

# China's Midterm Jockeying: Gearing Up for 2012

## (Part 1: Provincial Chiefs)

Cheng Li

China is set to experience a major leadership turnover at the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012. Current top leaders, including President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, and Chairman of the National People's Congress Wu Bangguo, are all expected to retire. The Politburo and its Standing Committee will be repopulated with a large number of new faces. Who are the most promising candidates for these supreme leadership bodies? What are the main characteristics and principal criteria for the advancement of these newcomers? Can one intelligently forecast the possible leadership lineup and factional distribution of power? To what extent will this new generation of leaders change the way Chinese politics operates? This essay aims to shed light on these questions and others by studying the 62 provincial chiefs—Party secretaries and governors—of China's 31 province-level administrative entities. There is little doubt that today's provincial chiefs will be among tomorrow's national decision-makers. One can reasonably expect that a subset of these leaders will rule the world's most populous country for most of this decade and beyond.\*

In China, as in the United States, 2012 will be a momentous year for politicians. Since 1977, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has regularly held a National Party Congress every five years. The Party congress has always been a grand occasion for change in China's top leadership. The 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CCP, which is scheduled to convene in the fall of 2012, will be no exception. As many as seven of the nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest decision-making body in the country, are expected to retire. Within the full 25-member Politburo, at least 14 leaders will vacate their seats to make way for younger candidates. Consequently, the principal figures responsible for the country's political and ideological affairs, economic and financial administration, foreign policy, and military operations will consist of newcomers after 2012.<sup>1</sup>

Although this major leadership turnover in Beijing still feels remote, Chinese politicians are already beginning to take action. China, of course, does not have midterm elections like the United States. The American practice of midterm elections is a foreign notion to political actors in the People's Republic of China (PRC), but insofar as “the midterms” in the United States represent an important midway point before the upcoming presidential election, the Chinese political clock follows a remarkably similar rhythm. Fervent jockeying for power among key contenders and their attendant factions tends to heat up at least two years prior to the upcoming “grand year of the leadership change.”

This particular span of time is primarily a function of recently established CCP regulations and norms that require high-ranking officials (county chief or above) to serve for at least two years before receiving a promotion.<sup>2</sup> The candidates seeking membership in the new Central Committee and the new Politburo must position themselves carefully now and in the coming months by occupying steppingstone posts within the Party and government at either the central or provincial level of leadership.

Analyzing the incumbents of these prominent posts—especially the new appointees in the recent reshuffling—is therefore enormously valuable for China-watching communities. Such an analysis can help achieve four important objectives: 1) to reveal the possible leadership lineup in the next Politburo, including its Standing Committee; 2) to exhibit the political and professional characteristics of new top leaders, including the rising stars of the younger generation; 3) to offer an assessment of the factional balance of power within the Chinese leadership after the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress; and 4) to forecast the political trajectory and policy orientation of the country under its new leadership.

This essay is the first in a series on Chinese politicians' jockeying for power in the run-up to the leadership transition in 2012. The series intends to examine several of the most crucial bureaucratic constituencies, such as the CCP central departments, ministries of the State Council, major state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and the military. This first essay focuses on the 62 current provincial chiefs—Party secretaries and governors (or mayors)—of China's 31 province-level administrative entities.<sup>3</sup> It provides comprehensive empirical analysis of the biographical backgrounds, educational credentials, career paths, and political networking or factional identities of these 62 top provincial leaders. With the exception of some information concerning these individuals' patron-client ties and family backgrounds, which is based on the author's interviews and non-official Chinese media, all data are derived from the website of the government-run Xinhua News Agency.<sup>4</sup>

These 62 provincial chiefs are arguably the most important group to watch in the country's ongoing midterm jockeying, as China's provincial leadership is both a training ground for national leadership and a battleground for various political forces. The factional distribution of power is as evident at the provincial level as at the national level, and therefore deserves our attention. Identifying which provincial chiefs advanced their careers through the Chinese Communist Youth League (Hu Jintao's power base), or are princelings (leaders who have high-ranking official family backgrounds), or are the members of the "Shanghai Gang" (leaders who were the protégés of Jiang Zemin when he was in charge of the city), is one of the best methods for forecasting the Chinese political landscape in the years to come.

## Provincial Leadership: A Pivotal Stepping Stone for China's Top Leadership

China's provincial chiefs currently carry enormous political weight in the governance of the country for three main reasons. First, the provinces and municipalities that these

leaders govern are large socioeconomic entities. It is often said that a province is to China what a country is to Europe. In fact, Chinese provinces are much bigger in terms of population than most European countries. For example, China's five largest provinces—Henan, Shandong, Sichuan, Guangdong, and Jiangsu—are more populous than the five largest countries in Western Europe: Germany, England, France, Italy and Spain.<sup>5</sup> Henan Province currently has a population of 99.7 million people and is expected to surpass 100 million in July 2010.<sup>6</sup> Besides China, only 10 other countries in the world have a population over 100 million.<sup>7</sup> The economic significance of these provinces is also important. For example, the total GDP of Guangdong Province has already surpassed three of the “East Asian Tigers”: Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Guangdong's governor recently claimed that the province's GDP will surpass that of the other “tiger,” South Korea, within a decade.<sup>8</sup> China's provincial chiefs, like top leaders in European nations and the East Asian Tigers, are constantly concerned with regional economic development and have coped with daunting challenges such as unemployment, distributive justice, social stability, health care, and the welfare needs of those in their jurisdictions.

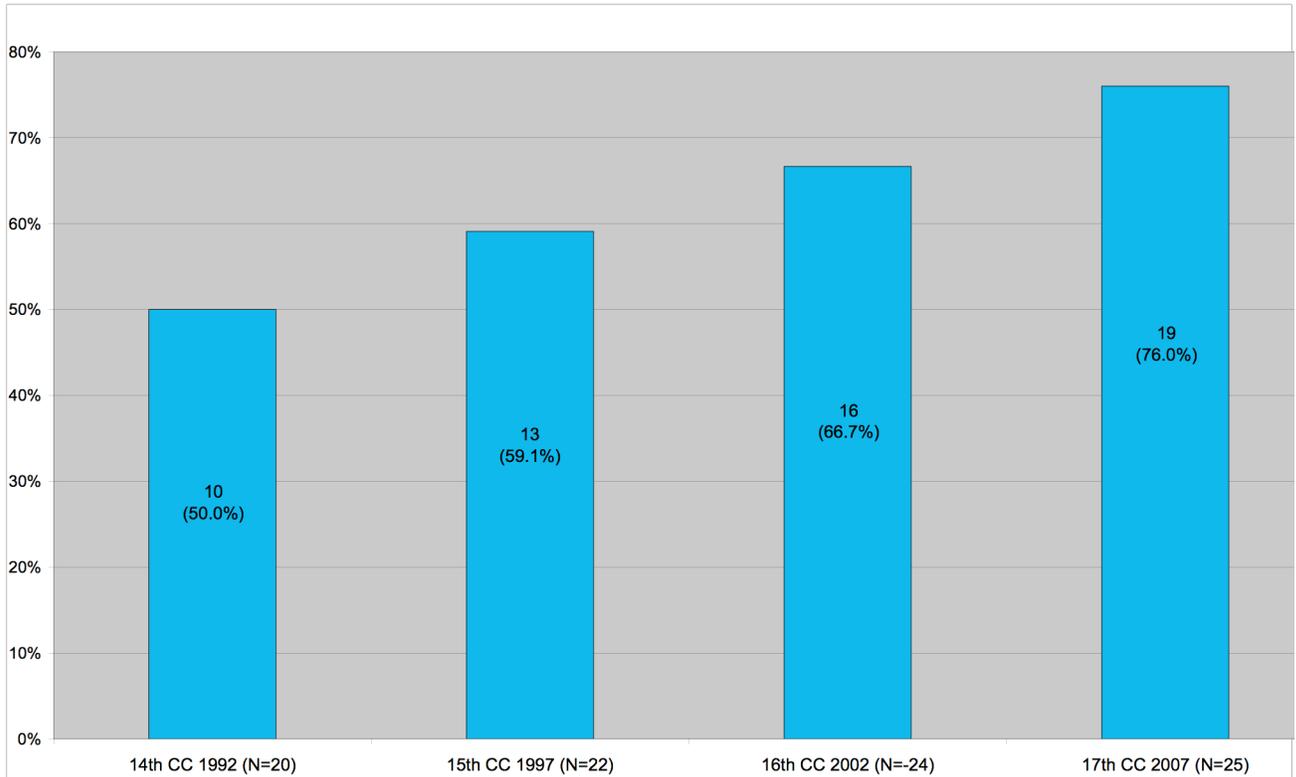
Second, the top provincial leadership in China is also a political force in its own right, especially at a time when provincial governments have more autonomy to advance their regional interests. Although usually behind closed doors, they are constantly engaged in political networking, policy lobbying, and coalition-building both among themselves and with the central authorities. It is no coincidence that the two most important political purges in the CCP over the past 15 years happened to two Politburo members who were concurrently serving as provincial chiefs—Beijing Party Secretary Chen Xitong in 1995 and Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Liangyu in 2006. The PRC's last two presidents, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, were able to consolidate their power and authority in the central government by eliminating these two formidable political rivals at the provincial level. More recently, provincial and local governments' “liaison offices in Beijing” (*zhujingban*), the region-based Chinese lobbying groups, have rapidly increased in number. In January 2010 the central government issued new regulations to substantially reduce the permitted number of these offices representing local interests and to require financial auditing of the remaining lobbying groups at the province and municipality levels.<sup>9</sup>

Third, and most importantly, the post of provincial chief has been the most pivotal stepping stone to top national leadership offices in post-Deng China. Most of China's top leaders in this period—Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji of the third generation, Hu Jintao and Wu Bangguo of the fourth, and Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang of the fifth—all served as provincial or municipal Party secretaries before moving to Beijing to assume the country's most prominent national leadership posts. Of the nine members of the current Politburo Standing Committee, all but one (Premier Wen Jiabao) had prior experience as a provincial chief. All of the six rising stars in the top leadership—the Politburo members who belong to the fifth generation—either recently served or currently serve as provincial chiefs.<sup>10</sup> Chart 1 displays the remarkable increase in Politburo members with experience as provincial chiefs, from 50 percent in 1992 to 59 percent in 1997, 67 percent

in 2002, and 76 percent in 2007. For civilian leaders, experience as a provincial chief has almost become a prerequisite for membership in the Politburo.

**Chart 1**

*The Increase of Politburo Members with Experience as Provincial Chiefs*



SOURCE: Cheng Li, “A Pivotal Stepping-Stone: Local Leaders’ Representation on the 17th Central Committee.” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 23, (Winter 2008), p. 3.

In addition, on the eve of the National Party Congress, all provincial chiefs are automatically placed on the ballot for confirmation by the full membership of the Central Committee (CC) of the CCP.<sup>11</sup> For example, when the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee was formed in 2007 the provincial Party secretaries and governors of 31 province-level administrations all obtained full membership seats on the committee. Although it is understood that provincial chiefs might soon be promoted to the central government or transferred to another province, this distributional norm was strictly applied when the Central Committee was elected. This norm has the effect of making provincial chiefs the group with the largest representation among the 200 or so full members of the CC. Table 1 presents the current provincial chiefs’ membership statuses in the 17<sup>th</sup> CC. Six currently serve as members of the Politburo: Beijing Party Secretary Liu Qi, Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan, Shanghai Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng, Tianjin Party Secretary Zhang Gaoli, Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai, and Guangdong Party Secretary Wang Yang. Forty-one provincial chiefs (66 percent of the total) are full members of the 17<sup>th</sup> CC and twelve (19 percent) are alternate members. Altogether 95

percent of the current provincial chiefs serve on the 17<sup>th</sup> CC, and as a group they are well positioned to seek higher office.

**Table 1**

*Current Provincial Chiefs' Membership in the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (2010)*

<i>Membership Status</i>	<i>Number of Leaders</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Politburo member	6	9.7
Full member	41	66.1
Alternate member	12	19.4
Member of CCDI	1	1.6
None of the above	2	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100.0</b>

NOTE: CCDI = Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

Three provincial chiefs who are not on the 17<sup>th</sup> CC are Inner Mongolia Governor Bater (Bagatur, born in 1955), newly appointed Chongqing Mayor Huang Qifan (b. 1952), and newly appointed Tibet Governor Padma Choling (b. 1951). Bater currently serves as a member of the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and he previously served as an alternate member of the 15<sup>th</sup> CC in 1997. All three of them are expected to become full members of the 18<sup>th</sup> CC, and Bater's ethnic minority background and broad leadership experiences may place him in a more advantageous position for further career advancement. All of these factors suggest that China's provincial chiefs carry heavy political weight and are among the front-runners for national leadership positions at the upcoming 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.

## An Anticipated Large-Scale Leadership Turnover at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress

Despite the Chinese political system's authoritarian nature and one-party monopoly of power, the CCP's leadership has had a remarkably high turnover rate over the past three decades. This is evident in the fact that newcomers constituted 60 percent of the 12<sup>th</sup> CC in 1982, 68 percent of the 13<sup>th</sup> CC in 1987, 57 percent of the 14<sup>th</sup> CC in 1992, 63 percent of the 15<sup>th</sup> CC in 1997, 61 percent of the 16<sup>th</sup> CC in 2002, and 63 percent of the 17<sup>th</sup> CC in 2007, which averages to a 62 percent turnover rate.<sup>12</sup> Based on the age distribution of current CC members and the turnover rates at previous Party congresses, one can expect that roughly 60 percent of the members of the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress will be first-timers.

In the domain of Chinese elite circulation, the age of a leader is one of the most important indicators of that leader's future political prospects. Based on CCP regulations and norms, leaders of a certain rank cannot exceed a set age limit. For example, all provincial chiefs are supposed to step down when they reach 65, and only those under the

age of 63 are initially considered for the position. At the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2007, all leaders who were born before 1940, including the then political heavyweight Vice President Zeng Qinghong (who was born in 1939), were not allowed to continue to serve on the new Central Committee. These retirement age limits not only generate a sense of consistency and fairness in the retirement and recruitment of leaders, but also make the circulation of Chinese political elites very fast. For outside observers, the question of who will be up or down in the top leadership at the upcoming Party congress—reading of the tea leaves of Pekingology—has become less challenging than ever before.

Table 2 (next page) details the likely career prospects of today's 25-member Politburo after the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2012. Given that 1940 was the earliest permissible birth year at the last Party congress, it is likely that for the upcoming congress the authorities will choose 1945. If this is the case, at least 14 members (56 percent of the total) will retire. Among the nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee, only two, Vice President Xi Jinping and Executive Vice Premier Li Keqiang, were born after 1945 and will therefore be allowed to retain their seats. Xi and Li are widely recognized as the “dual heirs apparent.” The other seven members (78 percent of the total) will likely vacate their seats in favor of younger leaders who now serve on the Politburo, most notably Li Yuanchao, Wang Qishan, Liu Yunshan, and Zhang Dejiang. The head of the CCP Organization Department Li Yuanchao and Vice Premier Wang Qishan are currently in charge of Party personnel affairs and the country's financial development, respectively. These two crucial areas of responsibility have already made Li and Wang political heavyweights, and they are expected to play even greater roles in the years to come. The head of the CCP Publicity Department Liu Yunshan and Vice Premier Zhang Dejiang have already served two terms as Politburo members and have a good chance of being promoted to the Standing Committee.

Of the 16 non-Standing Committee members of the Politburo, in addition to the four who are likely be promoted to the Standing Committee as described above, at least seven will step down due to the age limit. Prominent leaders in other bureaucratic institutions such as the CCP central departments, the State Council, and the military will also obtain some of these seats. For example, Ling Jihua, currently head of the Central Office of the CC and a member of the Secretariat, will most likely obtain a seat in the next Politburo. As Hu Jintao's protégé, Ling may even have a chance to be elevated to the Politburo Standing Committee, echoing what happened to Zeng Qinghong, Jiang's protégé, in 2002.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, current provincial chiefs will likely occupy a majority of these 14 open seats, including three seats on the Standing Committee (assuming the institution will remain a nine-member body).

It is too early, of course, to suggest that the political prospects of individual contenders for the Politburo or its Standing Committee are assured. It is also reasonable  
*(text continues on p. 8)*

**Table 2***Current Politburo Members' Career Prospects after the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2012*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year Born</i>	<i>Age in 2012</i>	<i>Likely political standing after the 18th Party Congress</i>
Hu Jintao	1942	70	Retired
Wu Bangguo	1941	71	Retired
Wen Jiabao	1942	70	Retired
Jia Qinglin	1940	72	Retired
Li Changchun	1944	68	Retired
Xi Jinping	1953	59	Remaining on Standing Committee
Li Keqiang	1955	57	Remaining on Standing Committee
He Guoqiang	1943	69	Retired
Zhou Yongkang	1942	70	Retired
Wang Gang	1942	70	Retired
Wang Lequan	1944	68	Retired
Wang Zhaoguo	1941	71	Retired
Wang Qishan	1948	64	Promoted to Standing Committee
Hui Liangyu	1944	68	Retired
Liu Qi	1942	70	Retired
Liu Yunshan	1947	65	Promoted to Standing Committee
Liu Yandong	1945	67	Retired, unchanged, or promoted to Standing Committee
Li Yuanchao	1950	62	Promoted to Standing Committee
Wang Yang	1955	57	Unchanged or promoted to Standing Committee
Zhang Gaoli	1946	66	Unchanged or promoted to Standing Committee
Zhang Dejiang	1946	66	Promoted to Standing Committee
Yu Zhengsheng	1945	67	Retired or promoted to Standing Committee
Xu Caihou	1943	69	Retired
Guo Boxiong	1942	70	Retired
Bo Xilai	1949	63	Unchanged or promoted to Standing Committee

NOTE: Shading indicates current members of the Standing Committee.

*(continued from p. 6)*

to point out that the transition of power from Hu and Wen to Xi and Li is not a foregone conclusion. A dark horse can emerge in Chinese politics, just as in American politics. It is for this reason, however, that we should pay greater attention to a broader group of potential contenders for power, especially the rising stars in provincial leadership. It is also important to note that the upcoming personnel changes at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress will mark the full takeover of the so-called fifth generation of leaders in the country's supreme leadership bodies. As PRC history has shown time and again, each generation of leaders tends to bring with it a distinctive perceived mandate, different approaches to governance, and idiosyncratic hot-button issues. To grasp the collective characteristics or generational traits of the upcoming fifth and sixth generations of Chinese leaders—especially among provincial chiefs, the most important source of recruitment for future leaders—is a task as important as identifying the top contenders for the supreme leadership bodies.

## An Empirical Analysis of the 62 Provincial Chiefs

### *Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Birthplace*

Table 3 (next page) provides an overview of the biographical information for these 62 provincial chiefs. Not surprisingly, only one woman is represented, Fujian Party Secretary Sun Chunlan, who was appointed to her position in November 2009. Over the past decade it has consistently been the case that only one provincial chief position is held by a woman. In 2000, a Mongolian woman named Uyunqing served as Inner Mongolia's governor. Most recently, Song Xiuyan served as governor of Qinghai, and she currently holds the post of first secretary of the All-China Women's Federation. Sun Chunlan was born in 1950 and began her career in 1969 as a worker in a watch factory in Anshan, Liaoning. She worked as an official on the grassroots Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) committee, a factory manager and Party secretary, and the head of women's associations at both the municipal and provincial levels. She served as Party secretary of Dalian City from 2001 to 2005 and first secretary of the All-China Workers' Federation between 2005 and 2009. Sun has been on the CC since the 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1997 and is a full member in the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. The Chinese official media recently referred to Sun as “another Wu Yi” among the Chinese leadership.<sup>14</sup> She is one of the few female candidates for membership in the next Politburo.<sup>15</sup> The other women leaders with whom she will likely compete include the abovementioned Song Xiuyan (b. 1955), Minister of Supervision Ma Wen (b. 1948), Minister of Justice Wu Aiying (b. 1951), and Executive Head of the CCP Organization Department Shen Yueyue (b. 1957).

Six provincial chiefs belong to ethnic minority groups. They include all five governors in China's five province-level ethnic minority autonomous regions: Ningxia Governor Wang Zhengwei (Hui, b. 1957), Guangxi Governor Ma Biao (Zhuang, b. 1954), Inner Mongolia Governor Bator (Mongolian), Xinjiang Governor Nur Bekri (Uighur, b. 1961), and the newly appointed Tibet Governor Padma Choling (Tibetan).

The *Law of Ethnic Minority Autonomous Areas of the People's Republic of China*, which was revised by the National People's Congress (NPC) in 2002, specifies that the top post of the local government in all autonomous ethnic minority-populated regions should be held by a leader who hails from the same minority background as the majority of the jurisdiction's citizens.<sup>16</sup> Only one ethnic minority leader, Guizhou Party Secretary Shi Zongyuan (Hui, b. 1946), serves as a provincial Party secretary. Although ethnic minority leaders serve as governors in each of China's five ethnic minority autonomous regions, it is without exception a Han Chinese leader who occupies the post of Party secretary in these regions.

**Table 3**

*Biographical Backgrounds of Provincial Chiefs (as of February 2010)*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Male</i>	61	98.4
<i>Female</i>	1	1.6
<hr/>		
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Han	56	90.3
Minority	6	9.7
<hr/>		
<i>Age range in years / (birth year range)</i>		
66–70 / (1940–1944)	2	3.2
61–65 / (1945–1949)	21	33.9
56–60 / (1950–1954)	29	46.8
51–55 / (1955–1959)	6	9.7
46–50 / (1960–1964)	4	6.5
<hr/>		
<i>Top six birth provinces</i>		
Shandong	8	12.9
Zhejiang	8	12.9
Hebei	6	9.7
Henan	5	8.1
Jiangsu	5	8.1
Anhui	4	6.5
<hr/>		
Total chiefs from top six birth provinces	36	58.2

SOURCE: Xinhua News Agency. Calculated by the author.

Vice Premier Hui Liangyu (Hui, b. 1944) is the only current Politburo member with an ethnic minority background and he is expected to step down due to age. It is almost certain that there will be at least one ethnic minority member in the next Politburo. The candidates include Minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Committee Yang Jing (Mongolian, b. 1953), Party Secretary of the Federation of Industries and Commerce and concurrently Vice Director of the CCP United Front Work Department Quan Zhezhu (Korean, b. 1952), and the abovementioned Bateer, Ma Biao, and Wang Zhengwei.

Table 3 illustrates that only two provincial chiefs have exceeded the retirement age at this level of leadership. They are Beijing Party Secretary Liu Qi (b. 1942) and Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan (b. 1944). Both of them are currently members of the Politburo and are expected to retire in 2012. A few provincial chiefs who were born in the late 1940s may still have a chance to obtain a seat in the next Politburo, but most of them will likely retire in the next few years. Several of them are expected to vacate their seats as provincial chiefs very soon, including Hubei Party Secretary Luo Qingquan (b. 1945), Ningxia Party Secretary Chen Jianguo (b. 1945), Anhui Party Secretary Wang Jinshan (b. 1945), Yunnan Party Secretary Bai Enpei (b. 1946), Hainan Party Secretary Wei Liucheng (b. 1946), Guangdong Governor Huang Huahua (b. 1946), Fujian Governor Huang Xiaojing (b. 1946), and Zhejiang Governor Lu Zushan (b. 1946).

Thirty-five provincial chiefs (56.5 percent of the total) were born in the 1950s, and can therefore stay on in their positions for many more years, with the possibility of further promotion. Table 4 displays the length of tenure of current provincial chiefs. According to CCP regulations, each leader can stay on in the same position for only two five-year terms. Only one leader, Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan (a Politburo member), does not meet this requirement, having served in his position since 1995. It appears the central authorities have granted this exception because of the need to control a region with increasing ethnic tensions. Fifty provincial chiefs (81 percent) were appointed to their current positions after 2006, and are thus still in their first five-year term. The fast turnover rate among the provincial chiefs is evident in this table.

**Table 4**  
*Length of Tenure of Current Provincial Chiefs*

<i>Year Appointed to Current Post</i>	<i>Number of Leaders</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
before 2000	1	1.6
2000	0	0.0
2001	1	1.6
2002	2	3.2
2003	4	6.5
2004	0	0.0
2005	4	6.3
2006	2	3.2
2007	22	35.5
2008	14	22.6
2009	10	16.1
2010	2	3.2
TOTAL	62	100.0

SOURCE: Xinhua News Agency. Calculated by the author.

Four leaders were born in the 1960s: Inner Mongolia Party Secretary Hu Chunhua (b. 1963), Jilin Party Secretary Sun Zhengcai (b. 1963), Hunan Governor Zhou Qiang (b. 1960), and the aforementioned Xinjiang Governor Nur Bekri. They belong to the so-called sixth generation of PRC leadership. Of the 371 members of the 17<sup>th</sup> CC (including both full and alternate members), only 25 (6.7 percent) were born in the 1960s. Among them, only four are full members (Hu Chunhua, Sun Zhengcai, Zhou Qiang, and the chairman of China Commercial Aircraft Co., Ltd., Zhang Qingwei). Their relatively younger age and tenure in this crucial leadership body will make them very competitive aspiring leaders in the years to come.

Table 3 lists the top six provinces in which China's current provincial chiefs were born. Approximately 58 percent of leaders were born in these six provinces and about 40 percent were born in four provinces in Eastern China (Shandong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui). Among the eight municipal chiefs of China's four major cities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing), seven were born in Eastern China. This finding echoes several recent studies of China's post-Mao leadership that show an overrepresentation of elites who were born in Eastern China, especially in the provinces Shandong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang.<sup>17</sup> Also, several leading contenders for high office after 2012 were born in Anhui (also the native province of Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, and Li Keqiang); they include Guangdong Party Secretary Wang Yang (b. 1955), Sichuan Party Secretary Liu Qibao (b. 1953), and Liaoning Party Secretary Wang Min (b. 1950).

Table 5 provides information about the change in promotion patterns in terms of location of these 62 provincial chiefs from 2003 to 2010. The number of provincial chiefs who were promoted in the same province decreased from 38 (61 percent) in 2003 to 28 (45 percent) in 2010. More leaders are now transferred from the other provinces or from the central government. This author's research on the change of correlation between birthplace and workplace for provincial chiefs in the same period also shows that the number of provincial chiefs working in the same province in which he or she was born decreased from 18 (29 percent) in 2003 to 11 (18 percent) in 2010. It is interesting to note, however, that two Shandong natives, Jiang Yikang (b. 1953) and Jiang Daming (b. 1953), serve as the provincial chiefs of Shandong Province.

**Table 5**

*Change of Promotion Pattern for Provincial Chiefs (2003–2010)*

	<i>Provincial chiefs, 2003</i>		<i>Provincial chiefs, 2010</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Promoted from same province</i>	38	61.3	28	45.2
<i>Promoted from different province</i>	14	22.6	22	35.5
<i>Promoted from central government</i>	10	16.1	12	19.4
TOTAL	62	100.0	62	100.0

NOTES & SOURCE: The 2003 data is based on Cheng Li, "Analysis of Current Provincial Leaders." *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 7, (Summer 2003), p. 12.

*Educational Backgrounds*

A major difference between the fourth generation and the fifth generation of leaders lies in their educational backgrounds. Very few leaders in the fourth generation received post-graduate education, and a majority of the leaders who were born in the 1940s studied engineering as undergraduates prior to the Cultural Revolution. The fifth generation of leaders often received graduate education, usually in part-time programs, and many hold Ph.D. degrees. Their academic fields are diverse, and many have studied economics, management, politics, or law. These new trends are evident among the 62 provincial chiefs. Table 6 shows that 40 leaders (64.5 percent) hold advanced degrees. In 2001, only eight provincial chiefs (13 percent) had attended graduate programs (mainly acquiring master's degrees).<sup>18</sup> In contrast, eight current provincial chiefs hold Ph.D. degrees, including Guangxi Party Secretary Guo Shengkun (b. 1954), Tianjin Mayor Huang Xingguo (b. 1954), Shaanxi Governor Yuan Chunqing (b. 1952), newly appointed Qinghai Governor Luo Huining (b. 1954), and Wang Min and Sun Zhengcai, already discussed above.

**Table 6**  
*Educational Backgrounds of Provincial Chiefs (as of February 2010)*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Educational Level</i>		
Ph.D.	7	11.3
Master's Degree	33	53.2
4-Year College	21	33.9
2-Year College	1	1.6
TOTAL	62	100.0
<i>Academic Majors</i>		
Economics / Management	17	27.4
Politics, CCP Affairs	16	25.8
Engineering	15	24.2
Law	3	4.8
Business	2	3.2
Chinese	2	3.2
History	2	3.2
Journalism	2	3.2
Agronomy	1	1.6
Philosophy	1	1.6
Physics	1	1.6
TOTAL	62	100.0

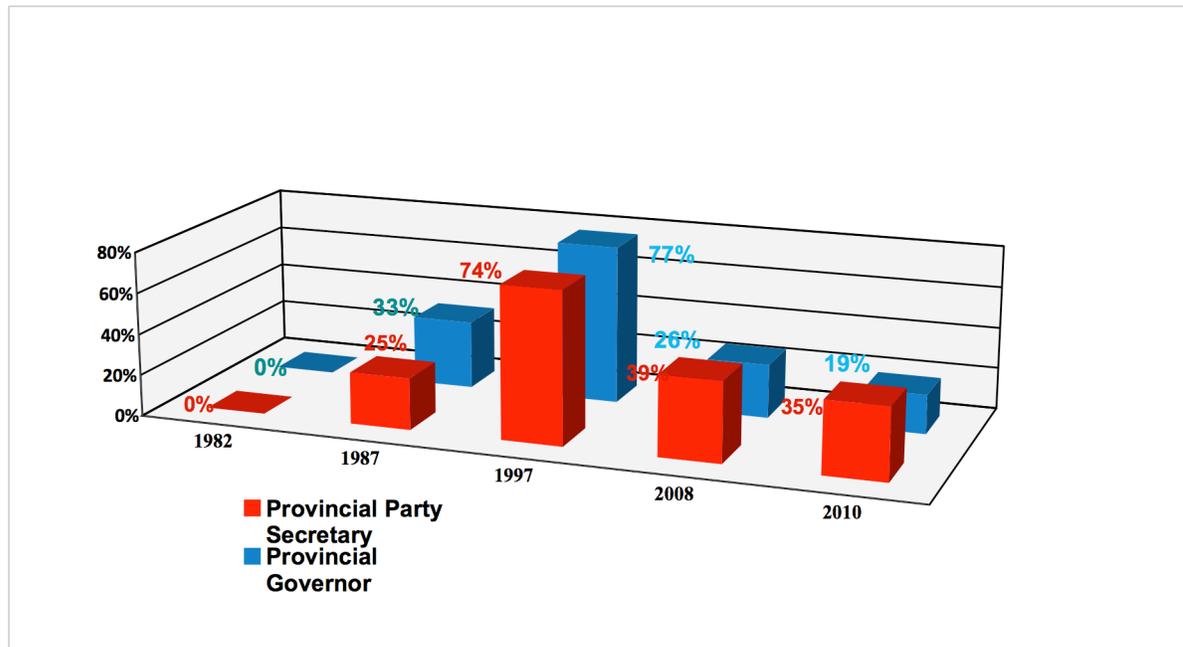
SOURCE: Xinhua News Agency. Calculated by the author.

It is important to point out that most of these provincial chiefs attended master's or Ph.D. programs on a part-time basis, and many actually received their advanced degrees at the Central Party School (CPS). In recent years there has been strong criticism across the country of these "fake academic credentials" (*jiaxueli*). The official Chinese media recently called for political leaders to have "clean academic degrees" (*xueli qingqingbaibai*).<sup>19</sup> It was also reported in the Chinese media that some high-ranking officials even received their "advanced degrees" from what some critics called "fake foreign universities." According to certain sources, the qualification of these "advanced degrees," such as the EMBA, was not recognized by the Department of Education in the United States.<sup>20</sup> Two high-ranking leaders who were recently purged on corruption charges, former Shenzhen Mayor Xu Zongheng and former Vice Minister of Culture Yu Youjun, both received their degrees from such programs.

There are, of course, some exceptions. For example, Wang Min attended the Ph.D. program (full time) in engineering at the Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics from 1983 to 1985. Wang was also a visiting scholar at Hong Kong Polytechnic University from 1987 to 1989. Of the 62 provincial chiefs, only three, including Wang Min, were reported to have studied overseas. The other two include Bater, who studied economic management in Tokyo as a visiting scholar from 1989 to 1990, and Hubei Governor Li Hongzhong, who attended the future leaders program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. None received academic degrees overseas.

Table 6 also shows that the academic fields of economics, management, politics and Party affairs top the list in frequency. Thirty-three of the provincial chiefs (53 percent) majored in these fields, and 15 (24 percent) majored in engineering. By contrast, in 2001, 39 provincial chiefs (63 percent) received their education in engineering and only 6 (9.7 percent) studied economics, politics, or Party affairs.<sup>21</sup> Chart 2 (next page) illustrates the dramatic rise and fall of provincial chiefs who qualify as technocrats (educated as engineers and natural scientists) from 1982 to 2010.

China experienced a "technocratic turnover" within the party-state leadership in the late 1980s and 1990s. In 1982, technocrats—cadres with a university-level technical education—constituted just 2 percent of the Central Committee, but by 1987 they soared to 25 percent. By 1997 they made up over half of the Central Committee.<sup>22</sup> The nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee elected in 2002 were all engineers, including the top three leaders, General Secretary Jiang Zemin (electrical engineer), Chairman of the NPC Li Peng (civil engineer), and Premier Zhu Rongji (electrical engineer). This is also true of the current leadership's top three: Hu Jintao (hydraulic engineer), Wu Bangguo (electrical engineer), and Wen Jiabao (geological engineer). The representation of technocrats also increased dramatically among provincial Party secretaries and governors during that period. The decline of the technocrats among provincial chiefs in recent years suggests that the era of the technocrats' dominance in Chinese political leadership is coming to an end. The next Politburo will likely be more diversified in terms of its members' academic fields.

**Chart 2***Changes in Technocrats' Representation among Provincial Chiefs (1982–2010)*

SOURCE: The author's database.

*Career Paths, Leadership Experiences, and Political Associations*

A majority of current provincial chiefs belong to the so-called lost generation, whose members spent their formative years during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and lost the opportunity to receive primary and high school education. Instead, many became “sent-down youths” who were rusticated, usually as teenagers, from cities to the often remote countryside to do manual labor for years or even a decade. Twenty-three provincial chiefs (37 percent)—including Sichuan Party Secretary Liu Qibao, Liaoning Party Secretary Wang Min, Guangxi Party Secretary Guo Shengkun, Hainan Governor Luo Baoming (b. 1952), and Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng (b. 1954)—were subjected to this fate. Newly appointed Henan Party Secretary Lu Zhangong, for instance, was born in Cixi City, Zhejiang Province, in 1952, but spent 13 years of his early career in the remote province of Heilongjiang, which included about four years of farm labor.

Several provincial chiefs hail from farming families. Tianjin Mayor Huang Xingguo, for instance, was born in 1954 in the rural area Xiangshan, Zhejiang Province, and began to advance politically in a local People's Commune. Similarly, Inner Mongolia Governor Bater began his career as a herdsman on an Inner Mongolian farm at age 17. Many of the provincial chiefs who were not sent-down youth also had other sorts of humble work experiences early in their careers. Shanxi Party Secretary Zhang Baoshun (b. 1950) was a dock worker; Shanxi Governor Wang Jun (b. 1952) was a coal miner; Guangxi Governor Ma Biao was a worker in an iron and steel factory; Chongqing

Mayor Huang Qifan was a worker in a chemical plant; Xinjiang Party Secretary Zhang Qingli (b. 1951) was a laborer in a fertilizer plant; and Guangdong Party Secretary Wang Yang was a worker in a food-processing factory. Several provincial chiefs—including Qinghai Party Secretary Qiang Wei (b. 1953), Shandong Party Secretary Jiang Yikang, Jiangsu Governor Luo Zhijun (b. 1951), Ningxia Party Secretary Chen Jianguo, and Tibet Governor Padma Choling—began their careers as soldiers.

These extraordinary life experiences resulting from the Cultural Revolution had a lasting impact on each of these leaders and a unique collective impact on the fifth generation as a whole. The generation's members differ from the third and fourth generations of leaders, who had already finished their college education by the time the Cultural Revolution began. It is also reasonable to infer that fifth-generation leaders, as a whole, will differ profoundly from future sixth-generation leaders in terms of their adolescent experiences. The latter group has tended to move seamlessly from high school to college in an economically affluent period, and has rarely had to face the kind of hardships and obstacles encountered by the preceding generation. There is some evidence that the fifth generation's arduous and humbling experiences forced its members to cultivate such valuable traits as endurance, adaptability, and humility. As Henan Party Secretary Lu Zhangong has said, "I was merely one of the thousands of sent-down youths. There was not much difference between my fellow sent-down youths and me. The only difference is that I was lucky enough to seize the opportunity given me."<sup>23</sup>

A recent study of China's 31 current provincial governors and mayors, published by the official Chinese media, revealed that 77 percent of these leaders began their careers as sent-down youths, factory workers, or soldiers—and very few as white-collar clerks.<sup>24</sup> On average, they joined the Chinese Communist Party at age 23, began to work as governmental officials at 29, rose to the position of governor at 54, and are now 57 years old. The report emphasized the fact that, on average, these leaders had 25 years of leadership experience before assuming the post of governor.

Table 7 (next page) exhibits the main work experience of 31 current provincial governors and mayors. Based on their official biographies, the author has coded their experiences into nine functional areas: rural work, industrial work, foreign trade, finance, CCP organizational (personnel) work, propaganda, academic research, *mishu* experiences (including serving as personal assistant, office director, or chief of staff), and CCYL official experiences. The table shows that almost half of these leaders had experience in rural work as county heads in charge of agricultural affairs, but only one-fifth had experienced industrial work as a general manager of a factory or head of the industrial bureau at the municipal or provincial level of administration. Only one-fifth had administrative experience in foreign trade. Only two leaders, Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng and Chongqing Mayor Huang Qifan, were in charge of financial affairs. Only one leader, Guangxi Governor Ma Biao, had leadership experience in the academic world. He worked as a scholar and deputy director of the Economic Planning Research Institute of the Guangxi government from 1982 to 1991, an associate fellow and director of the Economics Department of the Ethnic Minority Research Institute of the Chinese

*(text continues on p. 17)*

**Table 7**  
*Main Work Experience of 31 Current Provincial Leaders*

<i>Leader</i>	<i>Area of work experience</i>								
	Rural	Industrial	Foreign trade		Organization	Propaganda	Academic research	<i>Mishu</i>	CCYL
Beijing Mayor Guo Jinlong	X					X			
Tianjin Mayor Huang Xingguo	X					X		X	X
Hebei Governor Chen Quanguo	X				X			X	
Shanxi Governor Wang Jun		X							
Meimenggu Governor Bateer	X								X
Liaoning Governor Chen Zhenggao	X					X		X	X
Jilin Governor Wang Rulin	X							X	X
Heilongjiang Governor Li Zhanshu	X				X			X	X
Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng		X	X	X				X	X
Jiangsu Governor Luo Zhijun						X		X	X
Zhejiang Governor Lu Zushan		X						X	
Anhui Governor Wang Sanyun	X				X			X	X
Fujian Governor Huang Xiaojing									X
Jiangxi Governor Wu Xinxiang	X	X							
Shandong Governor Jiang Daming	X				X			X	X
Henan Governor Guo Gengmao	X								
Hubei Governor Li Hongzhong		X	X					X	
Hunan Governor Zhou Qiang								X	X
Guangdong Governor Huang Huahua								X	X
Guangxi Governor Ma Biao	X						X		
Hainan Governor Luo Baoming			X			X			X
Chongqing Mayor Huang Qifan		X	X	X				X	
Sichuan Governor Jiang Jufeng	X					X		X	
Guizhou Governor Lin Shuseng	X		X					X	
Yunnan Governor Qin Guangrong					X				X
Tibet Governor Padma Choling								X	
Shaanxi Governor Yuan Chunqing								X	X
Gansu Governor Xu Shousheng	X				X				
Qinghai Governor Luo Huining			X			X		X	
Ningxia Governor Wang Zhengwei						X		X	
Xinjiang Governor Nur Bekri						X		X	X

NOTE: CCYL = Chinese Communist Youth League

(continued from p. 15)

Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) between 1991 and 1994, and was later appointed deputy director of the Economic Reform Commission of the Guangxi government. Almost half of the governors in question worked as heads of either the CCP Organization Department or the Propaganda Department (at the county, municipal, or provincial level of leadership).

An interesting finding is that as many as 21 provincial governors (68 percent) had experience as *mishu*, a statistic that reflects the strong role of patron-client ties in Chinese elite recruitment. Some began their careers by serving as personal assistants to former high-ranking officials. Hubei Governor Li Hongzhong, for example, was a *mishu* to former Politburo member Li Tieying, and Hunan Governor Zhou Qiang was a *mishu* to former Minister of Justice Xiao Yang. Early in their careers Sichuan Party Secretary Liu Qibao and Sichuan Governor Jiang Jufeng (b. 1948) both worked as *mishu* in their respective provincial government offices (Liu in Anhui and Jiang in Zhejiang). Shandong Party Secretary Jiang Yikang advanced his career almost entirely by working as a *mishu*. After working as a *mishu* for many years early in his career, Jiang was promoted to be deputy director of the Mishu Bureau of the Central Office of the CCP in 1988. From 1995 to 2002, he served as deputy director of the Central Office of the CCP before being appointed to become deputy Party secretary of Chongqing.

Table 7 also shows that 16 provincial governors (52 percent) had experience as officials of the CCYL organization at the county level of leadership or above. Those who advanced their careers from within the CCYL and worked directly under Hu Jintao at the provincial or national levels of the CCYL organization in the early 1980s are often called *tuanpai* (the youth league faction). This study also examines those leaders who served as officials in the CCYL's provincial and national leadership between 1993 and 1998, at which time Li Keqiang was in charge of the CCYL. It is important to note, however, that not all of the 16 governors with leadership experience in the CCYL should be identified as *tuanpai*. Some have never worked at the CCYL's provincial or national levels of leadership, and therefore do not qualify. Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng does not have the factional identity *tuanpai* despite having served as secretary of the Shanghai CCYL Committee, as he primarily advanced his career through his connections to the Shanghai Gang.

Nevertheless, 13 of these governors with CCYL experience are in fact *tuanpai* members. Table 8 (next page) shows that the number of provincial chiefs with the *tuanpai* affiliation increased from six (9.7 percent) in 2003 to 13 (21 percent) in 2005 and 21 (33.9 percent) in 2010. This high representation of *tuanpai* members in the provincial leadership is not surprising. At the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CCP, 86 leaders (23 percent), including both full and alternate members, could be identified as *tuanpai*. This study suggests that the protégés of Hu Jintao and Li Keqiang will likely continue to occupy a large number of seats in the next Central Committee and Politburo.

*Tuanpai* leaders are, of course, unable to completely dominate either the provincial or national leadership, now or after the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. Some of the protégés of

other top leaders (former or current) also hold important posts in the provincial leadership. Beijing Party Secretary Liu Qi and Tianjin Party Secretary Zhang Gaoli are widely known to be Jiang Zemin's protégés. The newly appointed Jilin Party Secretary Sun Zhengcai is a protégé of both Jia Qinglin and Zeng Qinghong. Princelings, leaders who come from high-ranking family backgrounds, often compete with the *tuanpai* for some of the most important posts at the provincial level of administration. Shanghai Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng and Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai are the most prominent figures in the provincial leadership that represent the interests of princelings. Although the number of "Shanghai Gang" members in the provincial leadership is very small, several occupy important posts, such as Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng and Chongqing Mayor Huang Qifan. Princelings and members of the Shanghai gang usually have more leadership experience in economic administration, foreign trade and finance. Yu Zhengsheng and Bo Xilai previously served as minister of construction and minister of commerce, respectively. Han Zheng and Huang Qifan are among the very few top provincial leaders with expertise in finance. Their much-needed professional credentials and leadership skills will likely make them indispensable during the upcoming leadership transition.

**Table 8**

*Increasing Tuanpai Representation among Provincial Chiefs (2003–2010)*

Year	Provincial Party secretary (N = 31)		Provincial governor (N = 31)		Total (N = 62)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2003	3	9.7	3	9.7	6	9.7
2005	6	19.4	7	22.6	13	21.0
2010	8	25.8	13	41.9	21	33.9

SOURCE: The author's database.

## Top Provincial Contenders for Politburo Seats in 2012

China's 31 province-level administrative entities have peer status, but they are not equal. Some carry far more weight in the country's socioeconomic and political affairs than others. This is equally true of the 62 provincial chiefs, some of whom are much more powerful and influential than others. In general, provincial Party secretaries are higher on the totem pole than provincial governors, and the six provincial chiefs who are Politburo members are unquestionably the most powerful. The Party secretaries of municipalities directly under the control of the central government—Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and, in the last decade, Chongqing—routinely hold seats in the Politburo. The same can be said of China's richest province, Guangdong, where current Party secretary Wang Yang and his three immediate predecessors—Xie Fei, Li Changchun, and Zhang Dejiang—have all served on the Politburo during their tenure as provincial Party boss.<sup>25</sup> In the past two decades this has been increasingly the case for Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Liaoning, Henan, Hubei, Sichuan, and Xinjiang. For example, four current Politburo members—Jia Qinglin, Xi Jinping, He Guoqiang and Wang Zhaoguo—previously served as provincial chief of Fujian Province. If the post of provincial chief is

a stepping stone for further promotion, serving in one of the above-mentioned cities or provinces is basically an admission ticket for Politburo membership.

Table 9 (next page) presents a list of the most likely candidates, among current provincial chiefs, for the next Politburo and its Standing Committee. The list was formed according to three criteria: the individual's age; city and province in which they currently serve; and their factional affiliation due to the imperative for balance of power in the Chinese leadership politics at present. Elite politics in post-Deng China can be broadly characterized as the contestation of two major coalitions: the "populists" and the "elitists."<sup>26</sup> The two coalitions differ in terms of their members' family backgrounds, career paths, and political associations. They represent different geographic regions (inland vs. coastal) and, to a certain extent, also represent the interests of different socioeconomic groups in the country. The core of the populist coalition is the *tuanpai* group, as discussed above, and the core of the elitist coalition consists of princelings and members of the Shanghai Gang.

Among these 13 leaders, 11 currently serve as provincial (or municipal) Party secretaries, and the other two, Beijing Mayor Guo Jinlong and Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng, had previous experience serving as a provincial or municipal Party secretary. Guo served as Anhui's Party secretary from 2004 to 2007 and Tibet's from 2000 to 2004. Han had served as acting Party secretary of Shanghai for several months in late 2006 and early 2007. Of the 13 individuals listed, four are current members of the Politburo. Wang Yang, Bo Xilai, and Zhang Gaoli are likely to keep their seats in the new Politburo and all of them stand a fairly good chance of becoming Politburo Standing Committee members. Because of Wang Yang's relative younger age, he will be able to serve on the Standing Committee for two terms after 2012. This will have the effect of making Wang one of a very few top political heavyweights in the ranks of China's future leadership.

If the earliest permissible birth year for members of the next Central Committee is 1945, Shanghai Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng will be able to retain his seat in the next Politburo. Due to the fact that he has already served as a Politburo member for two terms, it is highly likely that he will be able to obtain a seat on the Politburo Standing Committee. His seniority will make him a pivotal political figure similar to Li Ruihua on the 15<sup>th</sup> Politburo Standing Committee, or Zeng Qinghong on the 16<sup>th</sup> Politburo Standing Committee. Because of Yu's potentially formidable power, however, Hu Jintao and others currently at the top may attempt to negotiate for his retirement at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.

Hu Chunhua and Sun Zhengcai, both born in 1963, have been widely reported in the official Chinese media to be the two rising stars of the so-called sixth generation of leaders. Hu Chunhua's career advancement over the past two decades, which began as a top CCYL official in Tibet in the late 1980s, has largely been due to strong support from Hu Jintao. The media made particular note of the fact that Hu Chunhua speaks Tibetan fluently.<sup>27</sup> Counterbalancing Hu Jintao's tutelage of Hu Chunhua, Jia Qinglin and Zeng Qinghong played a crucial role in the rapid rise of Sun Zhengcai. It seems that a political  
*(text continues on p. 21)*

**Table 9**  
*Top Provincial Chief Contenders for Next Politburo*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>Current position</i>	<i>CC status, length of appointment</i>	<i>Next Politburo prospect</i>	<i>Main leadership experience</i>	<i>Factionalist identity</i>
Wang Yang	1955	Guangdong Party secretary	Alternate member, since 16 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Standing Committee	Chongqing Party secretary (2005–2007); Deputy secretary general of State Council (2003–2005)	Populist ( <i>tuanpai</i> )
Bo Xilai	1949	Chongqing Party secretary	Full member, since 16 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Standing Committee	Minister of Commerce (2004–2007); Liaoning governor (2001–2004)	Elitist (princeling)
Zhang Gaoli	1946	Tianjin Party secretary	Alternate member, since 15 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Standing Committee	Shandong Party secretary (2002–2007); Shenzhen Party secretary (1997–2001)	Elitist
Yu Zhengsheng	1945	Shanghai Party secretary	Alternate member, since 14 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Standing Committee	Hubei Party secretary (2001–2007); Minister of Construction (1998–2001)	Elitist (princeling)
Hu Chunhua	1963	Neimenggu Party secretary	Full member, since 17 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Hebei Governor (2008–2009); CCYL secretary (2006–2008); Tibet deputy Party secretary (2003–2006)	Populist ( <i>tuanpai</i> )
Sun Zhengcai	1963	Jilin Party secretary	Full member, since 17 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Minister of Agriculture (2006–2009); Chief of staff, Beijing Party Committee (2002–2006)	Elitist
Liu Qibao	1953	Sichuan Party secretary	Alternate member, since 16 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Guangxi Party secretary (2006–2007); Deputy secretary general of State Council (1994–2000)	Populist ( <i>tuanpai</i> )
Jiang Yikang	1953	Shandong Party secretary	Alternate member, since 16 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Chongqing deputy Party secretary (2002–2006); Deputy director, CCP Central Office (1995–2002)	Unclear
Guo Jinlong	1947	Beijing Mayor	Alternate member, since 15 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Anhui Party secretary (2004–2007); Tibet Party secretary (2000–2004)	Populist
Han Zheng	1954	Shanghai Mayor	Full member, since 16 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Shanghai acting Party secretary (2006–2007); Shanghai deputy Party secretary (2002–present)	Elitist, Shanghai Gang
Lu Zhangong	1952	Henan Party secretary	Alternate member, since 15 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Fujian Party secretary (2004–2009); Deputy secretary of Federal Workers Union (1998–2001)	Populist
Sun Chunlan	1950	Fujian Party secretary	Alternate member, since 15 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Party secretary, All Workers Union (2005–2009); Dalian Party secretary (2001–2005)	Unclear
Wang Min	1950	Liaoning Party secretary	Full member, since 17 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress	Politburo	Jilin Party secretary (2007–2009); Jilin governor (2004–2007); Suzhou Party secretary (2002–2004)	Elitist

NOTES: CC = Central Committee; CCYL = Chinese Communist Youth League

(continued from p. 19)

deal has been cut between the two competing coalitions allowing these two younger men to enter the new Politburo. This will not only preserve the factional balance of power, but also can be seen as a collective effort to extend the continuity of leadership beyond the fifth generation.

Sichuan Party Secretary Liu Qibao and Shandong Party Secretary Jiang Yikang hold the top positions in two of the most important provinces in the country. Both have broad leadership experience within the central government, and they are among the leading candidates for the next Politburo. Over the past three decades, serving as Beijing mayor or Shanghai mayor has often led to membership in the Politburo and sometimes even its Standing Committee. Guo Jinlong's broad provincial leadership experience and Han Zheng's long tenure running the country's most cosmopolitan city are invaluable credentials. Both of them, however, will need to transition to Party secretary of their respective cities or transfer to other important leadership posts in the next two years in order to obtain membership in the new Politburo. Lu Zhangong, Sun Chunlan, and Wang Min were all appointed to their current posts in major provinces in November 2009, along with the aforementioned Hu Chunhua and Sun Zhengcai. This reshuffling put all of them in advantageous positions as they gear up to seek Politburo membership. As discussed earlier in the essay, each has his or her own distinct advantage in the upcoming political jockeying.

The main contenders for the top Chinese leadership in 2012 have already been engaged in personal political campaigns (in the Chinese style, of course). For understandable reasons, Vice President Xi Jinping and Executive Vice Premier Li Keqiang will probably not be inclined to show how they differ from their predecessors until they are fully in charge. That said, it has already become evident that both Xi and Li represent new leadership styles and wish to pursue new policy priorities. During the New Year celebrations of 2010, for example, Xi used the short message service (SMS) to send a text message of his "personal" greetings to approximately one million officials in the CCP grassroots branches across the entire country—an unprecedented way for a top Party leader to communicate with local officials.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Li has drawn attention for his strong interest in such new issue areas as climate change, energy efficiency, health care, and affordable housing. None of these four issues was a priority for Chinese leaders 10 years ago.

Wang Yang and Bo Xilai have been anything but quiet, having acquired the nickname the "two cannons" (*liangge dapao*). Ever since he was appointed as Guangdong Party secretary in 2007, Wang Yang has been advocating a new mode (or model) for China's economic growth and insisting on the necessity of political reforms. He personally launched a new wave of "thought emancipation," urging local officials to overcome ideological and political taboos. In a meeting of the provincial Party committee in 2008, Wang Yang said that political reforms could be a "bloody road" (*xuelu*), quoting Deng Xiaoping's description of the tremendous difficulties that his economic reforms encountered.<sup>29</sup> Early this year official Chinese media widely reprinted and circulated online a long article about Wang Yang that had been originally published

in an issue of the *People's Daily* weekly magazine *Earth Week*.<sup>30</sup> The article emphasized Wang's very humble family background. More importantly, the article made a strong point that it was Deng Xiaoping who "found" Wang Yang in 1992 when Deng visited Anhui and met this 37-year-old mayor of Tongling, Anhui. Deng was quoted as saying: "Wang Yang is an exceptional talent." The article concluded by predicting that, as a Politburo member with a distinguished "CCYL factional identity" (*xianming de tuanxi secai*), Wang Yang would enjoy an even brighter political career in the future. This sort of media coverage of a provincial chief is truly extraordinary in China's political and media culture.

Bo Xilai's self-promotion campaign has garnered even more publicity. He is now known for two idiosyncratic initiatives: "Striking black triads and singing red songs" (*dahei changhong*). The first half of the slogan refers to a police campaign he launched in Chongqing last year to arrest what he called the "gangsters of the underground mafia" who were often supported by corrupt law enforcement officials in the city. With the help of his protégé from Liaoning, who now serves as Chongqing's police chief, Bo mobilized 30,000 police officers in the city to arrest a large number of "gangsters" and corrupt officials. Bo put the former police chief and head of the municipal government's Justice Department on trial. According to *Chongqing Evening News*, Bo recently ordered that the city's police should aim to arrest approximately 9,000 criminals in the city.<sup>31</sup>

As for "singing red songs," Bo requested that both officials and ordinary Chongqing residents sing revolutionary songs to lift their spirits. As many domestic and foreign reporters observed, this was a way for Bo Xilai to show that his Communist princeling pedigree makes him an ideal successor of the red regime that his father's generation established.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, Bo also allocated 600 million yuan in "bonuses" (*hongbao*, known as "money in a red envelope") to distribute to five million retired cadres, disabled veterans, and the city's poor.<sup>33</sup> Although critics posit that these methods reflect Bo Xilai's "Cultural Revolution-like mentality and behaviors," Bo seems to have become quite popular among the Chongqing public. Nationwide, Bo's loud bravado earned him the title "man of the year" in a 2009 online poll conducted by *People's Daily*.<sup>34</sup>

Other top contenders, however, have retained a more conventional, less ostentatious style of leadership. Tianjin Party Secretary Zhang Gaoli, for example, recently told a foreign visitor that he was more interested in promoting a "down-to-earth style of intense effort with a low profile." His motto is: "Do more. Speak less."<sup>35</sup> All of the activities discussed above—some distinctively new and others more familiar—reflect dynamic changes in Chinese elite politics.

The country may soon witness an even more dynamic and perhaps even more "bipartisan" phase in its painful—but still hopefully peaceful—political transformation. As a new generation of leaders emerges, greater change seems to be inevitable, and the provincial chiefs described above are almost certain to be at the forefront of these changes. The general sense of uncertainty surrounding this upcoming leadership turnover, and the profound effect it might have on the CCP's factional dynamics, make it likely that 2012 will mark an especially interesting year in Chinese elite politics.

Subsequent installments of this series on the political jockeying taking place in the run-up to the 18th Party Congress will examine a variety of other factors likely to affect the event's outcome and speculate on how it might reorient China's immediate and long-term political future.

---

## Notes:

\*The author is indebted to Yinsheng Li for research assistance. The author also thanks Jordan Lee and Matthew Platkin for suggesting ways in which to clarify the article.

<sup>1</sup> For example, of the 11-member Central Military Commission (CMC), eight, including the two vice chairmen, are expected to step down at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.

<sup>2</sup> The document, "The Regulations of the Selection and Appointments of the Party and Government Leaders," was issued by the CCP Organization Department in July 2002. See [http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/18/content\\_695422\\_1.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/18/content_695422_1.htm). Exceptions, however, did occur. For example, Xi Jinping served as Shanghai Party secretary for only eight months before being appointed to the Politburo Standing Committee in 2007.

<sup>3</sup> China has 31 provincial-level administrations, including 22 provinces, five autonomous regions, and four municipalities directly under the central government. These autonomous regions (Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Guangxi) and municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing) have provincial status. This study identifies these party secretaries and governors (or chairmen of the governments of the autonomous regions or mayors of municipalities that have provincial status) of the 31 province-level entities as "provincial chiefs."

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.xinhuanet.com>. The information about the family backgrounds and patron-client ties of provincial chiefs is based on the author's interviews in China and non-official online media sources in the PRC, Hong Kong, and overseas.

<sup>5</sup> For more discussion on this, see Cheng Li, "After Hu, Who?—China's Provincial Leaders Await Promotion," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 1 (Winter 2002).

<sup>6</sup> *Henan ribao* (Henan Daily), January 11, 2010, p. 1. These foreign countries with a population over 100 million are India, the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Russia, Japan, and Mexico.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See <http://city.cctv.com/html/chengshijingji/88645f7c0d8c2c294837385a15b0fe9c.html>.

<sup>9</sup> See *Liaowang xinwen zhouban* (Outlook Newsweek), January 23, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Five of them—Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Wang Yang, and Wang Qishan—obtained their Politburo seats at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress when they were provincial or municipal Party secretaries. Another rising star, Bo Xilai, then minister of commerce, also had leadership experience as governor of Liaoning for several years, and was appointed Party secretary of Chongqing after the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.

<sup>11</sup> The political norm that each province has two full membership seats on the Central Committee has been in effect since the 15<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress in 1997. Cheng Li, "A Pivotal Stepping-Stone: Local Leaders' Representation on the 17th Central Committee." *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 23 (Winter 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Cheng Li, "China's Communist Party-State: The Structure and Dynamics of Power," in William A. Joseph (ed), *An Introduction to Chinese Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 186.

<sup>13</sup> Prior to the 2002 Party Congress, Zeng Qinghong was an alternate member of the Politburo and a member of the Secretariat. The post of alternate member in the Politburo was abolished at a 2002 Politburo meeting.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.daynews.com.cn/sjdsb/Aban112/A11/878237.html>.

<sup>15</sup> The current female member of the Politburo, Liu Yandong, may retain her membership for another term.

<sup>16</sup> For the amendment to this law in 2004, see <http://www.seac.gov.cn/gjmw/zcfg/2004-07-10/1168742761853498.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Full-Fledged Technocratic Leadership with Partial Control by Jiang Zemin," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 3 (March 1998): 231–264; and Zang Xiaowei, "The Fourteenth Central Committee of the CCP: Technocracy or Political Technocracy," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993): 787–803.

<sup>18</sup> See Li, "After Hu, Who?," p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.daynews.com.cn/sjdsb/Aban112/A11/878237.html>.

<sup>20</sup> *Shijie ribao*, January 4, 2010, p. A11.

<sup>21</sup> See Li, "After Hu, Who?," p. 19.

---

<sup>22</sup> Li, “China’s Communist Party-State,” pp. 179–180.

<sup>23</sup> *Dongfang liaowang zhoukan* (Oriental Outlook Weekly), June 26, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> *Jinan ribao* (Jinan Daily), February 2, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> In the PRC’s history, several heavyweight politicians, notably Zhao Ziyang, Ye Jianying, Xi Zhongxun, and Tao Zhu, all served as provincial Party secretaries of Guangdong Province.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion of the author’s analytical framework, “one party, two coalitions,” see Cheng Li, “China’s Team of Rivals.” *Foreign Policy*, (March/April 2009): 88–93.

<sup>27</sup> See [http://news.sina.com.cn/c/sd/2009-04-15/110817614496\\_3.shtml](http://news.sina.com.cn/c/sd/2009-04-15/110817614496_3.shtml).

<sup>28</sup> For the actual text of the message, see <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2010-01-06/114619410949.shtml>. Also see *Shijie ribao* (World Journal), January 7, 2010, p. A4.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://news.sohu.com/20080219/n255223638.shtml>.

<sup>30</sup> *Dadi zhoukan* (Earth Week), No. 23, 2009; also see <http://news.hexun.vnet.cn/2010-01-02/122228741.html>.

<sup>31</sup> *Chongqing wanbao* (Chongqing Evening News), January 16, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class22/200908/100195.html>.

<sup>33</sup> *Shijie ribao*, January 8, 2010, p. A12.

<sup>34</sup> *Shijie ribao*, January 3, 2010, p. A2.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Lawrence Kuhn, *How China’s Leaders Think*. New York: John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd., 2010, p. 230.