

The Central Committee Departments under Hu Jintao

Alice Lyman Miller

Over the year since the 17th Party Congress in October 2007, the main working departments of the Party Central Committee have seen significant turnover in leading personnel. Adjustments in the top leadership of these departments serve to strengthen party General Secretary Hu Jintao's hold on the Party apparatus well beyond his limited effort to do so in his first term as Party leader.

The Operational Core of the Central Party Apparatus

Among the dozen bodies organizationally subordinate to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), six manage core functions that are critical to the work of the Party's decision-making elite, the Politburo, and its relations with other constituencies in the Party and in the broader political order. The Organization Department facilitates Politburo decisions on appointments and promotions throughout the political system. The Propaganda Department, together with the Party's daily newspaper *People's Daily* and semimonthly journal *Seeking Truth*, manages the Party's public presentation of its message in the media and other relevant channels. The United Front Work Department sustains the Party's relationships with associations and constituencies in broader Chinese society, while the International Liaison Department manages the Party's ties to foreign political parties and movements. The Policy Research Office coordinates research and advice relevant to ongoing leadership decision-making and drafting of major policy decisions. The General Office provides administrative and logistical support to the functioning of the Politburo and Secretariat leadership itself.

The remaining half dozen Central Committee departments play roles that are essentially secondary to the work of the Politburo elite and subordinate to the core six. These include the Party History and Documentary Research Offices, the Party Secrets Committee General Office (which overlaps with the State Secrets Bureau), and Work Committees for Central Committee and State Council Organs.

The ability of the Party general secretary to guide the work of the core Central Committee departments is a key element of his larger political power. In his first term as general secretary (2002–2007), Hu Jintao appeared to do little to extend and consolidate his power in the Central Committee departments by replacing officials from the Jiang Zemin era with his own people (see “Hu Jintao and the Party Apparatus,” *CLM* 15, Summer 2005). The flurry of appointments to these departments since the 17th CCP Congress in October 2007 appears to change that.

Beijing does not as a matter of course publicize rosters of officials serving in the Central Committee departments. PRC media do routinely publicize notices of changes in

the posts of director of the departments, but they do not do so for lower-ranking positions. The two departments that deal with the Party's external relations—the United Front Work Department and the International Liaison Department—have official websites on the Internet, and these do provide rosters, and in some instances brief biographical data, of their respective director and deputy directors, but nothing more. The *People's Daily* website *The People's Net* (Renminwang 人民网) maintains a running list of new appointments to Party and state institutions, but changes in the Central Committee departments are often not reflected in its postings.¹

As a consequence, gaining a comprehensive picture of appointments to the Central Committee departments is an exercise in analytical *pointillisme*. It involves the old-fashioned, labor-intensive kremlinological process of compiling lists of personnel in the departments from references to their public appearances in PRC media, noting in particular references to officials in department posts for the first time. Only by standing back and viewing the changes compiled in this manner can trends and patterns be discerned in the larger whole. This article reflects that method.

General Office

The Party General Office manages the communications and paper flow into leadership decision-making, arranges and maintains leadership office space and meeting rooms, administers leadership logistics and living arrangements, provides security for individual leaders and for the leadership as a whole, and supervises other services essential to the functioning of the leadership. The critical nature of the functions performed by the General Office on behalf of the Party leadership makes its staffing more politically sensitive than that of any of the other departments.

The post of General Office director, in particular, carries with it countervailing sensitivities. Ideally, on one hand, the director must serve the entire top leadership and enjoy its confidence that their interests and needs are served evenhandedly. On the other, the collaboration of the director is essential to the effectiveness of the Party general secretary in managing (and potentially dominating) the policymaking processes and politics of the leadership, and so the general secretary has a first-order interest in placing his own lieutenant in that post.

The appointment of Ling Jihua, Hu Jintao's personal secretary, as head of the General Office on the eve of the 17th Party Congress, replacing Wang Gang, therefore marks a major enhancement to Hu's power. Wang had served as director since March 1999, when he replaced Zeng Qinghong in the post, and his tenure through Hu Jintao's entire first term as general secretary made him a significant holdover from the Jiang Zemin era. His predecessor Zeng Qinghong had been Jiang Zemin's personal staff chief in Shanghai, and Zeng's appointment as General Office director in March 1993 thus came significantly earlier in Jiang's tenure as Party general secretary than Ling's did in Hu's.

Ling's connections to Hu Jintao go back to the early 1980s, when he served in national-level positions in the Communist Youth League (CYL) under Hu's leadership of that body. His service in the General Office began in 1995, while Hu was running the Party apparatus as executive secretary of the Party Secretariat, and Ling served as one of its deputy directors under Wang Gang from 1999–2007.

A round of retirements and new appointments to the General Office soon followed Ling's appointment as director. In addition to Ling, the General Office had three other deputy directors up through 2007, and all three have apparently retired. One, Fan Shijin, last appeared in that role in July 2007. Another, Mao Linkun, also stopped appearing in that role in 2007, and in March 2008 was mentioned in the media as a deputy to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a common post-retirement post for Party cadres. Meanwhile, PRC media began reporting the activities of Zhao Shengxuan 赵胜轩 as a new deputy director, including his accompanying Xi Jinping's inspection of earthquake damage in early July 2008. Zhao also has served since July 2007 as deputy director of the Central Committee Secrecy Committee, as the now retired Mao Linkun had up through 2007, suggesting that Zhao's General Office responsibilities involve the security of communications and information systems for the leadership.

The third deputy director was You Xigui, who served concurrently as commander of the Central Guard Bureau, the PLA bodyguard unit responsible for the personal security of the leadership. That You has retired from both posts is clear. PRC media have not referred to him as General Office deputy director since the 17th Party Congress, where he was not re-elected as an alternate member of the Central Committee. Also, an account in the usually reliable Hong Kong communist newspaper *Wen Wei Po* of anticipated changes among PLA leaders on the eve of the Party congress referred to You as "former" commander of the Central Guard Bureau (*Wen Wei Po*, 9 October 2007).²

You's retirement had been long anticipated. He had served in the Central Guard Bureau since 1963, became its deputy commander in 1985, and was promoted—during Jiang Zemin's tenure as Party general secretary and Zeng Qinghong's leadership of the General Office—to commander in 1994, and he began serving as General Office deputy director in 1998. He was appointed a major general in the PLA in 1990, lieutenant general in 1997, and full general in 2004, all promotions by Jiang Zemin. Born in 1939, You had long since reached mandatory retirement age for PLA generals. You may already have been on his way out in 2006, when he was not reported accompanying Hu Jintao as security chief on Hu's visit to the United States in April that year; by contrast, You had been reported accompanying Jiang Zemin in that role during Jiang's October 2002 U.S. visit.

In September 2007, the independent Hong Kong newspaper *Ming Pao* reported that You's replacement as Central Guard Bureau commander was Cao Qing 曹清, who had been You's deputy. Since the 17th Party Congress, there are no known references in PRC media to Cao in this new role, but reports on You Xigui in this role were rare and so the absence of references to Cao is not in itself surprising. Cao was elected an alternate

member of the 17th Central Committee, replicating You's Party standing until his retirement in 2007.

It is noteworthy, however, that Cao has not been mentioned serving concurrently as deputy director of the General Office. Instead, PRC media have several times since April 2008 mentioned a new man, Zhang Jianping 张建平, as a new deputy director. This appears to be the same man who was serving as deputy commander of PLA Air Force units under the Beijing Military Region up through 2007 and who is the son of deceased PLA Air Force Commander Zhang Dingfa.³ Zhang is a major general, the same rank as You Xigui when he was appointed Central Guard Bureau commander and then General Office deputy director. For reasons that can only be guessed at, the dual posts held by You Xigui appear to have been split between two men.

Organization Department

Li Yuanchao's appointment as director of the Organization Department on the eve of the 17th Party Congress, replacing He Guoqiang, consolidated Hu Jintao's power over the Party's personnel processes managed by the department. Li has long ties to Hu that go back to CYL service in the early 1980s, and some speculation in the independent Hong Kong and Western press preceding the Party congress predicted (erroneously) that Li would be implicitly designated Hu's successor.

Li's appointment brought with it several changes among the department's deputy directors. Zhao Hongzhu was transferred after seven years' service as deputy director to become party chief in Zhejiang Province. In addition, Wang Dongming, originally appointed to the Organization Department in 2002, was moved out and appointed concurrently director of the General Office of the Central Committee Central Organization Committee and of the State Administration for State Organ Affairs. Replacing them in late 2007 were Zhang Jinan 张纪南 and Wang Ercheng 王爾乘, both of whom were promoted from their posts of cadres bureau chiefs in the department. Finally, in August 2008, Chen Liuhai 陈留海 was appointed deputy director. There are no known prior media references to Chen to illuminate his background.

Three deputy directors remain in place in the recent round of department appointments, all are of relatively recent tenure in their positions: Li Jianhua (appointed in 2003), and Li Zhiyong and Ouyang Song (both appointed in 2005).

Propaganda Department

First appointed Propaganda Department director on the eve of the 2002 16th CCP Congress, Liu Yunshan remains in place. But lower-ranking staffing in the department has seen major turnover as part of a reshuffle of leaders in the larger propaganda system in April 2008. These changes began with the appointment of State Council Information

Office Director Cai Wu as minister of culture at the 11th National People's Congress in March. Thereafter, in early April, came:

- appointment of *People's Daily* Director Wang Chen as State Council Information Office director;
- promotion of *People's Daily* Editor-in-Chief Zhang Yannong to director of the paper;
- return of Wu Hengquan to *People's Daily*, this time as editor-in-chief, from his post as director of the Party journal *Seeking Truth*;
- promotion of *Seeking Truth* Editor-in-Chief Li Baoshan to director; and
- appointment of Propaganda Department Deputy Director Li Congjun as director of the Xinhua News Agency, replacing Liu Yunshan's mentor Tian Congming.

Public appearances by Wang Chen reported in PRC media confirm that he retains his post as Propaganda Department deputy director while serving concurrently as State Council Information Office chief; it is not clear from PRC media references whether Li Congjun retains his department post since moving to Xinhua. There have been no media indications that either Zhang Yannong or Wu Hengquan are serving concurrently as department deputy directors.

As part of the same reshuffle, Executive Deputy Director Ji Bingxuan was transferred in early April to become Party chief of Heilongjiang Province. Deputy Director Li Dongsheng made his last appearance in that post in early April, suggesting that he has retired. Deputy Director Gao Junliang last appeared in that role in July 2007 and was appointed CPPCC deputy in March 2008, suggesting that he has also retired.

Deputy Director Wang Taihua has remained in place through the April reshuffle in the department and continues to serve concurrently as director of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television. Deputy Director Luo Shugang was promoted to replace Ji Bingxuan as executive deputy director. Earlier, Zhai Weihua 翟卫华, formerly deputy director of the administrative office of the Central Committee for Guiding the Building of Spiritual Civilization, was appointed deputy director of the department in February 2008.

Finally, in November 2008 Propaganda Department Deputy Director Ouyang Jian was appointed vice minister of culture, following the removal of Yu Youjun from that post on charges of corruption. Ouyang's position as deputy director was filled by Jiao Li 焦利, formerly director of the Propaganda Department of the Liaoning Provincial Party Committee.

United Front Work Department

On 2 December 2007, Xinhua reported that Du Qinglin had replaced Liu Yandong as head of the Party's United Front Work Department. Up to that point, Du had served as Party chief in Sichuan Province.

Under Du's leadership, the roster of department deputy directors expanded from six to nine. The original six include: Executive Deputy Director Zhu Weiqun, who has served as department deputy since 1998; the Yanbian Korean-Chinese Lee Dek Su, who has served in the department since 1992; Huang Yuejin, Luo Zhihao, and Chen Xiqing, who were all appointed in 2003; and Stah (Si Ta), a Tibetan appointed in 2006, who, among other activities, toured the United States in late 2008 to proffer Beijing's perspective on Tibetan issues.

The three new deputies include:

- Yang Jing 杨晶, an ethnic Mongol who had served as governor of Nei Monggol since 2004 and who now serves concurrently as minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission;
- Quan Zhezhu 全哲洙, a Korean-Chinese who has served as deputy secretary of the Jilin Provincial Party Committee since 2002 and who also now serves concurrently as first deputy chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (China's Chamber of Commerce organization); and
- Long Lantian 龙兰田, who manages the Party's linkages in Hong Kong and Macao (*Wen Wei Po*, 28 November 2008).

International Liaison Department

Department Director Wang Jiarui retains his position in the wake of the Party congress, a position he has held since March 2003. His roster of deputies has changed only by the addition of one new man, Li Jinjun 李进军, in March 2007. As do the three other deputy directors, Li has extensive foreign experience. He served in the department for 18 years, from 1975 to 1993, and later served as ambassador in Yangon and Manila (2000–2007).

Policy Research Office

Wang Huning retains his position as office director, a position he has held since December 2002. His staff has seen no detectable changes, as all three of his deputies—Zheng Xinli, He Yiting, and Fang Li—have all appeared in that role as of late 2008.

Hu Jintao's Consolidation of Power

The leadership changes in the major Central Committee departments since the 17th CCP Congress markedly enhance Hu Jintao's dominance over this key element of the Party apparatus. In particular:

- Installation of his personal secretary as director of the General Office is a critical benchmark of a general secretary's power.
- Appointment of crony Li Yuanchao as head of the Organization Department aids his control over the Party appointment process.

- Liu Yunshan's political associations are ambiguous, but there is evidence of ties to Hu in his CYL service in Nei Monggol in the early 1980s, when Hu presided over that body at the national level.
- Liu Yandong had been a clear associate of Hu's as director of the United Front Work Department, but her replacement by Du Qinglin does not diminish his influence there. Du has clear links to Hu from his service as CYL chief in Jilin in the early 1980s.
- Wang Jiarui's promotion to director of the International Liaison Department goes back to the beginning of Hu's tenure as Party general secretary and so Wang likely owes his appointment to Hu, and his continued tenure undoubtedly reflects Hu's confidence in him.

Wang Huning's continued tenure as director of the Policy Research Office makes him the only clear holdover from the Jiang Zemin era. Wang had been a professor of international politics at Fudan University in Shanghai when he was recruited into Jiang Zemin's service by Jiang's staff chief Zeng Qinghong in the late 1980s. Wang was appointed deputy director of the Policy Research Office in 1998 and served as a major speechwriter for Jiang and as principal drafter of Jiang's political report to the 2002 16th CCP Congress.

Though originally a Jiang man, Wang apparently has gained Hu Jintao's confidence. Wang was appointed office director in December 2002, soon after Hu became Party general secretary. Wang accompanied Hu on his visit to the United States in April 2006, and he continues to serve Hu in important roles, including aiding in the drafting of Hu's work report to the 17th Party Congress.

Hu's consolidation of power over the Central Committee departments only at the beginning of his second term as general secretary replicates in general terms Jiang Zemin's accomplishment in the 1990s. As of 1993—four years into his tenure as general secretary—Jiang had managed to place only one of his own associates as leader of a major Central Committee department. That was Zeng Qinghong's appointment in 1993 as director of the General Office. In 1995, Hu had secured Zhang Qianjing's appointment as head of the Organization Department, and in the immediate wake of the 1997 15th CCP Congress, he had established nearly complete dominance over the departments.

The wave of new appointments in the Central Committee departments over the year since the 17th Party Congress means that many will likely remain in place after Hu retires as general secretary at the 18th CCP Congress in 2012. On one hand, this phasing-in of new people only in Hu's second term may be intended as a means to ensure continuity and stability in this key sector while succession takes place at the top. On the other hand, it also likely ensures some continuing degree of access and influence by Hu after he retires to the status of elder.

Notes

¹ The *China Directory*, published annually in Tokyo, included listings of Central Committee department officials that were generally accurate, but it evidently ceased publication in 2007. The PRC-based Internet

bulletin board *Junzhengshequ* 军政社区 also maintains listings of current Central Committee department leaders, but the authority of these postings is not clear and some entries are erroneous.

² Oddly, however, the roster of Central Committee department leaders posted on the *Renminwang* website continues to list You Xigui as commander of the Central Guard Bureau.

³ Zhang 张 is one of the most common surnames among Chinese, and Jianping 建平 (“establishing peace”) is a common given name, and so it is difficult to be certain precisely which “Zhang Jianping” this may be. Indeed, one Zhang Jianping was among the victims of a sensational murder in Shanghai in the summer of 2007, although the new appointee to the General Office is not likely that unfortunate man.