The relationship of Mao’s and Schmitt’s political theories is complicated. Some ‘similarities’ between them have already been briefly summarized (see the conclusion of Chapter 4). This chapter further presents the relationship of their theories from the perspective of the politics of transition. It will give a clear answer to the second research question set at the beginning of this book. A detailed analysis of Mao’s and Schmitt’s theoretical relationship can help clear up an important obstacle to the reception of Schmitt’s political theory in China. Their theoretical differences will show that it is not reasonable to deny the significance of Schmitt’s theory on the basis of the judgment that Schmitt and Mao are similar. Exploring their theoretical relationship will also give us a chance to reflect on the issue of whether Mao’s theory contributes to an understanding of the politics of transition. I argued in the first three chapters that Schmitt’s political theory is helpful in providing theoretical resources to understand the politics of transition. If there are ‘similarities’ between Schmitt and Mao, will Mao’s conception of politics as class struggle, his understanding of homogeneity and his approach to protect the political order be of comparable value to the politics of transition? If not, what are the drawbacks of Mao’s political theory?

In order to explore their theoretical relationship and answer the questions raised above, this chapter analyzes the differences beneath some seemingly similar ideas in Mao’s and Schmitt’s political theories. There are five sections in this chapter. The first focuses on the similarities and differences in their understandings of the nature of
politics. Their conceptions of politics are helpful for understanding the nature of political activities in the extraordinary moments, notably the founding and protecting moments of the politics of transition. Political activities in these two moments cannot be totally regulated by law and procedures. Instead, politics in these moments is related to conflict. Some significant differences underlie their ‘similar’ conceptions of politics. The differences lie in the gap between the understanding of politics as involving the possibility of conflict, as in Schmitt’s theory, and as conflict itself, as in Mao’s. The analysis in Chapter 4 showed the lack of orientation towards ordinary politics in Mao’s political theory. This is its fundamental problem. The difference in their conceptions of politics reveals the first reason for the lack of orientation towards ordinary politics in the model of the politics of transition that is developed from Mao’s theory.

Section 5.2 explores the similarities and differences in their understanding of homogeneity. Homogeneity is important for the politics of transition. To both, homogeneity is an essential precondition for a collective entity’s political existence. In Schmitt’s political philosophy, a homogeneous people decides the form of political existence. The sovereign who represents the homogeneous people defends the political form in the state of exception. A similar understanding of homogeneity’s role is found in Mao’s theory. The first difference, however, lies in how they conceive homogeneity. The second is that Mao proposes some methods to continuously form homogeneity within the people. In Schmitt’s theory, however, the active formation of the people’s homogeneity is absent. This is the second reason for the lack of orientation towards ordinary politics in Mao’s model of the politics of transition.

Section 5.3 compares the role of the individual in the models of the politics of transition that are separately developed from Schmitt’s and Mao’s theories. Section 5.4 discusses their attitudes towards constitutional law’s relationship to political power. Although they rely on political power in similar ways, the difference between them is significant. For Schmitt, the homogeneous sovereign people conforms to constitutional law after its political decision to bring the new political order into existence. The sovereign, as the delegate of the sovereign people, reemerges in the state of exception to defend the political form of existence. By contrast, the homogeneous people