

The Work System of the Xi Jinping Leadership

Alice Miller

Appointments to PRC government posts at the 12th National People's Congress in March 2013 completed the generational leadership transition that began at last fall's 18th Party Congress. Analysis of the division of policy responsibilities among the new leadership provides insight into the structure and processes of policy-making under the new party general secretary, Xi Jinping.

Transitions in China's top leadership in the post-Mao era have proceeded in two stages. National party congresses meet every five years in the fall to make appointments to all top-level posts in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and newly elected members of the National People's Congress (NPC, China's parliament) meet the following spring to make appointments to all top-level posts in the PRC state. In the recent leadership transition, the 18th CCP Congress (8–14 November 2012) and the 18th Central Committee's First Plenum that immediately followed appointed a new top party leader—Xi Jinping—as well as a new Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee, Secretariat, party Central Military Commission, and Central Discipline Inspection Commission. The 5–15 March 2013 12th NPC dropped the other shoe, appointing a new NPC Standing Committee, State Council, state Central Military Commission, Supreme People's Court president, and Supreme People's Procuratorate chief.

In addition to participating in the Party's top-level decision making, the members of the Politburo routinely take up responsibility for supervising Party work in specific sectors of policy. They perform this function either by serving concurrently in other high-level posts in the political order or by coordinating policy through the Secretariat and the Central Committee's leading small groups (LSGs), or both. This division of policy responsibilities on one hand is intended to ensure compliance with Politburo decisions in the relevant policy sectors in the broader political system. On the other, it enables representation of those policy sectors in Politburo deliberations.

The policy roles that each member of the new leadership plays in the broader political process is apparent not only from the combination of posts that each holds in the party, state, united front, and military hierarchies, but also implicitly from public appearances by each leader reported in PRC media. Leaders preside over meetings and deliver keynote remarks on the policy sectors for which they are responsible. Comments they make during inspection tours of provinces and other sites normally pertain to the policy areas they preside over. From these, a composite picture of each leader's portfolio of responsibilities may be inferred.

The Politburo

Appointments at the 12th NPC make clear Politburo member postings to positions in the NPC and State Council that could only be guessed at during the interregnum since the

18th Party Congress last fall. Table 1 lists the members of the 18th Central Committee Politburo and the posts they hold concurrently in the party apparatus, in the PRC state structure, and the PLA.

Table 1
The 18th Central Committee Politburo

<i>Standing Committee (listed in rank order)</i>	
XI JINPING 习近平	CCP general secretary; chairman, CCP & PRC CMC; PRC president; (director, CC FALSG & TALSG?)
LI KEQIANG 李克强	State Council premier; (director, CC FELSG?); (director, State Education and S & T LSG?)
ZHANG DEJIANG 张德江	Chairman, National People's Congress
YU ZHENGSHENG 俞正声	Chairman, CPPCC
LIU YUNSHAN 刘云山	Exec. secretary, Secretariat; president, Central Party School
WANG QISHAN 王岐山	Chairman, Central Discipline Inspection Commission
ZHANG GAOLI 张高丽	Executive vice premier
<i>Regular Members (listed in stroke order)</i>	
MA KAI 马凯	Vice premier
WANG HUNING 王沪宁	Director, CC Policy Research Center
LIU YANDONG 刘延东	Vice premier; (dep. director, State Education and S&T LSG?)
LIU QIBAO 刘奇葆	Director, CC Propaganda Dept; (director, CC P&I LSG?)
XU QILIANG 许其亮	Vice Chairman, CCP CMC
SUN CHUNLAN 孙春兰	Secretary, Tianjin CP
SUN ZHENGCAI 孙政才	Secretary, Chongqing CP
LI JIANGUO 李建国	Vice chairman, NPC Standing Committee
LI YUANCHAO 李源潮	Vice president, PRC
WANG YANG 汪洋	Vice premier
ZHANG CHUNXIAN 张春贤	Secretary, Xinjiang AR CCP
FAN CHANGLONG 范长龙	Vice chairman, CCP CMC
MENG JIANZHU 孟建柱	Secretary, CC Political and Legal Affairs Commission
ZHAO LEJI 赵乐际	Director, CC Organization Dept.
HU CHUNHUA 胡春华	Secretary, Guangdong CP
LI ZHANSHU 栗战书	Director, CC General Office
GUO JINLONG 郭金龙	Secretary, Beijing CP
HAN ZHENG 韩正	Secretary, Shanghai, CP

KEY: CC = Central Committee; CMC = Central Military Commission; CPPCC = Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; FALSG = Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group; FELSG = Finance & Economy Leading Small Group; LSG = Leading Small Group; NPC = National People's Congress; TALSG = Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group; AR = autonomous region. NOTE: Posts listed in parentheses are as reported in unofficial Chinese wikis but have not been confirmed in PRC media.

On the basis of these postings, table 2 provides a roster of the leaders who will be working closely together in specific policy sectors.

Table 2
Policy Clusters in the 18th Politburo Leadership

<i>Policy sector</i>	<i>Leaders*</i>
Party apparatus	Xi Jinping, Liu Yunshan, Wang Qishan , Liu Qibao, Zhao Leji, Li Zhanshu
Finance and economy	Li Keqiang, Zhang Gaoli , Ma Kai, Wang Yang
Legislative affairs	Zhang Dejiang , Li Jianguo
Education/S&T	Li Keqiang , Liu Yandong
Propaganda and ideology	Liu Qibao
United front work	Yu Zhengsheng
Military	Xi Jinping , Fan Changlong, Xu Qiliang
Security	Meng Jianzhu
Foreign affairs & Taiwan	Xi Jinping , Wang Huning

***Boldface** denotes membership on the Politburo Standing Committee.

Li Yuanchao

Perhaps the most surprising of the NPC's leadership appointments was the selection of Politburo member Li Yuanchao as PRC vice president. Precedents set in 1997–98, in 2002–03, and again in 2007–08 suggested that Liu Yunshan would become vice president rather than Li. In each of those transitions, the Politburo Standing Committee member who was appointed executive secretary of the party Secretariat and president of the Central Party School (CPS) under a new Central Committee was also appointed PRC vice president at the subsequent NPC. Thus:

- At the 1997 15th CCP Congress Hu Jintao was appointed executive secretary and CPS president, at the 1998 9th NPC he was appointed PRC vice president;
- At the 2002 16th CCP Congress Zeng Qinghong was appointed executive secretary of the Secretariat and CPS president, and at the 2003 10th NPC Zeng was appointed PRC vice president; and
- At the 2007 17th CCP Congress Xi Jinping became executive chief of the Secretariat and CPS vice president, and at the 2008 11th NPC was appointed PRC vice president.

On the basis of these precedents, Liu Yunshan's appointment to the Politburo Standing Committee as Secretariat executive secretary and as CPS president suggested that he would also be appointed PRC vice president at the subsequent 12th NPC.

Hu Jintao's and Xi Jinping's appointments to the position of PRC vice president, in 1998 and 2008, respectively, comported with their evident preparation to succeed as China's top leader—Hu to Jiang Zemin in 2002–03, and Xi to Hu Jintao in 2012–13. Serving as vice president enhanced their international visibility by giving them the protocol standing to meet visiting foreign heads of state and by authorizing them to travel on state business, complementing their roles in managing the party apparatus as executive chief of the Secretariat and as CPS head.

Zeng Qinghong's appointment to this same array of party and state positions in 2002–03 did not make him the intended successor to Hu Jintao in 2007–08. Zeng was required to retire because of the age 68 rule in 2007, when Hu would begin his second term as top party leader. In that light, Zeng was a placeholder during Hu's first term, until the intended successor to Hu would be selected and would take these posts in 2007. By that logic, Liu Yunshan, who is slated for mandatory retirement in 2017, would similarly have been a placeholder over Xi's first term until Xi's intended successor is appointed to these posts in 2017–18, pending his replacement of Xi in 2022–23.

Appointment of Li Yuanchao as PRC vice president thus departed from these precedents, and neither leadership statements nor PRC media comment have since offered an explanation. In the post-Mao period, until the precedent set in the 1997–98 leadership transition at the 15th Party Congress and 9th NPC, the PRC vice president was not concurrently a member of the Politburo Standing Committee or necessarily even a member of the Politburo. The first vice president appointed under the 1982 PRC constitution was Ulanhu, an ethnic Mongol Politburo member, who was succeeded in 1988 by Wang Zhen, also a Politburo member. Wang's successor, appointed in 1993, was the Shanghai industrialist and CPPCC fixture Rong Yiren, who was not a Politburo member. In that context, the implications of Li's appointment as vice president are not clear.

Nor is it clear what broader responsibilities Li Yuanchao will take on. Under the PRC constitution, the PRC president is a largely symbolic and ceremonial figure, serving as head of state with no real powers. The vice president is even less consequential, exercising only such parts of the functions and powers of the president as the president may entrust to him.

The communist-owned Hong Kong newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* reported on 16 April that Li has assumed three duties. First, he has been appointed deputy director of the Central Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group to assist Xi Jinping in coordinating PRC foreign relations. Second, he has been appointed deputy director of the Central Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Coordination Group to assist Zhang Dejiang, who is in charge of that sector. Finally, Li has been put in charge of managing China's mass organizations.

Li's public appearances since becoming vice president include several meetings with foreign visitors and an inspection tour of Guangdong in late March, during which he offered comments primarily on the theme of "China's dream" introduced by Xi Jinping.

The State Council

The portfolio responsibilities of most State Council vice premiers and state councilors—who together with the premier constitute the State Council Executive Committee—are not announced at the time of the appointment by the NPC, but they may be inferred subsequently from their activities as reported by PRC media. Newly appointed Vice Premier Wang Yang, for example, has been reported by Xinhua remarking on several topics in rural policy, and on 16 April he received a Japanese trade promotion delegation, suggesting that he will supervise aspects of agricultural policy and foreign trade. The

policy portfolios of all of the vice premiers and state councilors as inferred from public appearances since the NPC are tabulated in table 3.

Table 3

Policy Portfolios of State Council Executive Committee Members

<i>Member</i>	<i>Portfolio</i>
Premier LI KEQIANG 李克强	Politburo Standing Committee
<i>Vice premiers</i>	
ZHANG GAOLI 张高丽	Economic policy
LIU YANDONG 刘延东	Education and S&T policy
WANG YANG 汪洋	Agriculture; trade policy
MA KAI 马凯	Industry and transportation
<i>State councilors</i>	
YANG JING 杨晶	State Council secretary general
CHANG WANQUAN 常万全	National defense
YANG JIECHI 杨洁篪	Foreign policy
GUO SHENGLUN 郭声琨	Internal security
WANG YONG 王勇	

As the table shows, the responsibilities of State Councilor Wang Yong are not at all apparent. The communist-owned Hong Kong newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* reported on 16 April that Wang has been assigned a supervisory role over State Council agencies responsible for monitoring and administering market order. On 19 March, the *State Council Bulletin* recorded that he had stepped down as director and party chief of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, a powerful post he had held since 2010. Wang has made virtually no public appearances since the NPC.

Foreign Affairs Team

One of two small mysteries regarding the composition of Beijing's new foreign policy team coming out of the NPC regards Politburo member Wang Huning. It was widely rumored before March that Wang would be appointed state councilor for foreign relations, replacing Dai Bingguo. That did not happen, as former Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi took Dai's post. The CCP's website confirms that Wang remains director of the Central Committee's Policy Research Office. Wang has held this position since 2002 but, until the 18th Party Congress, without Politburo membership. Since the party congress, Wang has made no public appearances on his own, though he has appeared ubiquitously at the side of Xi Jinping on Xi's domestic and foreign trips, perhaps underscoring his close advisory role with the general secretary.

A related puzzle regards the post of director of the Central Committee Foreign Affairs Office (CCFAO), which serves as the FALSG administrative body. Since 2005, that post had been held by Dai Bingguo, who served concurrently first as deputy foreign minister (from 2005 to 2008) then (from 2008 to 2013) as state councilor in charge of foreign

affairs. The 12th NPC saw Dai succeeded in that latter position by former Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, but so far Yang appears not to have succeeded Dai as director of the CCFAO. As of this writing (5 June), the list of leaders in charge of the party Central Committee's subordinate organs on the CCP's website—up to date in all other respects—continues to include Dai as CCFAO director.

At least one PRC publication has taken note of the ambiguity regarding the directorship:

For a long time, the FALSG has assumed responsibility for policy and coordination of foreign relations. The FALSG is composed of members of the Politburo Standing Committee and the Politburo in charge of foreign affairs and of relevant departments closely engaged in foreign affairs and national security work. But the administrative organ of the FALSG is the Central Committee Foreign Affairs Office (CCFAO). Now aged 72, Dai Bingguo began in 2005 to direct the FALSG General Office from his post as deputy foreign minister. Since 2008, Dai Bingguo directed that office from his post as state councilor. But since Dai Bingguo stepped down as state councilor, outsiders have speculated about whether the FALSG General Office would be directed by a new person. No matter who his successor is, the new foreign relations team has surfaced with the formation of the new State Council and the taking of office of those in organs related to foreign relations. (中国新闻周刊 [*China Newsweek*], 1 April 2013, No.605)¹

Politburo Standing Committee and the Secretariat

The completion of the leadership transition also enables assessment of the overarching structure and processes of policy-making and implementation. The system in place since early in the Deng reform era has centered on the relationship between the Politburo Standing Committee and the party Secretariat. This system was first established in 1956 at the Eighth Party Congress, when the Politburo Standing Committee was re-established as the key leadership decision-making core and the Secretariat was made the leadership's operational center, supervising and coordinating decisions made by the Politburo Standing Committee. General Secretary Deng Xiaoping was the key link between the two bodies, serving as head of the Secretariat and concurrently as lowest ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee under Mao Zedong. Facilitating the Secretariat's operational role was the creation in 1958 of five leading small groups, each effectively an informal task force that brought together the principals of the major institutions in its respective policy sector.

This system fell into disuse with the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, but was restored with the resurrection of the Secretariat in 1980 and the consolidation of the Deng leadership at the 1982 12th Party Congress. Since then, the system has remained the backbone of leadership policymaking, though it has been repeatedly modified—in 1987, with the demotion of General Secretary Hu Yaobang; in 1997 at the 15th Party Congress, when Jiang Zemin consolidated power; and in 2002, when Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang as party leader. Now, under Xi Jinping's leadership, the system has been tweaked again.

Under Hu Jintao, the Politburo Standing Committee had nine members, each of whom represented a major policy sector in policy discussions.² In addition, each member directed his policy sector's leading small group, enabling him to supervise coordination and implementation of decisions made in the Standing Committee. Concentration of leadership over the primary leading small groups in the hands of members of the Politburo Standing Committee came at the expense of the Secretariat, which originally had supervised the leading small groups while reporting to the Standing Committee. Under this newer arrangement, the Secretariat in the Hu era became focused exclusively on running the party apparatus. The full Politburo met about once a month, apparently to review Standing Committee decisions and to endorse its initiatives on major issues.

The downsizing of the Politburo Standing Committee under Xi Jinping, from nine members to seven, has been commented on widely.³ Less noticed has been the expansion of the Secretariat to include members from hierarchies other than the party apparatus—specifically, Du Qinglin (vice chairman of the united front umbrella body, the CPPCC) and Yang Jing (State Council secretary-general and state councilor). Table 4 lists the membership of the new Secretariat.

Table 4
The 18th Central Committee Secretariat

<i>Member</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
LIU YUNSHAN 刘云山	Politburo Standing Committee
LI U QIBAO 刘奇葆	Director, CC Propaganda Department
ZHAO LEJI 赵乐际	Director, CC Organization Dept
LI ZHANSHU 栗战书	Director, CC General Office
DU QINGLIN 杜青林	Vice chairman, CPPCC National Committee
ZHAO HONGZHU 赵洪祝	Deputy secretary, CDIC
YANG JING 杨晶	State councilor; State Council secretary-general

As tables 5a through 5d show, this broadening of the Secretariat to include members from other institutional hierarchies departs from the Hu-era Secretariat's focus on the party apparatus and comports with appointment patterns during the Jiang Zemin period.

In addition, leadership of the Central Committee's primary leading small groups is no longer concentrated among members of the Politburo Standing Committee, as it was in the Hu Jintao period. Instead, one leading small group—the Politics and Law Committee—is now led by a regular Politburo member. This change in the leadership system under Xi is a half step back toward arrangements during the Jiang Zemin period, as table 6 (page 9) shows.

Official PRC media have yet to confirm Xi Jinping as head of the Central Foreign Affairs and Taiwan Work LSGs or Li Keqiang as the head of the Central Finance and Economy LSG. This lack of confirmation is normal, as PRC media only very rarely refer to these primary Central Committee LSGs. That Xi and Li do lead these groups, however, is strongly suggested by the patterns of the Jiang and Hu periods.⁴

(text continues on page 9)

Table 5a*The 14th Central Committee Secretariat (1992–97)*

<i>Member</i>	<i>Other posts held</i>
HU JINTAO 胡锦涛	PSC; president, Central Party School; director, PBLSG (est. 1993)
DING GUANGEN 丁关根	Politburo; dir., Propaganda Dept.; director, PILSG
WEI JIANXING 尉健行	Secretary, CDIC
WEN JIABAO 温家宝	Alternate member, Politburo; secretary-general, FELSG
REN JIANXIN 任建新	President, Supreme People's Court; director, Politics & Law Committee
WU BANGGUO 吴邦国*	Politburo; vice premier (industry); deputy director, FELSG
JIANG CHUNYUN 姜春雲*	Politburo; vice premier (agriculture); member, FELSG

*Added September 1994.

Abbreviations used in tables 5a through d

CMC = Central Military Commission; CPS = Central Party School; FELSG = Finance & Economy Leading Small Group; PBLSC = Party-building Leading Small Group; PILSG = Propaganda & Ideology Leading Small Group; PSC = Politburo Standing Committee

Table 5b*The 15th Central Committee Secretariat (1997–2002)*

<i>Member</i>	<i>Other posts held</i>
HU JINTAO 胡锦涛	PSC; president, CPS; director, PBLSG; PRC vice president (March 1998)
WEI JIANXING 尉健行	PSC; secretary, CDIC
DING GUANGEN 丁关根	Politburo; director, Propaganda Department; director, Propaganda & Ideology LSG
ZHANG WANNIAN 张万年	Politburo; (political) vice chairman, Central Military Commission
LUO GAN 罗幹	Politburo; state councilor; director, Politics & Law Committee
WEN JIABAO 温家宝	Politburo; vice premier; secretary-general, FELSG; director, FELSG Financial Work Committee
ZENG QINGHONG 曾庆红	Alternate member, Politburo; director, General Office (through March 1999); director, Organization Dept. (from March 1999)

Table 5c*The 16th Central Committee Secretariat (2002–2007)*

<i>Member</i>	<i>Other posts held</i>
ZENG QINGHONG 曾庆红	PSC; PRC vice president; president, CPS; director, PBLSG
LIU YUNSHAN 刘云山	Politburo; director, Propaganda Dept.; deputy director, PILSG
ZHOU YONGKANG 周永康	Politburo; state councilor; minister of public security; deputy director, Politics and Law Committee
HE GUOQIANG 贺国强	Politburo; director, Organization Dept
WANG GANG 王刚	Politburo alternate; director, General Office
XU CAIHOU 徐才厚	Member, CMC; director, PLA General Political Department
HE YONG 何勇	Deputy secretary, CDIC

Table 5d*The 17th Central Committee Secretariat (2007–2012)*

<i>Member</i>	<i>Other posts held</i>
XI JINPING 习近平	PSC; PRC vice president; president, CPS; director, PBLSG
LIU YUNSHAN 刘云山	Politburo; director, Propaganda Dept.; deputy director, PILSG
LI YUANCHAO 李源潮	Politburo; director, Organization Dept.; deputy director, PBLSG
HE YONG 何勇	Deputy secretary, CDIC
LING JIHUA 令计划	Director, General Office
WANG HUNING 王沪宁	Director, Policy Research Office

Table 6*Leadership of Primary Central Committee Leading Small Groups, 1992–2013**

<i>Leading Small Group</i>	<i>1992–97</i>	<i>1997–2002</i>	<i>2002–07</i>	<i>2007–2012</i>	<i>2012–present</i>
Foreign Affairs	Li Peng	Jiang Zemin	Hu Jintao	Hu Jintao	Xi Jinping?
Taiwan Work	Jiang Zemin	Jiang Zemin	Hu Jintao	Hu Jintao	Xi Jinping?
Finance & Economy	Jiang Zemin	Zhu Rongji	Wen Jiabao	Wen Jiabao	Li Keqiang?
Propaganda & Ideology	Ding Guangen	Ding Guangen	Li Changchun	Li Changchun	Liu Yunshan
Party-building	Hu Jintao	Hu Jintao	Zeng Qinghong	Xi Jinping	Liu Yunshan
Politics & Law	Ren Jianxin	Luo Gan	Luo Gan	Zhou Yongkang	Meng Jianzhu

*Names in **boldface** indicate concurrent membership in the Politburo Standing Committee.

That Liu Yunshan has succeeded Li Changchun as head of the Central Propaganda and Ideology Leading Small Group is apparent from his presiding over the annual meeting in Beijing of propaganda chiefs on 4 January. Li presided over past annual meetings from 2008 to 2012. In addition, Xinhua confirmed that Liu has succeeded Xi Jinping as head of the Central Party-Building Leading Small Group when it reported a meeting of the body on 13 December 2012.

The exclusion of the internal security portfolio from the Politburo Standing Committee departs from the arrangement under Hu Jintao. In the Hu Standing Committee, Zhou Yongkang presided concurrently over the Central Committee's Politics and Law Committee, the party's leading small group for coordination of internal security policy. Zhou retired at the 18th Congress. Since then, PRC media have confirmed that Politburo member and State Councilor Meng Jianzhu presides over the Politics and Law Committee, indicating that this policy portfolio has devolved from leadership by a Politburo Standing Committee to a regular member, the practice in the Jiang Zemin period.

In that context, it seems noteworthy that PRC media have begun occasional reporting on meetings of the Central Committee Politics and Law Committee and the Propaganda and Ideology LSG. In the past, PRC media never reported on the activities of any of the Central Committee's primary LSGs except for the party-building group. The media

continue to avoid reporting on meetings of the Central Committee Foreign Affairs, Taiwan Work, and Finance and Economy LSGs.

Thus, since 2010, Xinhua has carried reports on meetings of the Politics and Law Committee presided over by Zhou Yongkang. And on 23 October 2012, the news agency reported Li Changchun presiding over a meeting of the Central Committee Propaganda and Ideology LSG held to review work on the propaganda and ideology front in the five years since the 17th Party Congress. Xinhua's report was all the more interesting for noting that the 23 October meeting was the LSG's 47th since the congress. On that basis, it appears that the group met on average of about 10 times a year. There has been no previous indication in official PRC media of the frequency with which any of the primary Central Committee LSGs meet.

Implications

The partial reversion to Jiang-era patterns of broadened Secretariat membership and of leadership over the primary Central Committee LSGs invites speculation into what these revisions mean for leadership decision-making and policy supervision and coordination. For one thing, it reinforces the surmise that the reduction of the Politburo Standing Committee from its nine-member Hu-era size was an attempt to facilitate consensus-driven decision-making in that body. As argued previously in the *Monitor*, Hu Jintao's first term as general secretary (2002–07) saw enunciation immediately of a new, overarching policy framework—promoting “people-centered” policies (2002). Steadily thereafter, several new policy initiatives followed—the “scientific development concept” (2003), “socialist harmonious society” (2004), and the “new socialist countryside” (2005). In contrast, Hu's second term saw no new major departures emerge, aside from the massive stimulus package that the leadership speedily delivered in November 2008 to blunt the impact of the world economic downturn. Instead, judging by several indications, the leadership seemed to drift in the face of major trends and dilemmas.⁵

The devolution of supervision of policy in the internal security apparatus to a member of the Politburo rather than the Standing Committee may reflect a decision not to promote Meng Jianzhu—who had not previously served on the Politburo—directly onto the Politburo's Standing Committee. It may also reflect recurrent rumors preceding the 18th CCP Congress that Zhou and the internal security apparatus had formed an obstructionist bloc that impeded leadership consensus in Hu's second term as general secretary.

In the past, additions to the Secretariat of leaders from sectors beyond the party apparatus seemed both to serve political goals and to tip forthcoming policy departures. For example, politically, the addition of Wu Bangguo and Jiang Chunyun to the Secretariat in 1994 brought two regional leaders (from Shanghai and Shandong, respectively) and marked an initial step in consolidating Jiang Zemin's power base in Beijing. It also reversed the severe reductions in size of the Secretariat occurring first at the 1987 13th Party Congress following the demotion in January 1987 of Hu Yaobang (which was precipitated in part by his using the Secretariat to usurp prerogatives of the Politburo Standing Committee), and again at the 1992 14th Party Congress. With regard to policy, the addition of Wu—the vice premier in charge of state-owned enterprises at the time—

and Jiang—the vice premier in charge of agriculture—comported with the focus of the leadership on new economic reforms, registered in the 50-point decision mandated sweeping changes in China’s banking and finance, foreign trade, and enterprise sectors, and with the leadership’s ongoing effort to join the World Trade Organization as a founding member. Similar concerns seem to have shape Secretariat appointments at the 15th Party Congress in 1997.

The addition at the 18th Party Congress of Yang Jing, secretary-general of the State Council, and Li Jianguo, vice chairman of the CPPCC, indicates that the party’s top leadership seeks closer coordination with those two bodies ahead. What sorts of policies the Xi leadership may be contemplating that would require this stronger coordination is not immediately clear, however.

Collective Leadership

Completion of the leadership transition also enables a final tally of the main institutional blocs represented on the Politburo. Setting aside the top leaders of four institutional hierarchies (the party general secretary, the NPC chairman, the State Council premier, and the CPPCC chairman), table 7 lists leaders representing the party apparatus, state institutions, the provinces, and the military and security sectors on the successive Politburos since 2002.

Table 7

Representation of Institutional Blocs on the 16th, 17th, and 18th Central Committee Politburos

<i>16th Central Committee Politburo (2002)</i>			
<i>Party apparatus</i>	<i>State organs</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Military/Security</i>
Zeng Qinghong*	Huang Ju	Wang Lequan	Luo Gan
Wu Guanzheng	Wang Zhaoguo	Liu Qi	Zhou Yongkang
Li Changchun	Hui Liangyu	Yu Zhengsheng	
He Guoqiang	Wu Yi	Zhang Lichang	Gen. Guo Boxiong
Liu Yunshan	Zeng Peiyan	Zhang Dejiang	Gen. Xu Caihou
Wang Gang		Chen Liangyu	
<i>17th Central Committee Politburo (2007)</i>			
<i>Party apparatus</i>	<i>State organs</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Military/Security</i>
Li Changchun	Li Keqiang	Wang Lequan	Zhou Yongkang
Xi Jinping	Wang Zhaoguo	Liu Qi	
He Guoqiang	Wang Qishan	Wang Yang	Gen. Xu Caihou
Wang Gang	Hui Liangyu	Zhang Gaoli	Gen. Guo Boxiong
Liu Yunshan	Liu Yandong	Yu Zhengsheng	
Li Yuanchao	Zhang Dejiang	Bo Xilai	

(continues on following page)

Table 7 (*continued*)

18th Central Committee Politburo (2012)

<i>Party apparatus</i>	<i>State organs</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Military/Security</i>
Liu Yunshan	Li Yuanchao	Sun Chunlan	Meng Jianzhu
Wang Qishan	Zhang Gaoli	Sun Zhengcai	
Liu Qibao	Ma Kai	Zhang Chunxian	Gen. Fan Changlong
Zhao Leqi	Liu Yandong	Hu Chunhua	Gen. Xu Qiliang
Li Zhanshu	Li Jianguo	Guo Jinlong	
Wang Huning	Wang Yang	Han Zheng	

*Names in **boldface** are members of the Politburo Standing Committee.

The table reveals a careful balancing of institutional blocs of Politburo leaders serving in the party apparatus, in state institutions, and in the provinces—as well as the severely limited representation of the military and internal security sectors—that has been consistent across the two Hu Jintao Politburos and now Xi Jinping’s.

This balancing of institutional blocs appears to be an effort to shore up collective leadership by inhibiting any single bloc from asserting dominance over the Politburo, and mirrors a Soviet technique employed in the later Brezhnev period. The Chinese version began at the 13th Party Congress in 1987 with the addition of provincial leaders to the Politburo, evolved across the Jiang era, and appears to have matured under Hu Jintao. The severely limited representation of the PLA and internal security seems a similarly motivated attempt to prevent the general secretary from using these powerful constituencies to assert dictatorial power over the rest of the leadership, as Mao Zedong did in the 1960s. Since 1987, representation of the internal security sector on the Politburo has been limited to two at most, and PLA representation has been consistently limited to two.

The continuation of balancing institutional blocs complements other practices that began in the Hu period and that also appear aimed at reinforcing consensus-based decision-making in an oligarchy. These include steps to depict the top party leader simply as first among equals rather than as paramount leader. Thus far, for example, Xi Jinping has not been referred to as “core leader” of the current leadership, paralleling treatment of Hu Jintao across the entire decade of his leadership and in contrast to Jiang Zemin, who was routinely called “core leader” in his tenure as general secretary from 1989 to 2002. In addition, Xi Jinping has not been described as the progenitor of any “theory” or “important thinking,” as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin were in their day. In contrast, all of the major policy departures of the Hu Jintao period were not attributed exclusively to him but rather described as reflecting the “collective wisdom” of the broader leadership.

Notes

¹ Accessed at <http://hi.people.com.cn/n/2013/0329/c231187-18379983.html>. *China Newsweek* is published by the PRC news agency China News Service (中国新闻社) and is not related to the American news magazine *Newsweek*. The original Chinese is as follows:

长期以来，中央外事工作领导小组负责外交的决策和协调。中央外事工作领导小组，由主管外事工作的中央政治局常委、分管有关外事工作的中央政治局委员和与外事、国家安全工作有密切工作联系的相关机构部长组成。而中央外事工作领导小组的办事机构则为中央外事办公室。

现年72岁的戴秉国，2005年开始，以外交部副部长的身份出任中央外事工作领导小组办公室主任，直至2008年，戴秉国以国务委员的身份出任中央外事工作领导小组办公室主任。

而随着戴秉国国务委员卸任，外界也一直在推测其担任的中央外事工作领导小组办公室主任是否将由新人出任。但无论其继任者为何人，随着新一届国务院的组建，与外交相关的部委机构一把手各自就职，包括十八大后调整到位的中央直属机构负责人，新一届外交班底已经逐步浮出水面。

² For detailed analysis of the leadership system under Hu Jintao, see “The Politburo Standing Committee under Hu Jintao,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 35 (September 2011).

³ For contrasting assessments, see the articles by Joseph Fewsmith and this author in *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 40 (January 2013).

⁴ For background on the LSGs, see “The CCP Central Committee’s Leading Small Groups,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 26 (September 2008).

⁵ See “The New Party Politburo Leadership,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 40 (January 2013).