

Think National, Blame Local: Central-Provincial Dynamics in the Hu Era

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The alarming statistics on public protests recently released by the Chinese authorities have led some analysts to conclude that the Chinese regime is sitting atop a volcano of mass social unrest. But these statistics can also reaffirm the foresight and wisdom of Hu Jintao, especially his recent policy initiatives that place emphasis on social justice rather than GDP growth. The occurrence of these mass protests could actually consolidate, rather than weaken, Hu's power in the Chinese political establishment. Although Hu's populist policy shift seems to be timely and necessary, it may lead to a situation in which the public demand for government accountability undermines the stability of the country. Under this circumstance, Hu's strategy is to localize the social unrests and blame local leaders. This strategy is particularly evident in the case of Guangdong, which recently experienced some major public protests. An analysis of the formation of the current Chinese provincial leadership, including the backgrounds of 616 senior provincial leaders in the country, reveals both the validity and limitations of this strategy.

The ever-growing number of social protests in China has attracted a great deal of attention from those who study Chinese politics.¹ Any comprehensive assessment of the political and socioeconomic conditions in present-day China has usually—and rightly so—cited Chinese official statistics on “mass incidents.” The annual number of these mass incidents in the People's Republic of China (PRC), including protests, riots and group petitioning, rose from 58,000 in 2003 to 74,000 in 2004, and to 87,000 in 2005—almost 240 incidents per day!

These protests were often sparked by local official misdeeds such as uncompensated land seizures, poor response to industrial accidents, arbitrary taxes, and failure to pay wages. The frequency and number of deaths caused by coal mine accidents in the country, for example, were shamefully astonishing. Despite the recent shutdown of a large number of mines by the central government, in 2005 China's coal-mining industry still suffered 3,341 accidents, which resulted in 5,986 deaths.² Not surprisingly, these

alarming statistics have led some China analysts to conclude that the current Chinese regime is sitting atop a volcano of mass social unrest.³

The issue here is not whether the Chinese government has been beset by mass disturbances and public grievances; it has, of course. The real question is whether the new administration under the leadership of President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao will be able to prevent the country from spinning out of control. Two unusual phenomena have occurred since Hu and Wen assumed the top leadership posts in the spring of 2003. These two developments are extraordinarily important, but have been largely overlooked by overseas China analysts.

The Crisis Mode and the Need for a Policy Shift

The first development relates to the release of these statistics and the resulting crisis mode (*weiji yishi*). Hu and Wen intend to show both the Chinese public and the political establishment that there exists an urgent need for a major policy shift. It is crucial to note that all of these incidents and statistics made headlines in the Chinese official media during the past two or three years. Issues of governmental accountability, economic equality, and social justice have recently dominated political and intellectual discourse in the country. This was inconceivable only a few years ago when some of these statistics would have been classified as “state secrets.”

In direct contrast to his predecessor, Jiang Zemin, who was more interested in demonstrating achievements than admitting problems, Hu Jintao is willing to address challenging topics. More importantly, Hu has already changed China’s course of development in three significant ways: from obsession with GDP growth to greater concern about social justice; from the single-minded emphasis on coastal development to a more balanced regional development strategy;⁴ and from a policy in favor of entrepreneurs and other elites to a populist approach that protects the interests of farmers, migrant workers, the urban unemployed, and other vulnerable social groups.

These policy shifts are not just lip service. They have already brought about some important progress. For example, one can reasonably argue that Hu and Wen, more than any other leaders in contemporary China, are implementing the so-called western development strategy (*xibu kaifa zhanlue*) effectively. During the past five years, 60 major construction projects have been undertaken in the western region with a total investment of 850 billion yuan (US\$105.7 billion).⁵ Additionally, a new industrial renovation project in Chongqing will have a fixed asset investment of 350 billion yuan (US\$43.5 billion) in the next five years.⁶ Meanwhile, the so-called “northeastern rejuvenation” (*dongbei zhenxin*) and the “take-off of the central provinces” (*zhongyuan jueqi*), with direct input from Premier Wen, have also made impressive strides.⁷

During the past few years, Hu and Wen have taken many popular actions: reducing the tax burden on farmers, abolishing discriminatory regulations against migrants, ordering business firms and local governments to pay their debts to migrant

workers, restricting land lease for commercial and industrial uses, shaking hands with AIDS patients, visiting the families of coal mine explosion victims, and launching a nationwide donation campaign to help those in need.⁸ These policy changes and public gestures by Hu and Wen suggest that current top Chinese leaders are not only aware of the tensions and problems confronting the country, but also are willing to respond to them in a timely, and sometimes proactive, fashion.

To a certain extent, the large number of social protests occurring in China today reaffirms the foresight and wisdom of the new leadership, especially its sound policy shift. In an interesting way, the occurrence of these mass protests could actually consolidate, rather than undermine, Hu and Wen's power in the Chinese political establishment. This, of course, does not mean that the Hu-Wen leadership is interested in enhancing social tensions in the country. On the contrary, their basic strategy is to promote a "harmonious society." In their judgment, the Chinese public awareness of the frequency of mass unrest and the potential for a national crisis actually highlights the pressing need for social stability in this rapidly changing country.

Localization of Social Protests and the Blame Game

The second interesting new phenomenon in the Hu era is that a majority, if not all, of these mass protests were made against local officials, government agencies, or business firms rather than the central government. During the past few years, there has been an absence of unified nationwide protests against the central authorities.⁹ This does not mean that the country has been immune from major crises on a national scale. In the spring of 2003, for example, China experienced a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic, a devastating health crisis that paralyzed the urban life and economic state of the country for several months. The regime survived this "China's Chernobyl" largely because new top leaders like Hu, Wen, and Vice Premier Wu Yi effectively took charge and confronted the challenge.

It is not a coincidence that protesters often state that their petitions are very much in line with Hu and Wen's appeal for social justice and governmental accountability. The Chinese public, including public intellectuals, believe that the new national leadership has made an important policy shift to improve the lives of weaker social groups.¹⁰ In the eyes of the public, mass protests against local officials are well justified because these local officials refused to implement policy changes made in Zhongnanhai. In Heilongjiang's Jixi City, for example, the municipal government delayed payment to a construction company for years; consequently, migrant workers employed by the company did not receive their wages. When Premier Wen learned of the situation in Jixi, he requested that the municipal government solve the problem immediately. However, the local officials sent a false report to the State Council, claiming the issue was resolved even though migrant workers remained unpaid. Only after both the Jixi protests and Wen's request were widely reported by the Chinese media did the municipal government begin to pay migrant workers.¹¹ A recent article published in *China Youth Daily* used the term "policies decided at Zhongnanhai not making it out of Zhongnanhai" to characterize

this prevalent phenomenon of local resistance to the directives of the central government.¹²

In recent years, the Chinese public, especially vulnerable social groups, seem to hold the assumption that the “bad local officials” often refuse to carry out the right policies of the “good national leaders.” Apparently due to this assumption, mass protests often occur shortly after top leaders visit a region; protesters frequently demand the implementation of the socioeconomic policies initiated by the central government.¹³ To a great extent, the increasing number of protests in China today can be seen as a result of the growing public consciousness about protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable social groups. Additionally, a multitude of Chinese lawyers who devote their careers to protecting the interests of such groups have recently emerged in the country. They have earned themselves a new Chinese name, “the lawyers of human rights protection” (*weiquan lushi*).¹⁴

Chinese journalists have also become increasingly bold in revealing various economic, sociopolitical, and environmental problems in the country. To a certain extent, the Chinese central authorities encourage the official media to serve as a watchdog over various lower levels of governments. For over a decade, local officials have been anxious when reporters from China’s leading investigative television news programs such as *Focus (Jiaodian fangtan)* visited their localities. Many local leaders were fired because the media revealed either serious problems in their jurisdiction or outrageous wrongdoings by the officials themselves.

The Hu-Wen leadership’s appeal for transparency of information has provided an opportunity for liberal Chinese journalists to search for real progress in media freedom throughout the country. The Chinese regime under Hu Jintao is apparently not ready to lift the ban on freedom of the press just yet. In recent years, several editors of newspapers and magazines have been fired, their media outlets banned, and several journalists have been jailed.¹⁵ But at the same time, some Chinese scholars and journalists such as Jiao Guobiao, a journalism professor at Beijing University, and Li Datong, an editor of *China Youth Daily*, continue to voice their dissent, and have even sued the top officials of the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee.¹⁶

An interesting recent phenomenon in the Chinese media is that some media outlets based in one city or province are often inclined to report the problems and misconducts of leaders in other cities or provinces. Some local officials have banned the media’s negative coverage of their own jurisdiction. But meanwhile, they have actually encouraged the practice of “cross-region media supervision” (*meiti yidi jiandu*). It is in their interest to have their potential rivals in other regions being criticized by the media, because any damage to their potential rivals’ career could enhance their own chance for promotion. This practice evidently damaged the interests of too many provincial leaders. In the fall of 2005, the authorities of 17 provinces, including Hebei and Guangdong, jointly submitted a petition to the central government, asking to ban the “cross-region media supervision.”¹⁷

The dilemma for Hu and his colleagues in the central leadership is that their populist policy shift seems to be timely and necessary on the one hand, but on the other hand it can lead to public demand for social justice, economic equality, and government accountability, all of which can undermine the political stability of the regime. Because of this dilemma, Hu's strategy has been to localize the social unrest. For the sake of maintaining the vital national interest of political stability, local governments should assume responsibility and accountability for the problems in their jurisdictions. If there is social unrest or other crises, local leaders will be blamed. One may call this strategy of the Chinese central leadership "think national, blame local."

An important component of this scheme is the new regulations on complaint letters and petition visits that were adopted by the State Council in May 2005. The new regulations emphasize "territorial jurisdiction" and the "responsibility of the departments in charge."¹⁸ Chinese citizens who have complaints and petitions are not encouraged to come to the central government in Beijing. Instead, they are told to go through a step-by-step procedure, submitting their complaints and petitions to the appropriate local government level. In the words of an official of the State Letters and Visits Bureau, the new regulations aim to not only protect "the lawful rights of people with legitimate complaints," but also to make "local authorities more accountable."¹⁹ This new procedure will place political pressure on local leaders while enabling the central leadership to avoid blame.

The central leadership's "blame game" has also been facilitated by an allocation of non-economic quotas for provincial governments. In February 2006, Li Yizhong, chair of the State Administration of Work Safety, announced that in order to reduce the number of coal mine explosions and other industrial incidents in the country, the central government would evaluate the performance of provincial governments not only by economic growth, but by four additional indicators: the industrial death rate per 100 million *yuan* of the GDP, the death rate of work accidents per 100,000 employees in commercial businesses, the death rate per 10,000 automobiles, and the death rate per one million tons produced by coal mines.²⁰

The populist approach of the Hu-Wen leadership has generated or reinforced the public assumption that social protests occurred because local leaders did not comply with the policies of the central government, some officials were notoriously corrupt, and/or these local bosses were incompetent. In the eyes of many people in China, "blaming local" is well justified. Some local governments have constantly resisted the directives of the central government and violated national laws and regulations.

This phenomenon of local resistance to the central authorities is certainly not new to China. The Chinese saying, "The mountain is high and the Emperor is far away," vividly epitomizes this enduring Chinese trend of local administration. However, the abuse of power by local officials for economic gain has increased during China's market transition, especially since the mid-1990s when the land lease for commercial and industrial uses spread throughout the country.

A “Wicked Coalition” between Real Estate Firms and Local Governments

It has been widely reported in the Chinese media that business interest groups have routinely bribed local officials and formed a “wicked coalition” (*hei tongmeng*) with local governments.²¹ Some Chinese observers believe that various players associated with the property development have emerged as one of the most powerful interest groups in present-day China.²² According to Sun Liping, a sociology professor at Qinghua University, the real estate interest group has accumulated tremendous economic and social capital during the past decade.²³ Ever since the real estate bubble in Hainan in the early 1990s, this interest group has consistently attempted to influence governmental policy and public opinion. The group includes not only property developers, real estate agents, bankers, and housing market speculators, but also some local officials and public intellectuals (economists and journalists) who behave or speak in the interest of that group.²⁴

This explains why the central government’s macroeconomic control policy (*hongguan tiaokong*) has failed to achieve its intended objectives. A survey of 200 Chinese officials and scholars conducted in 2005 showed that 50 percent believed that China’s socioeconomic reforms have been constrained by “some elite groups with vested economic interests” (*jide liyi jituan*).²⁵ In the first 10 months of 2005, for example, the real estate sector remained overheated with a 20% increase in the rate of investment despite the central government’s repeated call for cooling investment in this area.²⁶ In the same year, the State Council sent four inspection teams to eight provinces and cities to evaluate the implementation of the central government’s macroeconomic control policy in the real estate sector. According to the Chinese media, most of these provincial and municipal governments did nothing but organize study sessions of the State Council’s policy initiatives.²⁷

In 2004, the central government ordered a reduction in land leases for commercial and industrial uses as well as a reduction in the number of special economic zones that were particularly favorable to land leases. As a result, a total of 4,735 special economic zones were abolished, reducing by 70.2 percent the total number of special economic zones in the country.²⁸ But some local officials violated the orders and regulations of the central government pertaining to land leases. According to one Chinese study conducted in 2004, about 80 percent of illegal land use cases were attributed to the wrongdoings of local governments.²⁹ According to an official of the Ministry of Land Resources, about 50 percent of commercial land lease cases (*xieyi churang tudi*) contracted by the Beijing municipal government and business firms in 2003 were deemed violations of the central government regulations.³⁰

Not surprisingly, a large number of corruption cases are related to land leases and real estate development. For example, among the 13 total provincial and ministerial level leaders who were arrested in 2003, 11 were primarily accused of illegal pursuits in land-related decisions.³¹ Meanwhile, a large portion of mass protests directly resulted from

inappropriate compensation for land confiscations and other disputes associated with commercial and industrial land use. According to a recent study by the Institute of Rural Development of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, two-thirds of peasant protests since 2004 were caused by local officials' misdeeds in the handling of land leases.³²

It is of course unfair to assume that the local governments' enthusiasm for property development in their localities is purely driven by the personal interests of corrupt officials. Conflicting views regarding the issue of land leases between the central authorities and local governments are largely a product of asymmetrical priorities and concerns. As a Chinese analyst recently asserted, "the interests of the local governments are not aligned with [those of] the central government."³³ At present, the central government is apparently more concerned about the "overheat" of the Chinese economy, especially the financial bubble of real estate in coastal cities. In contrast, local governments are more worried about the "coldness" in local investment, foreign trade, consumption, and domestic demand—this is what Zhao Xiao, a scholar at the Research Center of the Chinese Economy of Beijing University, calls the "four coldnesses," which can be devastating for local economies.³⁴

Since 1994, China has adopted a tax-sharing system (*fenshuizhi*) in which tax revenue is divided by both the central and local governments. This tax-sharing system is supposed to better define fiscal relations between the central and local governments, promote market competition among various players, stabilize the regular income of the local authorities, and provide an incentive for local governments to collect taxes.³⁵ As a result of this taxation reform, 65 percent of state expenditure now comes from local governments. The economic status of China's provinces differs enormously from one to the next. Generally, local governments, especially at their lower levels, have been delegated more obligations and responsibilities and less power in allocating economic resources than in the early years of the reform era.

The heavy financial burden on local governments has inevitably driven local leaders to place priority on GDP growth and other methods of creating revenue. The best short cut for local governments to make up for this fiscal deficiency, as some Chinese scholars observe, is to sell or lease land.³⁶ Although local governments' reservations about the macroeconomic control policy and other regulations adopted by the Hu-Wen leadership may be valid, top local officials are expected to demonstrate their ability to handle various kinds of crises on their own turf. The central authorities' strategy of "blaming local," the growing public awareness of rights and interests, and the increasing transparency of media coverage of disasters (both natural and man-made) all place the local leaders on the spot.

Troubled Guangdong in the Spotlight: Blaming Zheng Dejiang?

Perhaps the most noticeable case of the growing central-provincial tension is Guangdong under the leadership of Zhang Dejiang. Zhang, a native of Liaoning, was a protégé of Jiang Zemin and is currently a member of the 25-member Politburo. Born in 1946, he

worked as a “sent-down youth” in the countryside of Wangqing County in Jilin Province between 1968 and 1970. He joined the CCP in 1971 and attended Yanbian University to study the Korean language in the early 1970s. After graduation he remained at the university as a party official. In 1978, Zhang was sent by the Chinese government to study in the economics department at Kim Il Sung University in North Korea. He returned to China in 1980 and served as vice president of Yanbian University. He later served as deputy party secretary of Yanji City, Jilin from 1983 to 1986, and vice minister of social welfare in the central government from 1986 to 1990.

According to some China analysts, Zhang Dejiang made a very favorable impression on Jiang Zemin when Zhang escorted him on a visit to North Korea in 1990.³⁷ Two years later, at the age of 44, Zhang became an alternate member of the CCP Central Committee. Since the early 1990s, he has served as the party boss in three provinces, first in Jilin, then Zhejiang, and now Guangdong. As the second youngest member of the current Politburo, Zhang seems poised to play an even more important role in the years to come, especially counterbalancing the growing power of Hu Jintao. However, Zhang’s poor performance in Guangdong may jeopardize his chance for a membership in the standing committee of the next Politburo.

Ever since he assumed the post of Guangdong party secretary in the fall of 2002, what was once the wealthiest province in the country and the frontier of China’s economic reform has turned into a disaster area. When SARS erupted in Guangdong in the fall of 2002, Zhang and his colleagues in the Guangdong government denied its occurrence and thereby enabled the epidemic to spread throughout the public. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), most of the 8,422 cases and 916 deaths in 29 countries (excluding those in the PRC) can be traced to one infected Guangdong doctor who traveled to Hong Kong.³⁸

Additionally, several major episodes of social unrest and contentious events in Guangdong received national or international attention during the past four years. The police brutality that led to the death of a migrant worker named Sun Zhigang in Guangzhou in the spring of 2003 caused outrage among China’s legal scholars and its public. As a result, the State Council abolished the urban detention regulations that discriminated against migrants.

Prior to Zhang’s 2002 arrival in Guangdong, the province hosted several of the most liberal and outspoken newspapers in the country, including the famous *Southern Metropolis Daily*, which later courageously broke the SARS cover-up in Guangdong and the police brutality case of Sun Zhigang. Four years later, these outstanding editors and journalists were either in jail or moved elsewhere. Under Zhang Dejiang’s watch, the newspaper’s editor-in-chief, Cheng Yizhong, and its general manager, Yu Huafeng, were arrested on corruption charges. Guangdong Province has become notorious for governmental crackdown on media freedom.

In 2005, Guangdong’s disasters frequently made headlines in China and/or abroad. Examples include two coal mine explosions in Meizhou that killed 139 miners,

and an excessive discharge of hazardous chemicals from a state firm that contaminated the Beijiang River. The public was not promptly informed about the water contamination. Most seriously, peasant protests in Taishi Village in Guangzhou and Dongzhou Village in Shanwei resulted in violent conflicts between armed police and villagers. Local government officials sent hundreds of armed police to crack down on protesters during the Dongzhou riot. The police fired at the protesters and killed at least three people, injuring at least eight others.³⁹

All these incidents and crises apparently damaged the public image of the Guangdong government, especially that of party boss Zhang Dejiang. It was widely reported in the Hong Kong and overseas media that Zhang admitted his mistakes and took responsibility in his report on the shootings of the Dongzhou riot and other incidents in Guangdong at a recent Politburo meeting.⁴⁰ In addition, Zhang made a well-publicized speech in a provincial party committee meeting in January 2006, outlining the so-called three red lines.⁴¹ According to Zhang, three types of wrongdoing in the acquisition of rural land for construction are usually the triggering factors for social unrests. He requested that no construction could start if: it has not completely fulfilled the central government's regulation, it has not reached an agreement with peasants on their compensation, or the compensation has not been delivered to the peasants. Any officials who crossed any one of these "three red lines" should be fired, according to Zhang.

Despite these policy prescriptions, social unrest and riots continued to occur in Guangdong in 2006. As an example, in early February, several hundred residents of two opposing villages in Zhanjiang used homemade guns and other weapons to fight against each other because of a land dispute. The local government sent one hundred armed police to crack down on the violent riot. Twenty-nine villagers were reportedly injured.⁴² According to some Hong Kong and overseas media sources, the frequency of the disasters in the province has led people in Guangdong to engage in a "campaign to cast out Zhang."⁴³ They argued that lower-level local officials as well as provincial chief Zhang should be held responsible and accountable for these incidents.

Some other Hong Kong-based Chinese newspapers, however, reported that it was unfair to place all the blame on Zhang's shoulders. According to these newspapers, socioeconomic development in Guangdong under the leadership of Zhang has been very much in line with the policies of the central government. During his visits to Guangdong in 2004 and 2005, Hu Jintao endorsed both the development plan of Guangdong and the performance of Zhang.⁴⁴ Although it is difficult to verify these rumors and speculations, conflicting reports highlight the tensions between various political players who have a stake in this important province. The complicated nature of central-provincial relations in the case of Guangdong has further clouded the situation.

Politics and Leadership in Guangdong: Past and Present

Guangdong Province has long been known for its demands for autonomy, which are based on its strong economic status and dialectic distinction. During the Nationalist era,

Guangdong produced a significant number of political and military elites. However, since the founding of the PRC, there have been only a handful of national leaders who are native Cantonese. Furthermore, to prevent the formation of a “Cantonese separatist movement,” the central government often appointed non-Cantonese leaders to head the province. If a Cantonese leader became too powerful, the central authorities likely “promoted” that leader to the central government in order to constrain local power. For instance, Ye Xuanping, son of the late marshal Ye Jianying, built a solid power base in Guangdong when he served as the party boss in the 1980s. The growing economic and cultural autonomy of Guangdong made the central authorities nervous. After some negotiation, the central authorities promoted Ye to senior vice chair of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

It was also reported that in preliminary meetings before the 15th Party Congress in 1997, central authorities intended to replace the sitting party secretary Xie Fei, a Cantonese native, with a non-Cantonese Politburo member as the new party secretary of Guangdong. Local officials in Guangdong rejected that proposal. They insisted that top officials in Guangdong should be Cantonese even if they lost their representation in the Politburo.⁴⁵ As a result of their stand, Xie Fei has remained in both Guangdong and the Politburo. It took almost a year for local officials to accept Li Changchun, a native of Liaoning and a Politburo member. Their eventual acceptance was largely the result of pressure from the central authorities as well as negotiation between the local and central governments. While serving as provincial leaders in Guangdong, Li Changchun and other non-Cantonese officials such as Wang Qishan (then executive vice governor of Guangdong), repeatedly claimed that they would continue to rely on local officials rather than bringing a large group of leaders from other regions to replace them.⁴⁶

The fact that Zhang’s predecessor Li Changchun later moved to Beijing where he became a standing committee member of the Politburo seems to suggest that Zhang might also have a chance for further promotion. This, however, depends on whether Zhang will be able to control the province as effectively as his predecessor did.⁴⁷ One of the most important tasks for Zhang as party boss of Guangdong, as Jiang Zemin told him bluntly, was to prevent Cantonese localism.⁴⁸ The factional politics in the provincial leadership of Guangdong at present are arguably far more complicated than in the Li Changchun era. This further undermines Zhang’s power and authority in running the province.

Table 1 shows the backgrounds of the 24 most important provincial leaders currently in Guangdong. They include 1) all the Guangdong-based leaders who also hold membership on the 16th Central Committee of the CCP or the 16th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CMDI), 2) all the standing members of the Guangdong provincial party committee, and 3) all vice governors. Table 1 demonstrates that all of them were appointed to their current positions within the last eight years, and 19 (79 percent) of them were appointed after 2002. All of these leaders are now between 50 and 61 years old.

Of these 24 leaders, 12 are native Cantonese, while four others began to work in Guangdong over three decades ago and can thus be considered locals (among them Head of Propaganda Department Zhu Xiaodan and Vice Governor You Ningfeng). Some of the remaining eight provincial leaders who were transferred from elsewhere have worked in the province for over a decade. As an example, Shenzhen Party Secretary Li Hongzhong, a native of Shandong who grew up in Liaoning, began to serve as a vice mayor of Huizhou, Guangdong, in 1988. Similarly, Chair of Guangdong Provincial Congress Huang Liman, a native of Liaoning, started to work as deputy chief of staff of the Shenzhen Party Committee in 1992.

Table 1
Backgrounds of the Provincial Leaders of Guangdong (as of February 2006)

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Current Position</i> | <i>Since</i> | <i>Born</i> | <i>Birthplace</i> | <i>Previous Position</i> | <i>16th CCM</i> | <i>Local/ Transfer</i> | <i>Factional Network</i> |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| Zhang Dejiang | Party Secretary | 2002 | 1946 | Liaoning | Zhejiang Party Secretary | PM | Transfer | Jiang Zemin's protégé |
| Huang Huahua | Governor | 2003 | 1946 | Guangdong | Guangzhou Party Secretary | FM | Local | CCYL, Guangdong Dep. Sec & Sec, 82-85 |
| Wang Huayuan | Disciplinary Sec. | 2002 | 1948 | Anhui | Guangdong Disciplinary Dep. Sec. | DIM | Transfer | |
| Ou Guangyuan | Dep. Party Sec. | 2002 | 1948 | Guangdong | Guangdong Exec. Vice Governor | AM | Local | |
| Liu Yupu | Dep. Party Sec. | 2004 | 1949 | Shandong | Shaanxi Head of Org. Dept. | AM | Transfer | CCYL, National Standing Com. Mem., 82-86 |
| Cai Dongshi | Dep. Party Sec. | 2004 | 1947 | Guangdong | GD Head, Propaganda. Dept. | | Local | |
| Huang Liman | Chair, Prov. Congress | 2005 | 1945 | Liaoning | GD Shenzhen Party Secretary | AM | Transfer | Jiang Zemin's protégé |
| Chen Shaoji | Chair, Prov. PPCC | 2004 | 1945 | Guangdong | GD Deputy Party Secretary | AM | Local | |
| Zhong Yangsheng | Exec. Vice Governor | 2003 | 1948 | Guangdong | GD Head, Propaganda. Dept. | | Local | |
| Huang Longyun | Foshan Party Sec. | 2002 | 1951 | Guangdong | GD Zhuhai Party Secretary | | Local | |
| Li Hongzhong | Shenzhen Party Sec, | 2005 | 1956 | Shandong | GD Shenzhen Governor | AM | Transfer | Li Tieying's personal secretary |
| Hu Zejun | Head, Org. Dept. | 2004 | 1955 | Chongqing | Vice Minister of Justice | | Transfer | |
| Liang Guoju | Head, Pub. Security Bur. | 2000 | 1947 | Hebei | Dep. Head, GD Pub. Security Bur. | | Local | |
| Lin Shusen | Guangzhou Party Sec. | 2002 | 1946 | Guangdong | GD Guangzhou Mayor | AM | Local | |
| Zhu Xiaodan | Head, Propaganda Dept. | 2004 | 1953 | Zhejiang | Guangdong Head of United Front | | Local | CCYL, Sec. of Guangzhou, 84-87 |
| Xiao Zhiheng | Chief of staff, Party Com. | 2001 | 1953 | Hunan | GD Huizhou Secretary | | Local | CCYL, Standing Mem. of Central Com. 90-94 |
| Xin Rongguo | Commander, Military Dist. | 2005 | ? | Shandong | Guangxi Military Commander | | Transfer | |
| Tang Bingquan | Exe. Vice Governor | 2003 | 1949 | Guangdong | GD Zhongshan Party Secretary | | Local | |
| Xu Deli | Vice Governor | 1998 | 1945 | Guangdong | GD Shantou Party Secretary | | Local | CCYL, Guangdong Deputy Sec., 83-87 |
| You Ningfeng | Vice Governor | 2000 | 1945 | Fujian | Chief of staff, GD Municipal Govt. | | Local | |
| Li Ronggen | Vice Governor | 2001 | 1950 | Guangdong | GD Shenzhen Dep. Party Sec. | | Local | |
| Xie Qianghua | Vice Governor | 2002 | 1950 | Guangdong | GD Meizhou Party Secretary | | Local | |
| Lei Yulan | Vice Governor | 2003 | 1952 | Guangdong | GD Jiangmen Mayor | | Local | CCYL, GD Foshan Dep. Sec. & Sec., 82-86 |
| Song Hai | Vice Governor | 2003 | 1951 | Hebei | GD Shenzhen Vice Mayor | | Transfer | |

Notes: 16th CCM = Membership in the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; AM = Alternate Member; Bur. = Bureau; CCYL = Chinese Communist Youth League; Com. = Committee; DIM = Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Member; Dep. = Deputy; Dept. = Department; Dis. = Disciplinary; Dist. = District; Exec. = Executive; GD = Guangdong; Govt. = Government; Mem. = Member; Org. = Organization; PM = Politburo Member; PPCC = People's Political Consultative Conference; Prov. = Provincial, Pub. = Public; and Sec. = Secretary.

Among China's 31 provincial-level administrations, Guangdong has the largest representation in the membership of the 16th Central Committee, with one Politburo member (Zhang), one full member (Governor Huang Huahua), one member of the CMDI (Deputy Party Secretary Wang Huayuan), and six alternate members. Aside from Guangdong, only five other provinces or cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Hubei, Xinjiang) have their top leader currently serving on the Politburo. In contrast to most other provinces that usually have two full memberships and two or three alternate memberships, Guangdong has six alternate memberships.⁴⁹

The large representation of Guangdong-based leaders in the 16th Central Committee arguably suggests that many factions and national top leaders intended to have their promising representatives in this important province. In addition to appointing his protégé Zhang Dejiang to Guangdong, Jiang Zemin appointed his former *mishu* (personal secretary) and a long-time friend, Huang Liman, first to serve in the Shenzhen municipal leadership and then to be party secretary of this frontier city of China's economic reform. Huang also served as deputy party secretary of the province. Because of her personal ties with Jiang, Huang was long considered a political heavyweight in the province until her "helicopter-like" promotion made her unpopular there. In 2005, she stepped down from her posts as deputy party secretary and standing member of the Guangdong provincial party committee, an indication that she will no longer be running for the top positions in Guangdong. But her current position as chair of the Provincial People's Congress suggests that she still wields some power and influence in the province.

Li Hongzhong, Huang's successor in Shenzhen, is the current party secretary of the city and a rising star in the fifth-generation leadership. Li previously served as a *mishu* for Li Tieying, a former Politburo member and current vice chair of the National People's Congress (NPC). Li Hongzhong's *mishu* career lasted for three years, first in Liaoning where Li Tieying was the provincial party secretary, and then in the Ministry Of Electronics Industry where his patron was the minister. It is important to note that although Li Changchun, Zhang Dejiang, Huang Liman, and Li Hongzhong share the common bond of loyalty to Jiang Zemin or Li Tieying, they do not necessarily have a strong bond among themselves. Yet, they have often been on the same side in terms of both factional politics and socioeconomic policies (e.g., tight control over media). It is also interesting to note that all of them either were born in Liaoning Province or previously advanced their careers in Liaoning.

Table 1 also shows that six leaders have largely advanced their careers through the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), Hu Jintao's power base. This includes Governor Huang Huahua, a native of Guangdong who served in leadership posts of the Guangdong CCYL committee in 1982 to 1985, the period during which Hu was in charge of the CCYL at the national level. Because of his CCYL association with Hu and long-time leadership experience in his native Guangdong Province, Huang is considered a rising star. But it has been widely speculated in Guangdong and Hong Kong that Huang cannot get along well with Zhang Dejiang. As a governor, Huang might also be

responsible for some of the recent problems in the province. Compared with several other rising stars with CCYL backgrounds such as Liaoning party secretary Li Keqiang (born in 1955) and Jiangsu party secretary Li Yuanchao (b. 1950), Huang (b. 1946) does not have the age advantage. Due to his poor image in Guangdong in recent years, Huang has probably lost his chance for further promotion. Hu Jintao will most likely promote from among those of his protégés who are younger, less contentious, and have better track records in the provinces they oversaw.

Some Guangdong leaders with CCYL backgrounds were transferred from elsewhere, either from another province or from the central government. For example, Deputy Party Secretary Liu Yupu was a standing member of the CCYL Central Committee from 1982 to 1985, which as we have noted was the period of Hu's tenure in charge of the committee. A Shandong native, Liu (b. 1949) was a sent-down youth in Liaoning at the age of 19. He advanced his career through the CCYL where he also served as secretary of the central government organs. After working in the central government for 10 years, Liu went to Shaanxi where he served as assistant governor and head of the organization department in 1995. Five years later, Liu was transferred to Guangdong to take charge of organizational affairs in the province. An alternate member of the 16th Central Committee, Liu was promoted to deputy party secretary of Guangdong in 2004. It is unclear how the Guangdong-native CCYL officials have coped with those CCYL officials who were transferred from elsewhere.

Native leaders of Guangdong can be further divided by the specific counties or prefectures from which they come. This local tie plays an important role in factional politics in the province. For example, two vice governors, You Ningfeng and Xie Qianhua both worked as senior leaders in Meixian County and Meizhou City, while Huang Huahua, now Guangdong governor, previously served as deputy party secretary in the county and as the mayor of the city in the late 1980s.

All these aforementioned ties, associations, tensions, and divisions in the leadership of Guangdong underscore the complexity of factional politics in the province. This explains why Zhang Dejiang and his supporters argue that it is unfair to blame the recent troubles in Guangdong on Zhang alone. It also offers some clues about why Hu and Wen have been hesitant to replace the top leadership of the province despite the problems that have occurred in the past few years. It is one thing to "blame local," it is quite another to fire local chiefs at the risk of triggering vicious power struggles in the leadership at both the provincial and national levels. Largely because of this consideration, the number of provincial leaders who were actually fired was extremely small.⁵⁰ Furthermore, top national leaders often have their own agendas for factional politics.

An analysis of the relationship between the central authorities and the Guangdong leadership, both in the past and present, highlights the dynamics of such a relationship and the dilemmas faced by both sides. It is in the interest of Guangdong to have a high-profile, heavyweight leader as the head of the province because this can help enhance its bargaining power for resources, investment, and favorable policies. But a high-profile and heavyweight leader appointed by the central government may represent the interest

of Beijing rather than that of Guangdong. From the perspective of the central government, the provincial chief is supposed to achieve the following three objectives simultaneously: effectively prevent growing localism in the province; form a cooperative leadership team in the province; and maintain popularity among the people in the province. Zhang Dejiang has apparently failed to meet at least the last two of the three objectives. It is in fact hard for any provincial chief to fulfill these somewhat contradictory requirements.

Central-Provincial Dynamics: Paradoxical Trends in the Hu Era

It is probably most visible in Guangdong, but the tension between the central government's need to carry its policy initiatives (including the recruitment of political elites) and growing economic and political localism has been a common phenomenon across all the provinces in the country during the reform era. To a certain extent this tension is natural and healthy, as it reflects the dynamic interaction between the need for national unity and the demand for regional autonomy in the country. But some of the policies and measures adopted by the Hu-Wen leadership are inherently contradictory. These conflicting policies may generate more confusion and a sense of unfairness in central-provincial relations. The paradoxical trends resulting from these policies are evident in the case of Guangdong, discussed earlier, and will likely become even more salient in the coming years.

One of the most important methods used by the Chinese central authorities to control provinces is its appointment of top provincial leaders, especially provincial party secretaries. Partly because they are appointed by the central government, and primarily because of their need to please the top national leaders for further promotion, provincial chiefs are more dedicated to the interests of central authorities than they are to provincial constituencies. As part of the political norm in the reform era, which has been even more strictly reinforced in the Hu era, most provincial chiefs (party secretaries and governors) are not born in the same province in which they now serve. The majority of them were recently transferred from another province or from the central government.

Table 2 shows the number of the top three provincial leaders (party secretary, governor, and secretary of the provincial discipline commission) who work in their birth provinces. Only two (6.5 percent) of the provincial party secretaries (Jiangsu Party Secretary Li Yuanchao and Qinghai Party Secretary Zhao Leji) were born in the provinces in which they now operate. Li was in fact recently transferred from Beijing where he worked as the CCYL secretariat, in the Information Office of the State Council, and in the Ministry of Culture between 1983 and 2000.

The number of native leaders in the other two most important posts is significantly higher than that of party secretaries. A total of 14 governors (45.2 percent) and 11 secretaries of the provincial discipline commission (35.5 percent) are natives of the provinces in which they currently serve. Table 3 shows the percentages by province of those provincial leaders who were born in the same province. The term "provincial leader" refers to all the standing members of the provincial party committees and all

governors and vice governors.⁵¹ Of a total 616 provincial leaders, 280 (45.5 percent) were born in the same province. Excluding the leaders for whom information on birth provinces is unavailable, 47.1 percent were born in the same province. A few provinces are filled with leaders born in that same province. For example, over 90 percent of provincial leaders in Shandong are natives of the province.

Table 2
Provincial Top Leaders Who Work in Their Birth Provinces (2006)

| <i>Province</i> | <i>Party Secretary</i> | <i>Governor</i> | <i>Secretary of Discipline Commission</i> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Beijing | No | No | No |
| Tianjin | No | No | No |
| Hebei | No | No | No |
| Shanxi | No | No | Yes |
| Neimenggu | No | Yes | Yes |
| Liaoning | No | No | No |
| Jilin | No | No | No |
| Heilongjiang | No | Yes | No |
| Shanghai | No | Yes | No |
| Jiangsu | Yes | No | No |
| Shandong | No | No | Yes |
| Zhejiang | No | Yes | Yes |
| Anhui | No | No | Yes |
| Fujian | No | Yes | Yes |
| Henan | No | No | No |
| Hubei | No | Yes | Yes |
| Hunan | No | Yes | Yes |
| Jiangxi | No | No | No |
| Guangdong | No | Yes | No |
| Guangxi | No | Yes | No |
| Hainan | No | No | No |
| Sichuan | No | Yes | Yes |
| Chongqing | No | Yes | No |
| Guizhou | No | No | No |
| Yunnan | No | No | No |
| Xizang (Tibet) | No | Yes | Yes |
| Shaanxi | No | No | No |
| Gansu | No | No | No |
| Qinghai | Yes | No | Yes |
| Ningxia | No | Yes | No |
| Xinjiang | No | Yes | No |
| Total no. of leaders who work in the same province | 2 | 14 | 11 |

Those leaders who were born in another province may have worked in the province in which they currently serve for a long period of time. Table 4 illustrates that among the 616 current provincial leaders, only 93 (15.1 percent) were recently

transferred from elsewhere. These transferred leaders are usually the provincial party secretaries, secretaries in the provincial discipline commissions, heads of the organization departments, and commanders of the provincial military districts (who often serve on the provincial standing committees). A majority of current provincial leaders (84.9 percent), however, have advanced their careers in the same province, at least in recent years. In 12 provinces and municipalities directly under the central government (Beijing, Tianjin, Neimenggu, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Shandong, Fujian, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Yunnan), over 90 percent of leaders have advanced their political careers in the same province or municipality.

During the past decade, the number of leaders at the deputy provincial level or lower who were transferred from elsewhere is very small, despite top national leaders asserting the need to more frequently rotate and transfer local leaders, both vertically and horizontally. The central government seems to face increasingly strong resistance from local governments regarding the issue of the cross-province rotation of elites. The only exception was in the spring of 2005, when the CCP Organization Department selected 94 leaders from various agencies of the central government and the east coast region and appointed them to the province-prefecture-city levels of leadership in three northeastern provinces.⁵² The central authorities did this in the name of promoting northeastern rejuvenation. Table 4 also shows that of all the provinces, Heilongjiang has the lowest percentage (61 percent) of leaders who have been promoted from the same province. This was largely because several senior leaders in the province were fired on corruption charges in recent years. They were replaced by non-native “outsiders.”

The selection of local officials for leadership positions in their native areas has become a common phenomenon in the reform era. This trend challenges the “law of avoidance,” by which Mandarins were prohibited from serving in their native provinces and counties. This is actually a century-old policy characteristic of traditional China and a practice continued during the Mao era. In his study of the city of Wuhan during the early decades of the PRC, Ying-mao Kau observed that 91 percent of municipal elites in the city were non-native “outsiders.”⁵³ Most of the major local leaders (especially at the provincial and municipal levels) were not born in the region in which they served. This study shows that the law of avoidance in the selection of local elites has been completely revised in present-day China. The majority of current provincial leaders were born in the same province in which they now serve.

This new pattern of provincial leadership formation largely dictates the nature and tension of provincial elite politics in the country. The holder of the provincial party secretary position has been seen as the point person for the central authorities. His source of power comes from the central government or from his patron in the national leadership. Not surprisingly, the provincial party secretary wields enormous power in the province. The Hu-Wen administration’s new appeal for the “accountability of the top leader in a locality or an organization” (*shouzhang wenzhezhi*) rightly emphasizes that the provincial party secretary should be responsible for the problems in his province. But at the same time, the Hu-Wen leadership has also adopted a new regulation that all major decisions in a province should require a vote by all members of the provincial party committee. The purpose of this practice is to reduce the power of the provincial party secretary

(*diyibashou*) in the decision-making process. These two initiatives directly contradict each other; consequently, neither can be implemented effectively.

Table 3
Distribution of Provincial Leaders Who Work in Their Birth Provinces (2006)

| <i>Province</i> | <i>Born in Same Province</i> | <i>Born in Other Province</i> | <i>Unknown</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>% of Same Province</i> | <i>% of Same Province (Exc. Unknown)</i> |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|--|
| Beijing | 8 | 12 | 0 | 20 | 40.0% | 40.0% |
| Tianjin | 5 | 14 | 0 | 19 | 26.3% | 26.3% |
| Hebei | 9 | 11 | 0 | 20 | 45.0% | 45.0% |
| Shanxi | 11 | 4 | 2 | 17 | 64.7% | 73.3% |
| Neimenggu | 8 | 13 | 0 | 21 | 38.1% | 38.1% |
| Liaoning | 8 | 8 | 5 | 21 | 38.1% | 50.0% |
| Jilin | 7 | 12 | 1 | 20 | 35.0% | 36.8% |
| Heilongjiang | 6 | 12 | 0 | 18 | 33.3% | 33.3% |
| Shanghai | 8 | 13 | 0 | 21 | 38.1% | 38.1% |
| Jiangsu | 11 | 9 | 0 | 20 | 55.0% | 55.0% |
| Shandong | 19 | 2 | 0 | 21 | 90.5% | 90.5% |
| Zhejiang | 13 | 7 | 0 | 20 | 65.0% | 65.0% |
| Anhui | 5 | 11 | 2 | 18 | 27.8% | 31.3% |
| Fujian | 11 | 6 | 2 | 19 | 57.9% | 64.7% |
| Henan | 11 | 9 | 0 | 20 | 55.0% | 55.0% |
| Hubei | 9 | 9 | 0 | 18 | 50.0% | 50.0% |
| Hunan | 13 | 6 | 0 | 19 | 68.4% | 68.4% |
| Jiangxi | 8 | 10 | 0 | 18 | 44.4% | 44.4% |
| Guangdong | 11 | 11 | 0 | 22 | 50.0% | 50.0% |
| Guangxi | 8 | 13 | 0 | 21 | 38.1% | 38.1% |
| Hainan | 5 | 13 | 0 | 18 | 27.8% | 27.8% |
| Sichuan | 13 | 8 | 0 | 21 | 61.9% | 61.9% |
| Chongqing | 8 | 9 | 1 | 18 | 44.4% | 47.1% |
| Guizhou | 7 | 12 | 2 | 21 | 33.3% | 36.8% |
| Yunnan | 11 | 8 | 0 | 19 | 57.9% | 57.9% |
| Xizang (Tibet) | 14 | 9 | 1 | 24 | 58.3% | 60.9% |
| Shaanxi | 8 | 12 | 0 | 20 | 40.0% | 40.0% |
| Gansu | 6 | 11 | 2 | 19 | 31.6% | 35.3% |
| Qinghai | 6 | 14 | 3 | 23 | 26.1% | 30.0% |
| Ningxia | 4 | 14 | 0 | 18 | 22.2% | 22.2% |
| Xinjiang | 9 | 13 | 0 | 22 | 40.9% | 40.9% |
| Total | 280 | 315 | 21 | 616 | 45.5% | 47.1% |

Table 4
Distribution of Provincial Leaders Who Were Promoted in the Same Province (2006)

| <i>Province</i> | <i>Promoted From Same Province</i> | <i>Transferred to the Province after 2002</i> | <i>Total Leaders</i> | <i>% of Same Province</i> |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|---|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Beijing | 19 | 1 | 20 | 95.0% |
| Tianjin | 17 | 2 | 19 | 89.5% |
| Hebei | 16 | 4 | 20 | 80.0% |
| Shanxi | 15 | 2 | 17 | 88.2% |
| Neimenggu | 20 | 1 | 21 | 95.2% |
| Liaoning | 18 | 3 | 21 | 85.7% |
| Jilin | 17 | 3 | 20 | 85.0% |
| Heilongjiang | 11 | 7 | 18 | 61.1% |
| Shanghai | 20 | 1 | 21 | 95.2% |
| Jiangsu | 18 | 2 | 20 | 90.0% |
| Shandong | 19 | 2 | 21 | 90.5% |
| Zhejiang | 17 | 3 | 20 | 85.0% |
| Anhui | 12 | 6 | 18 | 66.7% |
| Fujian | 17 | 2 | 19 | 89.5% |
| Henan | 16 | 4 | 20 | 80.0% |
| Hubei | 17 | 1 | 18 | 94.4% |
| Hunan | 17 | 2 | 19 | 89.5% |
| Jiangxi | 17 | 1 | 18 | 94.4% |
| Guangdong | 19 | 3 | 22 | 86.4% |
| Guangxi | 17 | 4 | 21 | 81.0% |
| Hainan | 16 | 2 | 18 | 88.9% |
| Sichuan | 19 | 2 | 21 | 90.5% |
| Chongqing | 15 | 3 | 18 | 83.3% |
| Guizhou | 15 | 6 | 21 | 71.4% |
| Yunnan | 17 | 2 | 19 | 89.5% |
| Xizang (Tibet) | 21 | 3 | 24 | 87.5% |
| Shaanxi | 17 | 3 | 20 | 85.0% |
| Gansu | 13 | 6 | 19 | 68.4% |
| Qinghai | 19 | 4 | 23 | 82.6% |
| Ningxia | 15 | 3 | 18 | 83.3% |
| Xinjiang | 17 | 5 | 22 | 77.3% |
| Total | 523 | 93 | 616 | 84.9% |

The trend of deputy provincial level leaders (deputy party secretaries and vice governors) or lower being selected primarily in their native areas will likely continue in the future for two main reasons. First, the ongoing reform of the Chinese nomenklatura system—the list of positions and the candidates who are qualified to fill these vacancies—encourages provincial leaders to choose their successors from the same province. The nomenklatura system has been the hallmark personnel policy in Leninist countries.⁵⁴ During the reform era, the system has changed in the following way: in general, appointment decisions are now made by immediate supervisors rather than the more traditional policy of approval by a “two-tier” superior organization.⁵⁵ In practice,

provincial party secretaries and governors are responsible for appointing the “second tier” provincial-level officials and mayoral and prefecture heads of medium- and small-sized cities.

Previously, the appointment of “second tier” provincial level officials was controlled by the CCP Organization Department. However, since the mid-1980s central authorities have given provincial leaders autonomy in appointing mayoral and prefecture heads. Consequently, the total number of cadres who are supposed to be appointed by the CCP Organization Department decreased from 13,000 to 2,700.⁵⁶ The lists of names for the province-level nomenklatura are now composed disproportionately of people from the province in question. This is partly due to the fact that the lower levels of local administration tend to have more leaders born in the same region.⁵⁷ Because Chinese officials strive to defend their “turf,” it is hard to imagine that provincial leaders would search in other jurisdictions to find candidates for their posts.⁵⁸

Second, some new experiments in the political and administrative reform of local government, endorsed by Hu Jintao, favor leaders who were born in the same region. The aforementioned vote on major decisions by all the members of the provincial party committee includes the decision on personnel appointment. The secret vote allows these committee members to vote out the candidates who are the “outsiders,” nominated by the provincial party secretary or the central authorities. This trend toward recruitment of native-born elites is further strengthened by local cadre elections and public evaluation regulations of local leaders. In local elections, people are highly likely to choose a native candidate for a local leadership position, given candidates with roughly equal qualifications. In turn, these elected local elites may make “localist demands.”

Similarly, the “outsiders” will have virtually no chance to go through the local public evaluation in order to receive appointment or further promotion. Jiangsu Province, for example, has recently adopted the measure of public evaluation of leading officials in provincial governmental institutions. Usually more than 10,000 citizens were asked to publicly evaluate local leaders each time. In 2002, for example, five heads of departments in the Nanjing municipal government who received poor evaluations were either demoted or fired. Obviously those who scored well have a better chance for further promotion.

Under these circumstances, it will be very difficult for the central leadership to curb the growing provincial power in the selection of local leaders. As local officials demand greater regional autonomy in choosing their leaders, the central government has established some new norms and regulations to ensure its authority and power. These methods of central government control include choosing non-native provincial party secretaries, limiting the length of the terms of provincial leaders, using some electoral measures to evaluate their performance, and if needed, blaming them for the social, economic, political and environmental problems in the province, as evident in the case of Guangdong.

It should be noted that with the possible exceptions of some ethnic groups in Tibet and Xinjiang, no province is interested in economic and political independence. During the reform era, the provincial demand for greater regional autonomy has largely been

associated with attracting investment, allocating resources, choosing local leaders, and retaining more revenues for localities. In a way, the central government also wants the local leaders to have an incentive to improve the areas they manage.

Conclusion

Under the new leadership of Hu and Wen, the central authorities have appealed for a harmonious society with increased emphasis on social cohesion, government accountability, and distributive justice. Both the central authorities and the general public often blame provincial and other local leaders for problems caused in part by the misdeeds of these leaders. Hu and Wen's strategy of emphasizing the need for political stability in the country and of localizing social tensions seems to be working, at least for now.

The contradictory trends in central-local relations under the Hu-Wen leadership may be more easily understood if one realizes that political leaders at the national and provincial levels are constantly seeking the best possible equilibrium between national unity and local autonomy. The interactions between the central government, provincial party secretaries who are often the appointees from Beijing, other provincial leaders with solid grassroots ties, and the general public have become increasingly dynamic and complicated. It is truly extraordinary that in today's China the many instances of social unrest are widely noticed and the grievances of the vulnerable groups are being heard. Even more extraordinary is the emerging public consciousness, endorsed by the new national leadership, that local leaders should be accountable for their territories. This development may very well signify one of the most promising aspects of China's unfolding transformation.

Notes

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¹ For example, see the report by Reuters entitled "U.S. officials voice concern about China unrest." <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N02276595.htm>, February 2, 2006. Also see, *Shijie ribao* (World Journal), February 3, 2006, p. 1.

² Jiang Xuezhou, "Premier calls for work safety measures," *China Daily* online, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn>, January 25, 2006. Under orders by the Chinese authorities, 4,000 coal mines were closed due to their failure to meet safety regulations. See <http://www.xinhuanet.com>, February 6, 2006.

³ He Qinglian, a dissident Chinese intellectual who resides in the United States, argues that "Chinese society currently resembles a volcano on the verge of eruption." He Qinglian, "A Volcanic Stability," *Journal of Democracy*, No. 14 (2003): 71.

⁴ Between 1978 and 2001, 86 percent of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) in China went to the eastern coast, 9 percent went to the central region, and only 5 percent went to the western region. This is based on official data released by the conference of the 21st Century Forum held in Beijing in December 2003. See <http://www.xinhuanet.com>, December 18, 2003.

⁵ The Information Office of China's State Council, "Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in China" (White paper). Beijing, Feb. 28, 2005. See www.chinaview.cn.

⁶ *Diyi Caijing ribao* (The First Economics and Finance Daily). February 6, 2006. See also <http://finance.sina.com.cn/g/20060206/01222317519.shtml>.

⁷ In 2004, the northeastern region, for example, attracted a high rate of capital inflow that was unprecedented. Liaoning Province had a total of 2,499 new foreign investment projects in 2004, totaling US\$5.4 billion, about a 91.5 percent increase compared to the previous year. The total GDP in the northeastern region reached 1,500 billion yuan in 2004, a 12.5 percent increase over the previous year, which was higher than any other region in the country. *Shijie ribao*, February 1, 2005, sec. C, p. 7; and March 3, 2005, sec. F, p. 5.

⁸ For more discussion of Hu's populist approach, see Cheng Li, "Hu's Policy Shift and the Tuanpai's Coming-of-Age." *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 15 (Summer 2005).

⁹ One exception is the "hunger strike relay" (*jieli jueshi*) organized by human rights lawyers and activists in February of 2006. They were protesting the illegal governmental interference in legal affairs in the country. This hunger strike, however, was largely concerned about the human rights abuses caused by local governments and the underground mafia.

¹⁰ The new policy initiatives by the Hu-Wen leadership have received a very positive reaction from Chinese public intellectuals. According to a survey of experts in the fields of sociology, economics, law, and management conducted by China's Academy of Social Sciences in December 2004, 56.8 percent of respondents believed that the Chinese leadership has made important progress in improving the lives of weaker social groups, compared to 9.2 percent of respondents who felt this way in the 2003 survey. See Lu Jianhua, ed., *2005 nian Zhongguo shehui lanpishu* (Bluebook of the Chinese society in 2005). Beijing: China's Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2004.

¹¹ *Lianhe zaobao* (United Morning News), October 5, 2005.

¹² Tan Xiongwei, "Why do the policies of the central government sometimes fail to make it out of Zhongnanhai?" *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily), November 17, 2005. Quoted from <http://www.zonaeuropa.com>. February 10, 2006.

¹³ For example, a peasant protest regarding official brutality in family planning occurred one week after Premier Wen Jiabao visited the rural area of southwestern Shandong, where he emphasized the need to improve the health care of peasants. *Mingbao Daily*, February 7, 2006, p. 1; and also *Shijie ribao*, February 7, 2006, section C, p. 1.

¹⁴ The Hong Kong-based Chinese magazine *Asia Week* selected a group of Chinese human rights lawyers as "the heroes of the year of 2005." For their stories, see Ji Shuoming and Wang Jianming, "*Zhongguo weiquan lushi fazhixianfeng*" (China's lawyers of human rights protection: Vanguards of Rule of Law). *Yazhou zhoukan* (Asia Week), December 19, 2005. According to Gu Minkang, a law professor at City University of Hong Kong, most human rights cases that failed to receive a fair trial were largely due to the interference of local governments. *Yazhou zhoukan*, January 14, 2006.

¹⁵ According to a report released by Reporters without Borders, a nongovernmental organization based in Paris, in 2004, altogether 107 journalists in the world were put in jail. Among them, 27 were journalists in the PRC. *Shijie ribao*, May 3, 2005, section C, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Shijie ribao*, February 7, 2006, section C, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Shijie ribao*, September 19, 2005, section C, p. 1.

¹⁸ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/127378.htm>. February 7, 2006.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See <http://www.xinhuanet.com>. February 6, 2007.

²¹ *Zhongguo xinwen zhoukan* (China Newsweek), January 13, 2006, *Liaowang* (Outlook), December 5, 2005, and also see <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>, December 12, 2005.

²² The other powerful interest groups include the monopoly industries such as telecommunications, oil, electricity, and automotive. They have a huge stake in government policies. See Sun Liping, "*Zhongguo jinru liyi boyi de shidai*" (China is entering the era of the conflict of interests), <http://chinesenewsnet.com>, February 6, 2006.

²³ Sun, "*Zhongguo jinru liyi boyi de shidai*."

²⁴ Jin Sanyong, "*Zhongyang difang cunzai mingxian boyi*" (The open game that the central and local governments play). See <http://www.zisi.net>, February 10, 2006.

²⁵ China's Reform Institute (Hainan) conducted this survey. See <http://chinanews.com>, January 19, 2006.

- ²⁶ See <http://www.news.soufun.com>, February 10, 2006.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Liaowang dongfang zhoukan*, December 30, 2004, p. 25.
- ²⁹ Wu Jingna, “*Hongguan tiaokong: Zhongyang he difang liangzhong liliang de jiaozhu*” (Macroeconomic control: The contention between the central and local governments). *Quanqiu caijing guancha* (Global Economic and Financial Observer), September 2004.
- ³⁰ *Ershiyi shiji jingji baodao* (Economic report of the 21st century). April 2004.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² *Qianshao* (Frontier), No. 10 (2005), p. 83.
- ³³ Tan, “Why do the policies of the central government sometimes fail to make it out of Zhongnanhai?”
- ³⁴ “*Touzileng, waimaoleng, xiaofeileng, neixuleng*” (the coldness in investment, foreign trade, consumption, and domestic demand). Quoted from Wu, “*Hongguan tiaokong: Zhongyang he difang liangzhong liliang de jiaozhu.*”
- ³⁵ For an excellent review of the tax-sharing system, see Zhi-gang Yang, “Further Reform of China’s Fiscal System.” *World Economy & China*, No. 1, 2001.
- ³⁶ See <http://www.news.soufun.com>, February 10, 2006.
- ³⁷ Gao Xin, *Lingdao Zhongguo de xinrenwu: Zhongguo shiliujie zhengzhiju weiyuan* (China’s top leaders: Bios of China’s Politburo Members). Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 2003, vol. 2, pp. 558–559.
- ³⁸ *Taipei Times*, February 23, 2004, p. 5.
- ³⁹ For more detailed information about the major social unrests in Guangdong under the leadership of Zhang Dejiang, see http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20060114_1.htm, February 7, 2006.
- ⁴⁰ *Shijie ribao*, January 13, 2006, section 1, p. 1.
- ⁴¹ *Taipei Times*, January 22, 2006.
- ⁴² *Xingdao ribao*, February 5, 2006, p. 1.
- ⁴³ *Duowei monthly*, January 25, 2006.
- ⁴⁴ See <http://chinesenewsnet.com>, January 25, 2006.
- ⁴⁵ *Shijie ribao*, September 17, 1997, p.1; and *South China Morning Post*, September 16, 1997, p. 1.
- ⁴⁶ Ding Wang, *Li Changchun yu Guangdong zhengtan—Guangdong jiebanqun, quyu jingji he zuqun wenhua* (Li Changchun and Guangdong political scene: The Guangdong successors, regional economics and the culture of ethnic groups), 2nd edition. (Hong Kong, Celebrities Press, 1999).
- ⁴⁷ For a discussion of how Li Changchun dealt with the Guangdong local officials, see Gao Xin. *Xiangfu Guangdong bang* (Taming the Guangdong gang). Hong Kong: Mingjing chubanshe, 2000. Some observers believe that Li Changchun did not contribute much to the socioeconomic development of Guangdong. Instead, Li left a split provincial leadership for his successor.
- ⁴⁸ Zeng Qinghong quoted Jiang’s remarks to Zhang in a meeting of the Guangdong provincial party committee in April 2003. The public announcement of this conversation between Jiang and Zhang put Zhang in an odd situation with Cantonese native leaders. See <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>, February 15, 2006.
- ⁴⁹ For a detailed list of the provincial distribution of membership seats on the 16th Central Committee, see Cheng Li and Lynn White, “The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?” *Asian Survey* Vol. 43, No. 4 (July/August 2003): 576.
- ⁵⁰ According to one recent report, no senior provincial leader in Guangdong, Heilongjia, or Jilin has been fired in the past three years despite the fact that these provinces experienced environmental disasters. See <http://www.go.muzi.net>, January 13, 2006.
- ⁵¹ All the data come from the Chinese official sources, including Xinhua News Agency’s website (<http://xinhuanet.com>), and various provincial government home pages.
- ⁵² See <http://www.xinhuanet.com>, March 15, 2006.
- ⁵³ Ying-mao Kau, “The Urban Bureaucratic Elites in Communist China: A Case Study of Wuhan, 1949–1965,” in A. Doak Barnett (ed.) *Communist Chinese Politics in Action* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 227.
- ⁵⁴ John P. Burns, “China’s Nomenklatura System.” *Problems of Communism*, No. 33 (September/October 1987): 36–51; and John P. Burns, “Strengthening Central CCP Control of Leadership Selection: The 1990 Nomenklatura,” *China Quarterly* 138 (June 1994): 458–491.
- ⁵⁵ Burns, “China’s Nomenklatura System,” 37–38, and 40–41.

⁵⁶ Wu Guoguang, *Zhulu shiwuda: zhongguo quanli qiju* (Toward the Fifteenth Party Congress: Power Game in China). (Hong Kong: Taipingyang shiji chubanshe, 1997), 215.

⁵⁷ For the empirical evidence of this observation, see Cheng Li, “Political Localism versus Institutional Restraints: Elite Recruitment in the Jiang Era,” in Barry Naughton and Dali L. Yang, eds. *Holding China Together: Diversity and National Integration in the Post-Deng Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 29–69.

⁵⁸ This discussion is based on Cheng Li and David Bachman, “Localism, Elitism and Immobilism: Elite Formation and Social Change in Post-Mao China,” *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (October 1989), pp. 64–94.