplored. While some sources used in the article refer to specific elite positions on the Falungong, Politburo meetings, and their policy outcomes,³ available data do not permit a systematic analysis of the positions of the

2. Zong Hairen, "Zhu Rongji zai Yi Jiujiujiu Nian" [Zhu Rongji in 1999], 2001, n.p. Excerpts are translated in *Chinese Law and Government* 35:5 (January-February, March-April 2002), p. 61. Hereafter, the English translation will be cited as Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002). The original Chinese source will be cited as Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2001), when no published English translation is available.

3. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002); *Cheng Ming* (Hong Kong) 262 (August 1999), pp. 6–8; *Dongxiang* [The Trend] 172 (December 1999), pp. 8–9; "Jiang Zemin tongzhi zai zhongyang zhengzhiju huiyi shang guanyu zhujin chuli he jiezhue 'Falungong' wenti di jianghua" [The speech of Comrade Jiang Zemin on how to tightly grasp the management and solution of the 'Falungong' question at the Central Politburo Meeting] (June 7, 1999), *Beijing zhichun* [Beijing Spring] 97 (June 2001), pp. 10–12; Shiyu Zhou, "The '610 Office'—the Primary Organ Mechanism of Jiang Zemin's State Terrorism Policy against Falun Gong," presented at the Panel Discussion on China's State Terrorism, National Press Club, Washington, D.C., October 10, 2001.

seven Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) members in three crucial meetings of the Politburo and its Standing Committee, much less the positions of the larger Politburo itself.⁴ Analysis of the decision-making process has to await publication of the detailed record of Politburo meetings a la Zhang Liang's *Tiananmen Papers* or Li Rui's *Veritable Record of the Lushan Conference*.⁵

The data sources are the national and provincial press, an insider account of Politburo deliberations about the Falungong from May to July 1999,⁶ several publications on the congregation by official sources,⁷ as well as Chinese-language periodicals published in Hong Kong and the U.S., as noted in footnote 3. Extant Falungong sources have also been used, including its own publications; its website, <www.minghui.org>,⁸ and two knowledgeable informants who are current practitioners. Below, each question is addressed in order.

I. Selection of Timing of the Crackdown

The first operational issue we will investigate is the timing of the suppression. Was the choice of July 22 to ban the Falungong the result of indecision

4. The Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2001) source refers to three Politburo meetings on suppression of the Falungong. In two of these (June 17 and July 19), excerpts of speeches by Jiang Zemin, and no one else, were reported. In a third meeting (April 26), only the speeches of Jiang, Li Peng, and Zhu Rongji were excerpted. Extant sources, then, do not disclose the positions of a majority of the Politburo members or its Standing Committee on the Falungong.

5. Zhang Liang, *The Tiananmen Papers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001); Li Rui, *Lushan Huiyi Shilu* [Veritable record of the Lushan Conference] (Hong Kong: Tiandi Tushu Co., 1993).

6. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 53–72.

7. Ju Mengjun ed., *Chanchu Xiejiao Qiankun Lang* [The universe will be bright after the cult is eradicated] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2001); Dou Wentao, *Falungong Daqidi* [Great expose of the Falungong] (Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 2000); Wang Zhigang, Song Jianfeng, "Falungong" *Xiejiaobenji mianmianguan* [Different perspectives of the essence of the Falungong cult] (Beijing: Lantian chubanshe, 2001); Yen Shi, ed., *Shiji Jupian: Li Hongzhi* [Swindler of the century: Li Hongzhi] (Beijing: Dazhong wenyi chubanshe, 1999); Zhao Jixun, ed., *Zui-e—Falungong Shouhaizhe Xuelei Kongsu* [Crimes—The blood and tears accusations of Falungong victims] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzhu fazi chubanshe, 2000); *Toushi Xiejiao Jiepou Falungong* [Cult penetrated—Anatomy of Falungong] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2001); *Zhuan Falun Pipan* [A critique of Zhuan Falun] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2001); *Xiandai Huangyan: Li Hongzhi Wailixieshuo Pingxi* [Contemporary lies: A critical analysis of the crooked theories and evil teachings of Li Hongzhi] (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 1999); *Falungong Xianxiang Pingxi* [A critical analysis of the Falungong phenomenon] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2001); *Bushi "Zhen Shan Ren" er Shi "Zhen Chan Ren"* [It is not "truth, kindness, forbearance" but "real cruelty"] (Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 2001).

8. Li Hongzhi, *Zhuan Falun* [Turning of the Falun wheel] (Hong Kong: Falun Fofa chubanshe, 1997); *Falun Dafa Yijie* [An explanation of the meaning of Falun Dafa], <<http://www.falundafa.ca>>; <<http://www.minghui.org>>.

and inaction at the top echelon of the Party leadership, or the political calendar of the Politburo, or simply the inherent need for time to investigate and prepare for the case against the Falungong?

There were precedents to Politburo indecision and inaction on how to deal with groups that challenged the political status quo. In 1985–86, the Party did not crack down on student protests on college campuses, a failure of will for which then-Secretary-General Hu Yaobang was purged by Party elders in January 1987.⁹ Two and a half years later, it was the turn of his successor, Zhao Ziyang, who suffered the same fate for being unwilling and unable to deal resolutely with the two-month-old student-led movement known as the Beijing Spring.¹⁰ As chronicled in *The Tiananmen Papers*, Zhao's indecision was evident in his failure to convene a Politburo meeting about the student demonstrations after a series of incidents: the assembly of 100,000 students in Tiananmen Square on April 19, 1989; students' two clashes with security agents on April 19 and 20; and a larger demonstration of 200,000 students and citizens on April 21. Given Zhao's ambivalence, the Politburo was more procrastinating than proactive. It was only on April 24, the 10th day of the student demonstrations, that the first Politburo meeting on the incident was convened, with the first Central Committee notice prescribing action being issued that evening. The first official document denouncing the student demonstration was not published until April 26.¹¹ Official interactions with the students were to come even later. The first meeting with students by central government officials was on April 27, with State Council news spokesman Yuan Mu and Deputy Director of the State Education Commission He Dongchang. Students met with a Politburo member, Premier Li Peng, only on May 18, only after the top Party leadership had decided to impose martial law.¹² During these two months, there was no consensus within the Politburo Standing Committee on dealing with the students. Zhao Ziyang made several attempts to overturn the April 26 *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily] editorial characterizing the student demonstrations as turmoil. The vote at the May 17 PSC meeting to impose martial law was two affirmative, two negative, and one abstention.¹³ Even as he resigned from the Secre-

9. Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 200–08.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 247–70.

11. Contrary to Tian Ziyun's advice, Zhao did not postpone his trip to Pyongyang from April 23rd to 29th. It was only in his absence that the Politburo deliberated on what to do with the Falungong. See Zhang, *Tiananmen Papers*, pp. 47, 57–96.

12. Li Peng was also a member of the PSC. The decision to impose martial law was made in a meeting of the PSC on the morning of May 17. See Zhang, *Tiananmen Papers*, pp. 184–90.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

tary-General position, Zhao refused to recant his opposition to the Party decision to suppress the student movement.¹⁴

Resoluteness of the Politburo

In the case of the Falungong, the Politburo was neither indecisive nor inactive after the siege on April 25, 1999. During the siege, Premier Zhu Rongji met with Falungong representatives, joining Politburo member and security czar Luo Gan, and other top party, state, and Beijing municipal officials.¹⁵ That evening, Jiang Zemin wrote a letter to the Party's top leaders expressing his bewilderment over the mobilization capacity of Falungong as well as its discipline, calling it the largest collective action since the 1989 student movement.¹⁶ In stark contrast to Zhao Ziyang's ambivalence toward the student movement throughout the two months, Jiang Zemin denounced the April 25 siege as the boldest public challenge to regime authority since the founding of the People's Republic, unprecedented even during the Cultural Revolution, and called for resolute action to "nip it in the bud."¹⁷ In a subsequent Politburo meeting on June 7, Jiang proposed the establishment of a leadership committee to deal with the Falungong and outlined a strategy of gathering intelligence, exposing Li Hongzhi's political motives, systematically critiquing superstition, and publicizing cases where the practice of Falungong caused deaths, suicides, or schizophrenia.¹⁸ These later became the core content of the anti-Falungong campaign in July. In yet another Politburo meeting on July 17, Jiang characterized the April 25 event as "the most serious political incident since June 4."¹⁹ Altogether, Jiang delivered no fewer than three speeches and issued 13 written policy directives on the Falungong from April 25 to July 20.²⁰ Li Peng and a majority of PSC members joined Jiang in urging suppression of the Falungong.²¹ There was no report of opposition within the PSC challenging Jiang's hardline view or the Politburo decision for suppression.²² The April 26, June 7, and June 17 meetings also approved

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 441–46.

15. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 55–56.

16. The letter was addressed to the members of the PSC and other concerned leaders, dated April 25, 1999, and was transmitted by the General Office of the Central Committee for broader circulation on April 27. The text of the letter was published in *Beijing Zhichun* (Beijing Spring), no. 97 (June 2001), pp. 9–10.

17. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 63.

18. *Beijing Zhichun*, no. 97 (June 2001), pp. 10–12.

19. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 66.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

22. Zhu Rongji did not speak for suppression of the Falungong in the April 26 meeting. But neither did he voice opposition to the policy. See Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 64.

action items, apparently uncontested, against the Falungong.²³ Clearly, then, Politburo dissent and indecision is not a valid explanation for its inaction from late April to late July.

Beijing and Politburo Event Calendar, April-July 1999

Even if the top Party leadership was resolved to strike at the Falungong, three sets of factors could still affect the timing of the suppression. First, to avoid negative international media coverage, the target dates could not coincide with high-profile international summitry or with state visits at home and abroad, or be temporally close to major anniversaries in Beijing, all of which would attract a large contingent of foreign press on the lookout for stories on continued state repression in China. The regime was unlikely to repeat its May 1989 mistake of keeping the scheduled Gorbachev visit and that of the Asian Development Bank while the demonstrating students exploited the presence of the international media.²⁴ In effect, this would preclude a suppression effort a week before and after June 4, the 10th anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre, and before and after October 1, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, as periods when the regime needed to abstain from mass arrests. To a lesser extent, the same reasoning would also rule out the one-week period before and after July 1, when the anniversary of Hong Kong's 1997 reversion to Chinese rule would have primed foreign journalists, defiant legislators, resident human rights and Falungong groups in the Special Administrative Region, for similar stories.

Intrusion of Foreign Crises

Second, while the Politburo could avoid major anniversaries and state visits, it could not have prevented major foreign policy crises, two of which intruded into its time-table. The U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade on May 8, 1999, created an international crisis for the Beijing leaders. At its heels, then-Taiwan President Li Teng-hui's enunciation on July 9 of the "Two China Theory," which moved toward independence, also required the Politburo to respond.²⁵ The top leadership reportedly convened more than 10 meetings of the Politburo, the Taiwan Affairs Leading Group, and the Military Affairs Commission of the Central Committee to discuss response strate-

23. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 66.

24. Baum, *Burying Mao*, pp. 254–62.

25. In his interview with the German radio program *Deutsche Welle* on July 9, President Lee Teng-hui stated that relations across the Taiwan Strait should be "state-to-state," or at least a form of "special state-to-state relations," and not one "between the central and local governments within China." Central News Agency, Taipei, July 9, 1999. For the text of his speech, see <<http://www.taipei.org>> and <<http://www.future-China.org.tw>>.

gies.²⁶ The question is whether or not these events affected the timing of the crackdown.

Measuring the Effects of Foreign Policy Crises

To determine the intensity and durability of the effects of the two crises on the Politburo agenda, we examined their coverage in *Renmin Ribao*, the Party's daily newspaper.²⁷ To gauge the degree of Politburo attention and preoccupation with the given crisis, we analyzed (a) the relative number of front-page stories classified as *yaowen* (Important News), and (b) authoritative commentaries on the event.²⁸ In May-July 1999, on an average day, the domestic edition of the Party daily newspaper published on the front or the fourth page 20 to 30 news stories and commentaries that were classified as "Important News."²⁹ Of these, six to 12 items of first-order importance ran on the front page, including major in-bound and out-bound international visits, important national conferences, notable economic news, and authoritative commentaries, with the remaining international news items of secondary importance placed on the fourth page. Our survey counted only news items and commentaries as entries, not accompanying photographs, tables and charts, or other matter. Of the many news items on the military and political developments in Yugoslavia, only items pertaining to the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy were counted. Likewise, we only included items on the "Two State Theory," not other political reports on Taiwan. Since the news headline or title of the commentary may not always contain the keywords "NATO Bombing" or "Two State Theory," the principle of substantial content was used to determine whether a given news item pertained to the specific crisis.

As demonstrated in Table 1, our analysis reveals that front-page coverage of the two crises declines monotonically over time, in absolute and relative numbers, as well as continuity after the crisis erupted. In absolute terms, the number of front-page stories on the embassy bombing decreased steadily from four to five every day in the first eight days (May 9–16), to one to three in the following seven days (May 17–23), and then to zero to one thereafter through June 8. In relative terms, embassy bombing news was the subject of

26. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2001), p. 25.

27. The source is the domestic national edition of *Renmin Ribao*.

28. The authoritative commentaries were the *Renmin Ribao* editorials, those signed by the *Renmin Ribao* Commentator, the Xinhua Commentator, the *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army News] Commentator, and the *Renmin Ribao* Observer, all published on the front page.

29. The front page is reserved for both important domestic and international news, the fourth page for international news of secondary importance. In 1999, both pages had the "Important News" label in the top right corner. In the CD-ROM version, "Important News" is a column label. The domestic edition of the *Renmin Ribao* is published seven days a week.

TABLE 1 *Coverage of U.S. Bombing of PRC Embassy in Belgrade in Renmin Ribao, May 9–31, 1999*

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Front-Page Authoritative Commentary on Embassy Bombing</i> | <i>Totals of Front-Page “Important News” Stories on Embassy Bombing¹</i> | <i>Totals of Other Front-Page “Important News” Items</i> |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| 5/9 | Y | 4 | 3 |
| 5/10 | Y | 5 | 3 |
| 5/11 | Y | 4 | 5 |
| 5/12 | Y | 4 | 3 |
| 5/13 | Y | 4 | 3 |
| 5/14 | Y | 5 | 6 |
| 5/15 | Y | 4 | 7 |
| 5/16 | Y | 4 | 7 |
| 5/17 | | 3 | 6 |
| 5/18 | | 3 | 6 |
| 5/19 | Y | 3 | 6 |
| 5/20 | | 1 | 10 |
| 5/21 | Y | 1 | 10 |
| 5/22 | | 1 | 11 |
| 5/23 | | 1 | 9 |
| 5/24 | | 0 | 8 |
| 5/25 | | 1 | 9 |
| 5/26 | | 0 | 11 |
| 5/27 | Y | 1 | 7 |
| 5/28 | | 1 | 7 |
| 5/29 | | 0 | 10 |
| 5/30 | | 0 | 10 |
| 5/31 | | 0 | 8 |

SOURCE: Author compilation, drawing from *Renmin Ribao*, domestic national edition.

¹ The number of “Important News” items also includes authoritative commentaries.

over half of the front-page news items in the first six days (May 9–14), dropped to 27%–40% in the following five days, and further decreased to under 15% thereafter. In terms of persistence, there was daily coverage on the front page in the first two weeks (May 9–23), and thereafter, only intermittent coverage, with days of no coverage increasing in frequency and consecutivity. Front-page authoritative commentaries on the embassy bombing also steadily became infrequent, then extinct, with the last one appearing on May 27, three days after the publication of the “Important News” on the

TABLE 2 Coverage of Lee Teng-hui's "Two State Theory" in Renmin Ribao, July 9–23, 1999

| Date | Front-Page Authoritative Commentary on "Two State Theory" | Totals of Front-Page "Important News" Stories on "Two State Theory" ¹ | Totals of Other Front-Page "Important News" Items |
|------|---|--|---|
| 7/9 | | 0 | 8 |
| 7/10 | | 0 | 10 |
| 7/11 | | 0 | 13 |
| 7/12 | | 0 | 10 |
| 7/13 | Y | 3 | 6 |
| 7/14 | Y | 2 | 9 |
| 7/15 | Y | 2 | 7 |
| 7/16 | | 2 | 6 |
| 7/17 | Y | 2 | 7 |
| 7/18 | | 1 | 7 |
| 7/19 | Y | 2 | 5 |
| 7/20 | | 2 | 9 |
| 7/21 | Y | 2 | 8 |
| 7/22 | Y | 1 | 9 |
| 7/23 | | 0 | 9 |

SOURCE: Ibid.

¹ Totals for "Important News" also include authoritative commentaries.

crisis first became intermittent.³⁰ Two sources corroborate the *People's Daily* timeline. An internal source reported that the embassy bombing crisis had gradually dissipated by June 17, when Jiang Zemin and the Politburo refocused their attention on the Falungong and convened a Politburo meeting on the matter.³¹ A separate source also reported that the "June 10th Office," named after its inaugural date, was established to deal with the Falungong.³² It should be clear, then, that by the end of May, when front-page coverage of the embassy bombing became increasingly intermittent and indeed absent, the crisis had devolved to a less-intense phase of the cycle.

The same pattern is also observed in the coverage of the "Two-State Theory" (see Table 2) where authoritative commentary and front-page coverage stories began and ceased almost at the same time, from July 13 to 22. In both cases, we infer this pattern of double exit of the last authoritative commentary

30. There was another authoritative commentary published on June 18 in response to the U.S. investigative report on the bombing, delivered by Special Envoy Thomas Pickering on June 16.

31. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 65.

32. Zhou, "610 Office."

and last continuous coverage as signaling the weakening of the crisis, freeing the Politburo to turn its attention to other pressing matters.

In combination, the three major anniversaries and the two foreign policy crises effectively ruled out May 8 to June 11 (embassy bombing and June 4 anniversary), June 24 to July 8 (Hong Kong's reversion), July 9 to 22 (Lee's "Two-State Theory"), and September 24 to October 8 (around National Day), as target dates of the suppression. This would still leave April 26 to May 7, June 11 to 23, and after July 22 for the regime to take repressive action. Why did it not choose the earlier two windows? We suggest that the need for due diligence was the reason.

Need for Due Intelligence

First, there was need for time to gather the basic intelligence. In the PSC meeting of April 26, a decision was reached to conduct a full investigation of the Falungong movement at home and abroad.³³ Thereafter, security agents stationed in overseas diplomatic missions were instructed to collect data on the political orientation of the movement and on Li Hongzhi. At home, 25 groups of public security and state security agents, led by Deputy Public Security Ministers Zhao Yongji and Zhu Chunlin, were dispatched to provinces and cities where the Falungong was active, to work with their provincial counterparts to collect information on the movements and its activities.³⁴ In all, more than 3,000 public security agents reportedly investigated Falungong activities at home and abroad prior to the official ban on July 22, 1999.³⁵ The investigation was not completed until mid-July.³⁶

Second, the need for the time-consuming full investigation appears to have stemmed from the Politburo's concern about the overseas connection of the Falungong. The Politburo recognized that more than any previous domestic challenge to the regime, the Falungong had metastasized, that both its premier leader and organizational headquarters were overseas, where it had built substantial international support. For Jiang Zemin, the overseas connection assumed an increasingly threatening character over time. In his April 25 letter to PSC members, he referred to a possible overseas background (*jingwai beijing*) for the Falungong siege.³⁷ In the PSC meeting the following day, the overseas background assumed a more definite shape as "intervention by overseas organizations" (*jingwai zuzhi chashou*).³⁸ In a subsequent Politburo meeting on June 17, Jiang characterized the issue in yet more alarming terms

33. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 65.

34. *Cheng Ming*, no. 262 (August 1999), p. 6.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 67.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 58; *ibid.* (2001), p. 12.

38. *Ibid.* (2002), p. 63; *ibid.* (2001), p. 14.

as “a serious political struggle” between the Party and “enemies in and outside the country.”³⁹ In the PSC meeting on July 19 that resolved to ban the Falungong, Jiang not only asserted that there was covert overseas involvement in the April 25 siege, but also that it was part of a larger U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) scheme.⁴⁰ Jiang’s concern seems to have been shared by other PSC members. Li Ruihuan, Li Lanqing, and Zhu Rongji made references to possible foreign meddling in the Falungong case in the first part of July.⁴¹ Their suspicions were also echoed by Luo Gan, who in a separate national telephone conference on public security the day before affirmed an overseas connection in different policy settings, and warned participants against the involvement of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas dissidents in the Falungong.⁴² The overseas threat took on a different form that fall, when the regime claimed that it found evidence that the Falungong had engaged in an organized and systematic effort to acquire and disseminate 59 state-secret and top-secret documents, 10 of which it had circulated outside China through the Internet.⁴³

Third, it appeared that only after the basic facts of the Falungong’s membership size, organizational structure, geographical distribution, and evidence of culpability were known, did the Politburo move to the next stage of planning the operation. In early June, the “June 10th Office” was established as the executive arm of the Special Committee. Headed by Luo Gan, the office was entrusted to “study, investigate, and come up with a unified approach in terms of specific steps, methods, and measures to resolve the ‘Falun Gong’ problem.” It was authorized to deal with central and local, Party and state agencies, which were called upon to act in close coordination with that office.⁴⁴ It can be reasoned then, that the regime had not worked out a definite suppression strategy by mid-June.

Fourth, the regime was apparently intent to declare war on the Falungong only after building a strong case against the congregation and when it felt the outcome was certain. When the regime launched its suppression campaign in late July, due intelligence research had already resulted in a list of the top

39. *Ibid.* (2002), p. 66; *ibid.* (2001), p. 15.

40. *Ibid.* (2002), p. 68; *ibid.* (2001), p. 15.

41. *Cheng Ming*, no. 262 (August 1999), p. 7. Li Ruihuan and Li Lanqing referred to the involvement of *waiguo shili* (foreign forces), while Zhu suggested that those *caozhong, suoshi* (controlled and instigated) by outside forces should be apprehended. The source is not clear on whether these were speeches in a meeting or written comments on policy documents.

42. *Cheng Ming*, no. 262 (August 1999), p. 7.

43. *Xinhua*, Beijing, October 25, 1999. Among the 59, 15 were *mimi* (classified), 24 *jimi* (secret), and 20 *juemi* (top secret) documents.

44. Zhou, “610 Office.” An official source confirms the existence of the “June 10th Office”: see *Zhongguo Zhongyang Dianshitai Nianjian, 2001* [China central television yearbook, 2001] (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2001), p. 75.

Falungong leadership in all provinces, information on Li Hongzhi's involvement with the April 25 siege of Zhongnanhai, previous Falungong protest rallies in the provinces, and cases of deaths, illnesses, and insanity allegedly caused by practicing Falungong. Information on local Falungong leaders was used to conduct the manhunt. Information on their activities was published on July 23 to show probable cause for their arrest and detention,⁴⁵ and was presented in the series of press conferences held by four State Council agencies on the same day.⁴⁶

Four days earlier, based on the findings of the investigation, the Politburo resolved to ban the Falungong in its July 19 meeting.⁴⁷

II. Policy-making and Enforcement Institutions

In dealing with the Falungong, which set of institutions did the regime rely on to formulate and execute its plans of action? As a first order choice, the regime could authorize an existing formal institution or could establish an ad hoc committee to handle the case. The former could be a ministerial-level agency, or a supra-ministerial coordinating committee. Should the regime decide to establish an ad hoc committee, its second choice would be to decide on its composition, selecting among several regulatory and law enforcement bureaucracies that had jurisdiction over the congregation. The third institutional choice is the extent of top Party echelon leadership and involvement. Here, we want to analyze the extent to which the Politburo collectively, or its top leaders individually, initiated or merely approved the policy recommendations made by subordinates; which Party organization and which Party leader were assigned by the Politburo to lead and oversee the operation; how often the designated group met to deliberate on the Falungong; and how many documents it issued in its name. This section analyses these three sets of institutional choices made by the regime. To provide some background, the section begins with descriptions of the top policy-making institutions relating to law enforcement, and of the institutionalization of the process of managing the Falungong crisis, before examining the respective roles of these institutions in the case.

The Central Policy-making Organizations

The highest policy-making body in China is the 22-member Politburo and its more elite Standing Committee, which had seven members in 1999.⁴⁸ Be-

45. *Renmin Ribao*, July 23, 1999. Reports of arrests of top local Falungong leaders were published in *Renmin Ribao* in late July and early August 1999.

46. Xinhua, Beijing, July 23, 1999.

47. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 68.

48. *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Ziliao Shouce* [Handbook of information on the People's

cause all major policies in China are deliberated by this body, and its members are sometimes away from Beijing, the Politburo takes charge of making major policy decisions but leaves the operational details to lower organizational echelons. Below the Politburo, two supra-ministerial coordinating committees are empowered to deal with issues of law enforcement and social order: the Central Legal and Political Affairs Committee (CLPAC) and the Central Social Order Unified Management Committee (CSOUMC).⁴⁹

At the time, both of these were umbrella organizations headed by Luo Gan, who specialized in domestic security issues in the Central Secretariat, the executive arm of the Politburo. In this capacity, Luo held leading positions in both the Party and the state in security and law enforcement, and served concurrently as a State Councilor, as well as a member of the Politburo and the Central Secretariat. CLPAC had 10 members, comprising Luo as secretary, Chen Jiping and Zhang Geng as deputy secretary-generals, in addition to seven members who headed agencies in the regime's law-enforcement apparatus—Xiao Yang (president of the Supreme People's Court), Han Xubin (chief procurator of the Supreme People's Procuracy), Jia Chunwang (minister of Public Security), Xu Yongyao (minister of State Security), Gao Changli (minister of Justice), Zhou Ziyu (deputy director of the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army), and Wang Shenjun (chief of staff of CLPAC).⁵⁰

CSOUMC was a larger organization also headed by Luo Gan as its director, with three deputy directors—Cao Zhi (vice president of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress), Supreme Court President Xiao Yang, and Chief Procurator Han Xubin, the latter two mentioned above. CSOUMC had 39 members, consisting of heads and deputy heads of Party organizations (Propaganda, Organization, Disciplinary Committee, Trade Unions, Women's Federation, Chinese Youth League), the armed forces (General Political Department, Chief of Staff), and 29 ministries, commissions, and bureaus in the State Council, including not only the law-enforcement agencies (Public Security, State Security, Justice, Armed Police), but also most of the non-economic production ministries.⁵¹ All members of CLPAC not only served on CSOUMC, but also were listed on top of the committee roster.⁵² The former then, would appear to be on a higher hierarchical stratum than the latter.

Republic of China] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1999), p. 148.

49. Its Chinese title is Zhongyang zhi'an zhili weiyuanhui; see *Zhongguo Falü Nianjian, 2000*, pp. 1269–70.

50. *Zhongguo Falü Nianjian, 2000* [China law yearbook, 2000], p. 1269.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 1270.

52. Aside from Luo, Xiao, and Han, who were directors and deputy directors of CSOUMC,

Institutionalization of the Management Process

Neither CLPAC nor CSOUMC appears to have played a leading role in the regime's actions to deal with the Falungong. The process appeared to have evolved in two stages. In the early stage of the crisis, the regime was in a reactive mode, using different assortments of government agencies assembled at short notice to deal with the Falungong, depending on the task at hand. The point man was invariably Luo Gan, secretary for domestic security in the Central Secretariat, who communicated directly with his immediate superiors, the secretary-general of the Party, and the premier of the State Council, both of whom were personally involved in the process during this early stage. The process was institutionalized from June 10 on, when the "June 10th Office" and a separate ad hoc committee with a regular membership both were created to engage in more proactive planning of the suppression campaign. Luo Gan still headed the first ad hoc committee. Later, the appointment of a PSC member to head a larger committee appears to have replaced Luo, and reduced the need for the intervention of President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji.

The makeshift arrangements in the early stage of the crisis are evident through a look at the siege of April 25. The emergency meeting called by Luo Gan at Zhongnanhai was attended by top officials of the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security, the Armed Police Headquarters, the Central Security Forces Bureau, the General Office of the Central Committee, the General Office of the State Council, and related Beijing municipal departments.⁵³ The meeting was not convened in the name of CLPAC or CSOUMC, whose roles remained peripheral throughout the process. In a dialogue with the five Falungong representatives later the same day, it was also not the two committees which represented the regime. Luo Gan was the government's main spokesman, accompanied by Central Committee General Office Deputy Director Wang Gang, Beijing Municipality Executive Deputy Mayor Meng Xueliang, Vice Secretary-General of the State Council Cui Zhanfu, and Jia Chunwang, mentioned earlier. They were later joined by Zhu Rongji, who persuaded the Falungong practitioners to disperse.⁵⁴ Zhu, Wang, and Meng were not members of either committee. In the PSC meeting the following day, it was again Luo Gan who made the main presentation on the Falungong; Jia Qinglin, party secretary for the Beijing Municipality, made a supplementary presentation.⁵⁵ Jia served on neither

Jia, Xu, Gao, Zhou, and Wang were listed as the top five of the 39 members, with Chen Jiping and Zhang Geng listed as 22nd and 23rd. *Zhongguo Falü Nianjian*, 2000, pp. 1269-70.

53. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 54-55.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

TABLE 3 *Regime Agents Dealing with the Falungong, April 25–July 20, 1999*

| <i>Event/task</i> | <i>Primary Agent</i> | <i>Group</i> | <i>Personal Involvement of Top Party Leaders</i> |
|---|----------------------|--|--|
| Emergency meeting, 4/25 | Luo Gan | Top officials of the Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of State Security, Central Security Forces Bureau, Central Committee General Office, State Council General Office, Beijing Municipal Depts. | Jiang instructed Luo to convene meeting |
| Meeting with Falungong representatives, 4/25 | Luo Gan | Central Committee General Office, minister of Public Security, State Council deputy secretary, Beijing executive deputy mayor | Zhu Rongji participated in the meeting |
| Politburo meeting, 4/26 | Luo Gan | Luo Gan, Beijing party secretary, made presentation | Politburo Standing Committee in attendance |
| June 10 Office | Luo Gan | N/A | N/A |
| Central Leading Group for dealing with the Falungong, est. 6/17 | Li Lanqing | Li Lanqing, Luo Gan, Ding Guang'en, minister of Public Security, minister of State Security, Central Committee General Office deputy chair, State Council deputy secretary-general | Li Lanqing |

SOURCE: Ibid.

committee. As shown in Table 3, from April 25 to June 10 there was no group with fixed membership dealing with the Falungong.

The process was institutionalized later, when Luo Gan was appointed to head the "June 10th Office."⁵⁶ Thereafter, a designated agency replaced the

56. See Zhou, "610 Office."

shifting groups to deal with the Falungong. Instead of merely reacting to events as they arose, the office was given a proactive mission to devise an overall solution for the Falungong problem.⁵⁷ The function of the agency was later subsumed under the Central Leading Group on Dealing with the Falungong (CLGDF), established June 17 by a Politburo resolution.⁵⁸ Headed by PSC member Li Lanqing, CLGDF's deputies were Luo Gan and Ding Guang'en, concurrently minister of Propaganda and State Council vice premier.⁵⁹ Other members reportedly included Jia Chunwang, Xu Yongyao, Cui Zhanfu, and Hu Guangbao (deputy chairman of the General Office of the Central Committee).⁶⁰ In subsequent reports on regime operations dealing with the Falungong, Li Lanqing, rather than Luo Gan, was credited in official reports.

Analysis of Institutional Choice

In dealing with the Falungong, the foregoing section suggests a pattern of regime institutional choice that focused on public security issues rather than overall management of the Falungong; used ad hoc committees rather than permanent agencies; and vested power in the top Party echelon rather than functional state bureaucracies.

First, the focus on public security can be seen in the composition of the three ad hoc shifting groups that dealt with the Falungong on April 25 and 26, as well as CLGDF. The core of the seven-member CLGDF was the public security triumvirate (minister of Public Security, minister of State Security, Secretary of the Central Legal Political Affairs Commission), constituting the largest functional group within the body, while Li represented the Politburo Standing Committee, Hu the Central Committee, and Cui the State Council. Conspicuously absent in CLGDF were two sets of bureaucratic players. There was no representation from the triad of the administration of justice (Ministry of Justice, Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuracy), or the National People's Congress, which had enacted laws regulating social order and religious activities, all of whose representatives served on CLPAC. In addition, absent from the ad hoc committee were several regulatory agencies that had jurisdiction over the Falungong—the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which accredits social organizations; the Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Athletic Commission, which respectively managed religious organizations

57. Ibid.

58. The group's Chinese name is Zhongyang Chuli Falungong Lingdao Xiaozu. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 66–67.

59. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 67.

60. *Cheng Ming*, no. 262 (August 1999), p. 6, reports that an "April 25th Special Committee" was formed, headed by Hu Jintao, PSC member. It was probably referring to the same ad hoc committee but with mistaken identity.

and those practicing the popular mental/physical discipline *qigong*, and three agencies to which the Falungong had applied for registration, the National Minority Affairs Commission, the China Buddhist Federation, and the United Front Department.⁶¹ It may be recalled that these two sets of bureaucratic actors were also absent from the Zhongnanhai emergency meeting of April 25, from the subsequent dialogue with Falungong representatives, and from the PSC meeting the following day. It should thus be evident that the ad hoc groups of April 25 and 26, as well as both the “June 10th Office” and CLGDF, were structured more as a nimble task force to deal with the Falungong, and less as an overall organization with a broader mandate to manage other attendant legal and social issues relating to the congregation.

Second, in the choice of an ad hoc committee rather than the permanent law-enforcement agencies to deal with the Falungong, it can be noted that both CLPAC and CSOUMC were general-purpose coordinating bodies designed to be inclusive of most central Party, state, and military agencies with law-enforcement portfolios. They lacked the policy specificity relating to a major case like the Falungong. Many of the 43 constituent members of CSOUMC, in particular the State Tourism Bureau, the Ministry of Construction, the Insurance Supervision Management Bureau, and the State Birth Planning Committee, had little policy connection with the Falungong. Both committees were established to manage and formulate policy on major, national law-enforcement issues for the regime, the more important of which included armed robberies, drug trafficking, crime syndicates, organized gambling, abduction and sale of women and children, college campus safety, as well as airline and railroad security.⁶² A major case like the Falungong’s that required focused attention and sustained executive action would be more appropriate for a task force in the form of an ad hoc committee, where members are chosen for their specific functional expertise, personal availability, and institutional resources relating to the mission in question.

Third, the foregoing also suggests that decision-making power was vested in the top Party echelon rather than in functional state bureaucracies or supra-ministry coordinating bodies. This could be due, in large measure, to the fragmentary authority structure of the state bureaucracy that pushes policy issues to higher levels of political organization for consensus building and conflict resolution.⁶³ In the case of the Falungong, the organizational structure of the 43-member CSOUMC was clearly too diffuse, and the coordinat-

61. “Falungong zhenshi di gushi” at <<http://www.Minghui.org>>.

62. See Table of Contents of *Zhongguo Shehui Zhi’an Zonghe Zhili Nianjian, 1995–1996* [Yearbook of unified management of social order in China, 1995–1996] (Beijing: Falü chubanshe, 1998), pp. 1–29.

63. Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy-making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 22–24.

ing problems too endemic, for effective management of a major domestic security issue. While smaller, the 10-member CLPAC was made up of the top executives of the law-enforcement agencies, too preoccupied with managing their own policy portfolios to devote sustained quality time to the case. The Politburo solution was to exercise strong top-echelon Party leadership in dealing with the Falungong. This was manifested in the appointment of two Politburo members, Luo Gan and Ding Guang'en, and PSC member Li Lanqing, to handle the case. It can also be seen in the prominent role of the Central Secretariat, in the Politburo agenda, and in the personal involvement of several PSC members.

As noted earlier, from April 25 to June 17, responsibility for dealing with the Falungong was entrusted to Luo Gan of the Central Secretariat. Headed by its secretary-general, Jiang Zemin, the Central Secretariat acts as the top executive and policy-coordinating body of the Party. In this capacity, Luo Gan was able to call on top government and Party officials to work on the case, and draw on their institutional resources. In addition, he had direct access to Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji,⁶⁴ both of whom were personally interested and engaged in dealing with the Falungong. During the April 25 siege, Zhu volunteered to meet with the Falungong representatives, while Jiang set the guidelines for Zhu to respond to the demands of the Falungong practitioners.⁶⁵ Earlier that day, Jiang had instructed Luo Gan to convene the emergency meeting at Zhongnanhai.⁶⁶ Jiang's characterization of the Falungong, the ad hoc committee he proposed to establish, and the strategy he outlined became the official Party policy to deal with the Falungong.

Under the strong personal leadership of Jiang Zemin, the Politburo and the Central Committee also took deliberate action. Within three months of the siege, and notwithstanding the foreign crises enumerated above plus domestic crises including a major flood in the Yangtze River basin, the Politburo had met three times, and the PSC at least once, to discuss the Falungong.⁶⁷ On April 25, an emergency notice on the perils of the Falungong was issued by the General Office of the Central Committee, co-signed by its counterpart at the State Council, and sent through the Party and state hierarchy down to the county bureau cadres. An additional six documents were issued by the Central Committee by July 20, plus additional edicts promulgated on and after

64. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 54–56.

65. Jiang emphasized that sit-ins and demonstrations in Zhongnanhai would be absolutely forbidden, but added that the regime had not opposed *qigong* practice or ordered it banned. See Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 56–57.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 65, 68, reported the April 26, June 17, and July 19 meetings. *Beijing Zhichun* (June 2001), pp. 10–12, reported the June 7 meeting.

July 22.⁶⁸ Dealing with the Falungong, then, was a top priority item on the Politburo agenda in the early summer of 1999. In contrast to the inaction of the Politburo and the ambivalence of Zhao Ziyang in the first 10 days of the 1989 Democracy Movement, the Politburo and Jiang a decade later was decisive and acted with expeditious deliberation.

III. Target Selection

In striking at the Falungong, the regime had to define its targets very clearly. The number of Falungong practitioners ranged widely, from two to 40 million in official estimates,⁶⁹ to 70 to 80 million in Falungong sources.⁷⁰ After due diligence, the special committee that formed to deal with the Falungong used 2.3 million as the number of Falungong practitioners inside China.⁷¹

Even at the lowest end of the wide range of estimates, the 2.3 million practitioners presented a formidable problem for the regime's law-enforcement agencies, public security, the procuracies, and the courts. Of the troika, only data for the procuratorial system are readily available for 1999, when its total staff size was 226,157, among them being: 13,725 president procurators and deputy president procurators; 111,358 procurators; 43,697 assistant procurators; 21,631 clerks; and 10,533 marshals.⁷² Since press reports indicate that the prosecution of a Falungong practitioner generally involved several procuratorial staff members, the procuracy system in 1999 was clearly inadequate to handle the extraordinary caseload of 2.3 million. The enormity of the mission can also be seen in the number of cases processed by the court system. In 1998, courts in China processed a general total of 5,880,759 cases, and closed 5,864,274.⁷³ The great majority of these were civil cases (62.4%), followed by economic disputes (26.9%).⁷⁴ Only 480,374 criminal cases closed that year, the largest categories among which were burglaries, thefts, and other infringements on the property of others (212,999), followed by physical assault, homicide, and other infringements on the person and rights of other citizens (163,501). As shown in Table 4, obstructing social order (46,399), endangering public security (27,490), and endangering state security (208), offenses for which the regime planned to indict the Falungong

68. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), pp. 58, 68.

69. Two million was given in *Renmin Ribao*, August 15, 1999, p. 1; 40 million was reported in *Nanfang Ribao* [Southern Daily], March 18, 1999, p. 11.

70. "Falungong zhenshi di gushi" in <<http://www.Minghui.org>>. On the high end, one Falungong leader in Guangdong Province claimed that the movement had 130 million followers. *Nanfang Ribao*, July 27, 1999, p. 2.

71. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 67.

72. *Zhongguo Falü Nianjian*, 2000, p. 1212.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 1021.

74. *Ibid.*

TABLE 4 *Criminal Case Load and Processing in China's Procuracies and Courts, 1998*

| Cases | Arrests Authorized | | Cases Prosecuted | | Cases Closed |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | # of Cases | # of Persons | # of Cases | # of Persons | |
| Total no. | 403,210 | 598,101 | 403,145 | 584,763 | 480,374 |
| Endangering state security | 204 | 532 | 186 | 555 | 208 |
| Endangering social order | 23,575 | 26,787 | 27,141 | 30,015 | 27,490 |
| Obstructing social order | 45,984 | 76,540 | 43,520 | 69,177 | 46,399 |

SOURCE: Author compiled, drawing on *Zhongguo Falü Nianjian* [China law yearbook, 1999], pp. 1021, 1026.

practitioners, totaled only 74,097 cases, and constituted a small percentage (15%) of criminal cases closed in 1998.⁷⁵ The normal monthly caseload for criminal cases relating to social order and public security issues for the courts and procuracies in 1998 was thus slightly over 6,000 cases. At this rate and with the conservative figure of a 2.3 million caseload, it would take the procuracies and the courts over 33 years to prosecute and try all the Falungong practitioners should the regime decide to do so. Clearly then, the regime needs to choose its targets.

The first-order question for the regime, then, was to determine when it should make arrests and who should be arrested, detained, interrogated, and prosecuted. Should it focus on the urban areas where the Falungong sites were more active and their organizational bases were located, or the rural areas where 70% of the practitioners could be found? Should the arrests be done in waves in order of priority, or executed in a single strike for maximum policy impact and minimum fugitive evasion? Should the regime apprehend only the leaders, or the rank and file as well? Should priority be attached to those persons who had organized protest rallies challenging regime authority, or also those who had participated in collective action, while excluding those who only meditated?

In actual operations, arrests appear to have been made in three waves. Even before mass arrests connected with the July 22 ban, some Falungong leaders in the armed forces were already placed in custody.⁷⁶ Outside of the armed forces, the first strike was planned for midnight July 21, 39 hours before the official announcement of the ban.⁷⁷ The strike in fact began a day earlier, on July 20, to preempt the effect of a leak of the Politburo decision to

75. *Ibid.* The figures include only those in first trial, not appellate, cases.

76. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 69.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

ban the Falungong.⁷⁸ According to the Zong article, an internal source reported that 5,600 Falungong practitioners were detained on July 20, an overwhelming majority of them were released after they wrote a repentance document (*huiguoshu*) and pledged to withdraw from the organization.⁷⁹ More details were provided in the Hong Kong magazine *Cheng Ming*, which reported that arrests were made in 22 cities, resulting in the apprehension of 150 Falungong leaders, including those who had organized the Zhongnanhai incident, and also a protest rally in Tianjin in late April, as well as people who published Falungong books after they were banned.⁸⁰ In all, *Cheng Ming* reported, by July 24 the regime had summoned and interrogated (*chuanxin*) 4,525 individuals; held in custody and investigated (*shourong shencha*) 1,748; and arrested and investigated (*koulou shencha*) 427 Falungong practitioners.⁸¹ The sets of figures from both sources are quite similar and consistent, with the later Hong Kong report adding around 1,000 detainees in the ensuing two days.

After the late July arrests, a renewed and even larger arrest campaign was launched in October 1999. The promulgation of new regulations in the National People's Congress in late October criminalizing "cults" broadened the scope and invested law enforcement agencies with new powers to arrest and prosecute Falungong practitioners.⁸² The uneventful passage of the 50th anniversary of the PRC removed the regime's caution over taking severe measures to maintain social order. Thus empowered and emboldened, the authorities made more arrests, bringing the total number of Falungong detainees to more than 20,000 by October.⁸³ Even with this total, the number of practitioners detained and arrested three months after the official ban was less than 1% of the Falungong congregation within China.

78. Ibid. *Cheng Ming* (August 1999), p. 8, reported the arrests began on July 19.

79. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 70.

80. These were Beijing, Tianjin, Shijiazhuang, Dalian, Shenyang, Weifang, Yantai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Linyungang, Taiyuan, Datong, Changzhi, Zhangjiakou, Benxi, Yangchuan, Jinzhou, and four other unnamed cities. *Cheng Ming* (August 1999), p. 8.

81. Ibid. It reports that the original source was the July 24 Communiqué of the Central Social Order Unified Management Committee.

82. The regulation was passed by the 12th Plenum of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, convened from October 25–31, 1999, entitled "The Decision on Dissolving Cult Organizations, Preventing and Punishing Cult Activities" (in Chinese). *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui Changwu Weiyuanhui Gongbao* [Bulletin of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China], no. 6 (November 15, 1999), pp. 564–67. Article 1 of the regulation criminalizes the disruption of social order and endangering the life, property, safety, and economic development of citizens and the masses by cults.

83. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 71. The source was not clear on whether the 20,000 comprised new detainees in the October 2002 campaign, or cumulative detainees since July 22, 1999.

Differentiating Offenders

How did the authorities deal with these detainees? At 20,000, the number of detainees was more than the normal three-month case load for criminal cases related to public security and social order issues processed by the procuracy and court systems. To differentiate among the detainees, the regime worked out guidelines for separate treatment of different types of offense, before suppression. Issued on the same day as the official ban, a statement of Zheng Qinghong, minister of Organization of the Party, made four sets of basic distinctions: (1) common Falungong practitioners should be distinguished from the *gugan* (leaders); (2) common management leaders be distinguished from planners and organizers with political intentions; (3) errant but contrite practitioners should be distinguished from those who refused to repent; (4) those who made errors before the Party announced its official ban should be distinguished from those who made mistakes after the announcement.⁸⁴

The specific treatment of different types of offenses was stipulated in an earlier Party document distributed to the Party organizations in the central Party and government agencies, armed forces, mass organizations, and to those on the provincial level. Issued on July 19 in the name of the Central Committee, it was first circulated internally within the Party, and then published in *Renmin Ribao* on July 23 as the first salvo of the official ban.⁸⁵ The document stipulates the following behavior as evidence of contrition, and both mental and organizational separation from the Falungong: Errant Party members need to cease: (1) practicing Falungong; (2) participating in its activities; (3) holding positions in its organization; (4) disseminating its materials; (5) providing venues, funds, and other assistance for its activities. In addition, they should engage in behavior labeled as “accruing merit” (*li gong*), viz., taking the initiative to expose, criticize, and repudiate Li Hongzhi and the Falungong, and to actively coordinate with the Party and related organizations to propagate the anti-Falungong program to the masses.⁸⁶

Policy guidelines were also specified in the July 19 Central Committee document to deal, in ascending order of severity, with five different types of detainees. First, general practitioners who voluntarily withdrew organizationally and distanced themselves ideologically from the Falungong would not be treated as problems requiring disciplinary action. Second, the common Falungong leaders who would change their behavior similarly and provide exposés of Falungong problems would not be further investigated (*zhuijiu*). Third, those who have repented or accrued merit after committing

84. *Renmin Ribao*, July 24, 1999.

85. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1999, p. 1.

86. Ming Xia and Shiping Hua, eds., “The Battle between the Chinese Government and the Falun Gong,” *Chinese Law and Government* 32:5 (September-October 1999), pp. 14–18, 51–55.

serious errors would be dealt with leniently or not be further investigated. Fourth, unrepentant leaders with serious errors would be asked to withdraw from the Party, and would be dismissed if they refused to withdraw voluntarily. Finally, the planners, organizers, and “backstage plotters” of anti-government rallies would be resolutely expelled from the Party.⁸⁷

The above two documents were issued by Party organizations and dealt with Party members who practiced Falungong. Two related documents, published on July 23 by the Communist Youth League and the State Council, issued the same set of guidelines for League members and civil servants.⁸⁸ A month after the ban, in an apparent reaction to the uneven and overzealous manner with which the investigation was conducted in some localities, the Central Committee and the State Council issued a joint circular on August 24 calling for “strict observance of policy demarcation lines for promoting the conversion of the great majority of Falungong practitioners.”⁸⁹ The earlier guidelines for classifying offenses and prescribing disciplinary action were further elaborated.

The August 24 joint circular defines the first group of general practitioners as those who practice Falungong to improve their health. These persons would not be asked to make self-examinations and self-criticisms, and their cases should be promptly closed. Core leaders who participated in protest rallies would also be extricated if they severed their organizational and ideological ties with Falungong, provided a clear account of their activities, and exposed Falungong problems. Lenient punishments would be dealt to core leaders who made serious mistakes but who clearly had separated themselves ideologically from Li Hongzhi and the Falungong, conscientiously confessed their role in illegal activities, recognized and voluntarily examined their mistakes, voluntarily declared that they would withdraw from Falungong organizations, actively exposed the inside story of Falungong, and genuinely desisted from future participation. They would be exempted from punishment if there were indications that they would accrue merit and redeem themselves. Finally, hard-core plotters and organizers would be dealt with according to law if they had deliberately disrupted social stability, and when their actions constituted crimes. The classification scheme is presented in Table 5.

Summary and Conclusion

This article has analyzed three operational questions of the Chinese government in banning the Falungong on July 23, 1999, by focusing on the timing

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–18.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–55.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–55.

TABLE 5 *Classification of Offense Type, Contrition Behavior, and Disciplinary Action for Falungong Detainees*

| <i>Degree of Involvement</i> | <i>Contritional Behavior</i> | <i>Disciplinary Action</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Rank and file practitioner | Withdrawal from Falungong Renouncing Falungong | None |
| Core leadership who participated in illegal activities | Withdrawal from Falungong Renouncing Falungong Exposing Falungong Accounting for their activities | None |
| Core leadership with serious errors | Voluntary withdrawal from Falungong Renouncing Falungong Exposing Falungong Conscientious confession Voluntary self-examination Abstaining from future Falungong activities Accruing merit | None |
| Core leadership with serious errors | Same as above behavior, but without accruing merit | Lenient |
| Core leadership with serious errors | Unrepentant | Asked to withdraw from Party, dismissal if they refuse |
| Errant core leaders who planned and organized political turmoil | Unrepentant | Expulsion from Party or CYL or dismissal from government post |

SOURCE: Ibid.

of the suppression, the choice of Party and government agencies involved in the suppression campaign, and the ways by which the regime specified its targets. First, the article investigated whether or not the timing was the result of policy indecision, Politburo preoccupation with two foreign policy crises, or the inherent need for time to prepare the case against the Falungong. Analyses of Politburo deliberations and the daily coverage of "Important News" in *Renmin Ribao* suggest that the three-month response time was not due to indecision within the Politburo, nor to its need to respond to the crises of the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in early May and the enunciation in early July by Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui of the "Two

State Theory.” The delay appears to have been warranted by the need for time to collect intelligence and to build a case against the Falungong.

Second, the article has examined which Party and government agencies the regime relied on to formulate and execute the action plan to strike at the Falungong. We found that the regime focused on public security issues rather than the overall management of the Falungong, used ad hoc arrangements rather than formal institutions, and invested power in the top Party echelon rather than functional state agencies. This pattern of institutional choice suggests the predominance of public security concerns, the primacy of Party leadership, especially that of the Central Secretariat and the Secretary-General, and the need and preference for extra-bureaucratic organizational solutions for crisis management.

Third, since the task of investigating, arresting, interrogating, prosecuting, and incarcerating the 2.3 million Falungong practitioners would overwhelm the procuracy and courts system—which in 1998 only processed 6,000 criminal cases a month relating to public security and social order—the article addresses the question of which groups among the practitioners were to be interrogated and released, which ones arrested and detained, and which ones prosecuted and imprisoned. The finding was that the regime differentiated between (1) followers and leaders; (2) management and political leaders; (3) those who erred before the official ban, and those who erred afterward, with more severe punishments meted out to the latter in the four sets of dyads.

Beyond the mechanics of repression, the foregoing analysis illuminates where the regime drew the scrimmage line in the political arena. Ten years after the Democracy Movement in 1989, unregistered organizations were tolerated, even those whose publications were repeatedly banned and which had mounted numerous protest rallies against local government agencies, provided they did not demonstrate against the central government. Zhongnanhai, the cloistered national headquarters of the Party and state, is still the Forbidden City that offers no quarter for trespassers, the sanctuary into which the unordained and unanointed cannot enter, much less demonstrate. Indeed, the prohibition applies not only to territorial space, but organizational membership. A main reason why the Falungong was suppressed so resolutely was its successful penetration into the inner core and top echelon of the Party, a fact that Jiang Zemin found both disturbing and intolerable.⁹⁰

The effective campaign with which the Falungong was crushed testifies to the enduring power of China’s party-state. Contrary to predictions that its collapse is probable, even imminent and certain,⁹¹ this study demonstrates that the regime does not lack the capacity to respond to political challenges,

90. Zong, *Zhu Rongji* (2002), p. 63.

91. Gordon Chang, *The Coming Collapse of China* (New York: Random House, 2001).

the will to utilize that capacity, and the ability to achieve intended results. Even in this reform era, as the party-state's ideological machinery lapses in controlling the minds of its citizenry, its household registration system fails in keeping peasants on their farms and youths in their domiciles, and as its neo-authoritarian system in the work place offers fewer carrots and sticks than before to coax and coerce,⁹² the regime has not lost its will and capacity to crush its domestic adversaries. Indeed, compared to the regime reaction in the 1986 and 1989 student movements, the Jiang Politburo was much more resolute and effective in dealing with the Falungong than its predecessors were with the students.

At the dawn of the 16th Party Congress and the post-Jiang era, it is uncertain what the future portends. To paraphrase Heraclitus, the regime may not use the same methods twice to deal with domestic challengers. The next generation of civic groups may learn from the mistakes of the Falungong and adapt their strategies accordingly. Regarding the regime, with five or more of the seven PSC members expected to retire, the Politburo expected to be headed by Hu Jintao is likely to differ from the present regime. Yet, whether it will be a gentler and kinder horticulturist who allows the blooming of some unplanted flowers, or an overvigilant gardener who nips any uncultivated sprout in the bud, remains to be seen. In the garden of Communist Chinese leaders, there have been both varieties.

92. Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).