

Hu Jintao and the Central Party Apparatus

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Nearly three years into his tenure as top leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Hu Jintao has yet to make substantial progress in consolidating his power over the key organs of the central party apparatus. Hu's predecessor Jiang Zemin had also moved cautiously and with limited success to place political subordinates into these posts, at a comparable point in his tenure. Soon after consolidating his position at the top of the PRC political order, however, Jiang moved more quickly to promote his associates in the central party apparatus. Now that Hu has completed a comparable transition, he may move more assertively to do the same, especially as 2007 and the 17th Party Congress approach.

The central party apparatus is composed of a more than a dozen departments and organs under the party Central Committee that feed into Politburo decision making and implement leadership policy decisions throughout China's political order. The core cluster of these organs includes the General Office and four departments (*bu 部*) in functional areas—the Organization, Propaganda, United Front Work, and International Liaison Departments. In addition, there are three centers (*yanjiushi 研究室*) for policy support—the Policy Research Center, the Party History Research Center, and the Party Documents Research Center—and two mouthpieces that publish in the name of the Central Committee: the newspaper *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao 人民日报*) and the semimonthly policy journal *Seeking Truth* (*Qiushi 求是*). Finally, the Central Party School belongs among the core central party organs.

In addition to these core Central Committee organs in the central party apparatus, the formal table of organization includes several committees (*weiyuanhui 委员会*) that coordinate specific issues—such as the Central Committee for Comprehensive Management of Social Order, the Central Secrecy Committee, and the Central Committee for Guiding Spiritual Civilization Construction—whose existence is routinely acknowledged in PRC media. Off the formal table of organization are several “leadership small groups” (LSGs, *lingdao xiaozu 领导小组*) for specific policy areas: foreign affairs, Taiwan affairs, finance and economic affairs, ideology and propaganda, and so forth. Established in 1958, the LSGs work with the party Secretariat to coordinate implementation of central leadership decisions throughout the party and other institutional hierarchies in the Chinese political order. Despite their long existence and their operational significance, LSGs remain informal bodies and are almost never referred to in PRC media.

Finally, a Work Committee for Organs under the Central Committee supervises the political life of all party members in the central party apparatus. Central Committee organs send delegates to an upcoming national party congress as a bloc, and the Work Committee is the arena in which the delegates are selected. Overall, the Work Committee is an important leadership tool for enlisting support and maintaining political discipline within the central party organs.

Because of the importance of the central party apparatus in contributing to top leadership

decision making and in coordinating implementation and compliance with leadership decisions throughout the PRC political system, domination of the apparatus is a critical element of the general secretary's base of power. This article assesses the progress Hu Jintao has made in establishing dominance in this sector since his appointment as general secretary at the 16th Party Congress in November 2002.

The Current Central Apparatus Leadership

Listed in Table 1 are the names of the current heads of the core central party apparatus organs, together with their ages, the dates of their appointments, Central Committee status, and their predecessors in office.

Table 1: Current Leaders of Core Central Committee Organs Discerning the political relationships of the central party apparatus officials with the top party leadership is a speculative enterprise, but several inferences from this listing seem plausible.

Organ	Top Official	Age in 2005	Date Appointed	Central Committee Standing	Predecessor
General Office	Wang Gang	63	March 1999	Politburo alternative; Secretariat	Zeng Qinghong
Organization Department	He Guoqiang	62	October 2002	Politburo; Secretariat	Zeng Qinghong
Propaganda Department	Liu Yunshan	58	October 2002	Politburo; Secretariat	Ding Guan'gen
United Front Work Department	Liu Yandong	60	December 2002	Central Committee	Wang Zhaoguo
International Liaison Department	Wang Jiarui	56	April 2003	Central Committee alternate	Dai Bingguo
Central Party School	Zeng Qinghong	66	December 2002	Politburo Standing Committee	Hu Jintao

<i>People's Daily</i>	Wang Chen	55	November 2002	Central Committee	Bai Keming
<i>Seeking Truth</i>	Wu Hengquan		December 2003	None	Gao Mingguang
Policy Research	Wang Huning	50	December 2002	Central Committee	Teng Wensheng

Center					
Party History Center	Sun Ying	69	January 2001	None	Hu Sheng
Party Documents Center	Teng Wensheng	65	November 2002	Central Committee	Pang Xianzhi
CC Organs Work Committee	Wang Gang	63	March 1999	Politburo alternate	Zeng Qinghong

General Office

General Office Director Wang Gang attained his position during Jiang Zemin's tenure as general secretary and retains it following Hu Jintao's succession. The General Office manages the sensitive administrative and logistical affairs of the entire top party leadership. These duties include managing the traffic of classified and unclassified documents among top leaders, leadership communications, security for leadership offices and activities, office space and office needs in the central leadership work compound Zhongnanhai, residence arrangements, travel arrangements, and personal security for individual leaders and their families. The director of the General Office must therefore have the confidence politically and professionally not only of the general secretary (or before 1978, the party chairman) in particular, but also the rest of the top leadership generally.

For these reasons, General Office directors have frequently had long tenure in their positions and have been replaced at major turning points in central leadership politics. Yang Shangkun was head of the General Office from 1949 until November 1965, shortly before his purge as a member of the "black gang" at the onset of the Cultural Revolution in the spring of 1966. Wang Dongxing replaced Yang and directed the General Office through the Cultural Revolution decade until the watershed Third Plenum of December 1978. Deng Xiaoping ally Yao Yilin occupied the post through the early reform years until the eve of the 1982 12th Party Congress, in 1982. From 1982 through 1986, the General Office had three directors in quick succession—Hu Qili, Qiao Shi, and Wang Zhaoguo—all of whom subsequently moved up to Politburo positions. The present PRC Premier Wen Jiabao directed the General Office from 1986 to 1993, during which time he worked with three general secretaries in succession: Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Jiang Zemin. It was in that capacity that Wen accompanied Zhao Ziyang into the midst of Tiananmen Square to speak with demonstrators in May 1989. In March 1993, Wen Jiabao was replaced as General Office director by one of Jiang Zemin's closest lieutenants, Zeng Qinghong, who held the post for six years, until Wang Gang replaced him in 1999.

Wang attained to the directorship after a 22-year rise on the internal party administration track. He served first as secretary of the Xinjiang CP's General Office from 1977 to 1981, then as secretary of a division under the Central Organs Work Committee from 1981 through 1985. His next positions were deputy director and then secretary of a General Office bureau until 1990. From 1990 until 1999 he served as deputy director and then director of the party central archives and, after 1994, director of the State Archives Bureau under the State Council. He served concurrently as deputy secretary of the General Office after 1994 until he replaced Zeng Qinghong as director in 1999. Wang thus stands as an example of the trend toward increasing professionalization in career

tracks as well as the criterion of political reliability. As such, he is undoubtedly acceptable to Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong, and perhaps to Hu Jintao as well. At 63, Wang need not necessarily be replaced for several years; if he is—perhaps in the run-up to the 2007 17th Party Congress—it would suggest an effort by Hu to put his own man in the post.

Recent turnover among Wang's subordinates in the General Office, suggests that a shake-up may be in the offing. In January 2003, two new deputy directors—Fan Shijin and Mao Linkun, who serves concurrently as Wang Gang's deputy on the Central Secrecy Committee—were appointed, offsetting the two deputies remaining from Jiang's tenure as general secretary. One of these latter two is General You Xigui, who concurrently directs the sensitive Bodyguards Bureau under the General Office. You was appointed as Bodyguards Bureau chief in 1995 and as General Office deputy director in 1997, and so his political association with Jiang seems evident. However, at 66, You's retirement seems imminent, given prevailing provisions for mandatory retirement by PLA generals at age 65. This inference is reinforced by the fact that all five of You's Bodyguards Bureau deputies were appointed in 2003. In addition, one of the two deputy directors of the General Office's Secretariat was appointed in 2003, and its director, Xie Dongya, was appointed in July 2004.

In light of the preceding observations, it seems justified to conclude that the General Office remains under the supervision of a Jiang-era holdover, but that it may also be the object of a slow and cautious takeover by Hu Jintao.

Organization Department

The Organization Department manages the sensitive process of official appointment, not just in the CCP but also in all significant civilian posts in the Chinese political order. The central leadership itself directly appoints officials on a list of more than 2,000 posts in the party and in other institutional hierarchies in the political system. It retains authority to approve or reject appointments made by lower-level organs to several thousand more positions in the system.

When PRC media report the removal and appointment of civilian officials, they normally report that “the Central Committee has decided” to remove or appoint them. Precisely how these decisions are made is not well understood. It seems clear, however, that the Organization Department and its director draw up nominations under the direct supervision of the party general secretary and the executive secretary of the Secretariat, which are then presented for approval to the Politburo or its Standing Committee. The key participants in this process today, therefore, are Hu Jintao, Zeng Qinghong, and He Guoqiang.

He Guoqiang replaced Zeng Qinghong as director of the Organization Department on the eve of the 2002 16th Party Congress, at which He was also named to the party Politburo and Secretariat. He Guoqiang's ascent in the central party leadership appears tied to the early 1990s rise of two figures from Shandong: Jiang Chunyun and Zhang Quanjing. Jiang Chunyun rose in Shandong politics from local levels in the 1950s to provincial party chief in 1988. He was appointed to the Politburo at the 14th Party Congress in 1992. Jiang gave up his Shandong party secretary position in 1994, serving thereafter as State Council vice premier in charge of agriculture. Zhang Quanjing served in the Shandong party organizational affairs track for much of his career. He served first at the local level in the 1950s until the Cultural Revolution, and from the early 1970s Zhang rose through the ranks of the provincial party's Organizational Department, becoming its director in 1986. In 1991, on the eve of Jiang Chunyun's appointment to the Politburo, Zhang was promoted to the position of deputy director of the Central Committee's Organization Department, and he was promoted to director in November 1994, a position he retained until being replaced in

March 1999 by Zeng Qinghong.

In 1990s leadership politics, Jiang Chunyun appears to have been a useful complement to the coterie of Shanghai officials Jiang Zemin promoted into the central leadership, the “Shanghai gang.” Zhang Qianjing’s 1994 appointment appears to have reflected Jiang Zemin’s effort to place his own ally as director of the Organization Department. He Guoqiang worked with both Jiang Chunyun and He Guoqiang in Shandong in the 1980s, and his first national-level appointment, vice minister of chemical industry in 1991, coincided with those of Jiang Chunyun and Zhang Qianjing. He Guoqiang returned to province-level politics in 1996, serving as vice governor and then governor of Fujian, and as party secretary of Chongqing (a province-level municipality since 1997) in 1999–2002. Given this career history, He Guoqiang would seem to be associated with Jiang Zemin and now Zeng Qinghong. In addition, he may also have linkages to the current chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and fourth-ranked Politburo Standing Committee member, Jia Qinglin, who served as Fujian party chief until 1996 and who also appears to be tied to Jiang Zemin.

Among He Guoqiang’s subordinates in the Organization Department, turnover since the 16th Party Congress has been slow. Of his six deputies, three remain from the Jiang era, one was appointed on the eve of the congress in 2002, and two were appointed in 2003. Fewer than half of the department’s bureau chiefs and deputies are new since the congress.

On balance, if He’s political loyalties do incline toward the Jiang Zemin camp, then the appointment process supervised by Hu Jintao and Zeng Qinghong may be weighted against Hu Jintao.

Propaganda Department

The party Propaganda Department (known since the 1990s in PRC English renditions as the party “Publicity Department”) interacts with a huge array of institutions and activities that put forward and explain the party’s political line and sustain its public image. In principle, these include: all public print and electronic media; book and periodical publishing; the broader arena of culture, including film, theater, literature, and art; aspects of education; and social science institutions. Under the present leadership, Liu Yunshan supervises propaganda affairs both as Politburo member and as a member of the Secretariat, and he works closely with the Politburo Standing Committee member in charge of ideology and propaganda, Li Changchun.

Liu’s political associations are difficult to read. In some Western and Hong Kong media reports, he is described as being inclined toward Hu Jintao in leadership politics. This assertion gains some credibility from Liu’s rise in Inner Mongolian party affairs in the 1980s. In the early part of that decade he served as deputy secretary of the region’s Communist Youth League (CYL) at a time when Hu Jintao presided over the national CYL organization. In addition, Liu’s mentor in Inner Mongolian politics, Tian Congming, served as party deputy secretary in Xizang (Tibet) during Hu Jintao’s tenure as party secretary there.

Tian’s subsequent career and Liu Yushan’s ascent into central politics, however, suggest ties to Jiang Zemin and former PRC Premier Li Peng. Tian Congming left Lhasa in 1990 to assume the post of vice minister of radio, film, and television. With the 1998 State Council reorganization endorsed at the Ninth National People’s Congress that year, Tian became director of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television, and in June 2000 he became president

of the Xinhua News Agency, a position he retains today. Liu's first appointment at the central level—as deputy director of the party Propaganda Department—came in 1993, as Jiang was consolidating his position following the 14th Party Congress. Liu held that position throughout the remainder of the Jiang era, becoming director of the Propaganda Department in October 2002, on the eve of the 16th Party Congress.

Among Liu's subordinates in the Propaganda Department, there has been relatively little turnover since the 16th Party Congress. Of the six current deputy directors, only one has been appointed since the congress. The department's Secretariat has seen significant turnover, but the implications of those changes are not apparent.

United Front Work Department

“The united front” is a term the communists use to describe collectively the mass organizations and civic and professional associations supporting the CCP and falling under the national umbrella organization, the CPPCC. These include the PRC's trade unions, women's federation, Communist Youth League, the eight “democratic” political parties, religious bodies, professional societies, and other bodies. Interactions between this enormous body and the party are handled by the United Front Work Department (UFWD), which is effectively the party's organizational face to Chinese society.

Among all of the Central Committee apparatus leaders, United Front Work Department Director Liu Yandong seems to be the clearest example of a Hu Jintao ally. Although Liu graduated from Jilin University, she studied chemical engineering for several years at Qinghua University, Hu's alma mater. As have several Qinghua cadres, Liu also served in the national CYL organization during Hu Jintao's tenure in the early 1980s. After a decade's service as deputy director, she was appointed director of the department in 2002, shortly after the 16th Party Congress.

The majority of her subordinates in the department are new since the 2002 party congress. These include four out of seven deputy directors, the director and three of four deputy directors of the department's General Office, and a majority of the directors and deputy directors of the department's six bureaus.

It is noteworthy that Liu's department is one of the only two major Central Committee organs to maintain a public web site, the other being the party's International Liaison Department (ILD, about which more below). The web site offers information on the department's functions and history as well as photographs and brief biographies of Liu and the department's seven deputy directors. This bit of public relations may be due to the department's explicitly external orientation (which would explain the existence of the ILD's web site as well), but it may also reflect Liu's effort to respond to Hu Jintao's call for greater transparency in CCP affairs in service to better governance.

International Liaison Department

The ILD maintains the CCP's organizational contacts with foreign political parties and social movements. In the years before the early 1970s, when Beijing had few formal diplomatic ties with foreign governments, the ILD played an important role in the PRC's foreign relations. During the 1950s heyday of Sino-Soviet solidarity, the ILD frequently dominated the exercise of Beijing's relationships with the Soviet bloc. With the rise of Sino-Soviet competition, it was the central

mechanism for the CCP's interactions in the world communist movement. Since the 1970s, as Beijing has become better able to pursue its national interests through conventional diplomacy, the role of the ILD has evolved and its stature diminished. As the constraints of Maoist ideology were rejected in the late 1970s, relations improved between the CCP and foreign communist parties that it had previously condemned as "revisionist." Through the 1980s, the range of political parties and social movements that the CCP entertained ties with broadened to include progressive and conservative groups alike. Today, the CCP has formal ties with over 400 foreign political parties and organizations. In this context, the ILD remains a mechanism for establishing relationships with the political elite of all stripes in most countries in the world. As such, the ILD is a useful complement to conventional diplomacy practiced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other institutions involved in PRC foreign relations.

ILD Director Wang Jiarui is the most recent appointment among the current heads of the major Central Committee departments. He was named director of the department in April 2003, after nearly four years' service as its deputy director. His career in a variety of State Council posts up through the mid-1990s offers little clear insight into his political associations. In 1995, he was sent to work in Shandong, serving as vice mayor and then mayor of Qingdao. In 2000, he returned to Beijing to serve as deputy director of the ILD under Director Dai Bingguo. His promotion to ILD director followed Dai's transfer to serve as executive vice foreign minister in March 2003.

Although Wang's political linkages are hard to discern, the fact that the ILD, like the United Front Work Department, maintains a publicly accessible web site may indicate his responsiveness to Hu Jintao's call for transparency in party operations. In addition, Wang's department has seen significant staff turnover since the 2002 party congress, both among Wang's deputies and among the ILD's subordinate bureaus.

Central Party School and the Three Research Centers

The Central Party School (CPS) in Beijing offers mid-career academic training for mid-career party cadres marked for advancement in the party, and also serves as a research center for the top leadership. The school hosts approximately 1,600 students a year, who are served by a school staff of 1,300 and take courses in a range of areas, such as philosophy, economics, foreign affairs, party history, party administration, and communist theory. The school also houses a Research Institute on International Strategy.

Hu Jintao served as president of the Central Party School for a decade, from 1993 until December 2002. During the latter years of that decade, under Hu's presidency the school emerged as a center of relatively liberalized ideas on political reform and other controversial areas, reflected in the school's publicly available newspaper *Study Times* (*Xuexi shibao* 学习时报), which carried provocative opinion pieces on sensitive topics. In the run-up to the 16th Party Congress, CPS academicians such as Li Junru and Li Zhongjie propagated themes that have become associated with Hu Jintao. In particular among these academicians was the school's executive vice president, Zheng Bijian, a close associate of Hu's who has explicated themes strongly linked to Hu such as that of China's "peaceful rise" in the international order.²

Hu was succeeded at the school in December 2002 by Zeng Qinghong. Zheng Bijian left in 2002 as well, succeeded by Yu Yunyao, who served as Zeng Qinghong's deputy in the Organization Department in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, there has been little dramatic change in the school's voice in larger political affairs. Hu Jintao has occasionally drawn on school

academicians to lecture at the Politburo study session that Hu has formalized since becoming general secretary. *Study Times* continues to publish provocative articles on sensitive policy questions. There has been little turnover among the school's upper echelon. In addition, the school maintains a publicly accessible web site, although its offerings with respect to the school's staff are more limited than the equivalent sections on the UFWD and ILD sites.

The Policy Research Center has been led since December 2002 by Jiang Zemin adviser Wang Huning. After study in the United States, Wang was a professor of international politics and law at Fudan University in Shanghai when he was discovered by Zeng Qinghong in the mid-1980s and introduced to Jiang Zemin. According to various Western and Hong Kong media accounts, after becoming Policy Research Center deputy director in 1998, Wang drafted speeches for Jiang Zemin—he is credited with framing Jiang's "three represents" concept of party reform—and served as principal drafter of Jiang's political report to the 16th Party Congress.

When Wang became center director, he replaced Teng Wensheng, who had held the post since 1998 (after serving as the center's deputy director since 1990). On leaving the Policy Research Center, Teng became director of the Party Documents Research Center; like Wang Huning, he is undoubtedly a Jiang Zemin associate.

Party History Research Center Director Sun Ying assumed his post in January 2001, following the death of Hu Sheng, one of the party's most prominent historians since antediluvian times and head of the center since 1982. Sun's political associations are not clear—his entire career previously was in Gansu, where he rose through the ranks to become provincial party chief in the 1990s until leaving Gansu for Beijing in 2001. Among his present deputies is Li Zhongjie, who previously served as a prominent Central Party School commentator on political trends in PRC media preceding the 16th Party Congress.

People's Daily and Seeking Truth

The present director of the party newspaper *People's Daily*, Wang Chen, is a professional journalist whose rise to the top took off in the mid-1990s. After graduating from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in journalism, Wang worked most of his career as a reporter and editor for the nationally circulated united-front and intellectual-affairs newspaper *Enlightenment Daily* (*Guangming ribao*). In 1995 he became the newspaper's editor-in-chief, and in June 2000 he was appointed deputy director of the party Propaganda Department. In August 2001 he was named editor-in-chief of *People's Daily* and in November 2002—at the time of the 16th Party Congress—he became the newspaper's director, its top official. As such, Wang is a holdover from the Jiang era. There has been little turnover in upper-level *Renmin ribao* staff since the party congress under Wang's direction.

The top leadership of the party journal *Seeking Truth* has seen repeated turnover in recent years. Wu Hengquan was appointed director of the journal in December 2003 from his previous post as deputy editor-in-chief of *People's Daily*. His editor-in-chief, Li Baoshan, was appointed at the same time, moving over from his previous position as deputy secretary general of the Propaganda Department. The post of director of *Seeking Truth* was created only in 1997 and parallels the director/editor-in-chief arrangement at *People's Daily*. Nevertheless, as was the case with his predecessors Dai Zhou and Gao Mingguang, Wu is not a member of the Central Committee, while his *People's Daily* counterpart Wang Chen is a full member. He is therefore significantly outranked by Wang in political standing.

Both *People's Daily* and *Seeking Truth* have been available online since the late Jiang

era.

Central Party Organs Work Committee

The Work Committee for Central Committee Organs has been under the directorship of Wang Gang since 1999, concurrent with his leadership over the party General Office. His predecessor had been Zeng Qinghong, who had served in that role since March 1993, a term concurrent with his service as General Office chief. As such, this umbrella committee has been in the hands of a Jiang crony and then a Jiang-era holdover.

Hu Jintao's Limited Power Base in the Central Party Apparatus

The preceding kremlinological survey of the central party apparatus suggests that Hu Jintao has made only limited inroads into the staffing of this critical arena since becoming party general secretary nearly three years ago. In only two of the dozen main organs of the central party apparatus—the United Front Work and International Liaison Departments— does he appear to have succeeded in promoting leaders who owe allegiance to him rather than to his predecessor Jiang Zemin or to Zeng Qinghong. In all other departments, the top officials are likely Jiang/Zeng associates or at least holdovers from the Jiang period.

A number of factors may help explain this limited progress. For one thing, Hu's opportunity to consolidate his hold over the central party apparatus has undoubtedly been complicated by the two-year process of completing the transfer of top leadership positions from Jiang Zemin to himself. Although he succeeded Jiang as party general secretary in November 2002 and as PRC president in March 2003, he gained Jiang's posts as chairman of the party and state Central Military Commissions only in September 2004 and March 2005, respectively. A major public rationale for this staged turnover of positions from Jiang to Hu was to sustain "stability" in the political order and the military at a time of leadership succession. An aggressive effort by Hu to place his own associates in the central party apparatus might have been seized upon as disrupting stability in this sensitive period, and Hu's cautious approach since becoming general secretary seems in keeping with the caution he displayed on the way to the top party post.

An analysis of Jiang Zemin's tenure reveals that he suffered similarly limited success in his attempts to consolidate power over the central party apparatus early in his tenure. The comparison between Jiang's and Hu's tenures is not exact—Jiang became party general secretary in June 1989, in the heat of the Tiananmen crisis, and he succeeded Deng Xiaoping as party and state CMC chairman soon afterward: in November 1989 and March 1990, respectively. Over the next two years, Jiang had to deal with the complex leadership politics of the aftermath of the Tiananmen disaster and was reaffirmed as general secretary at the 1992 14th Party Congress. He became PRC president only at the Eighth NPC in 1993.

At that point, Jiang had succeeded in placing a political associate in only one Central Committee organ—Zeng Qinghong in the critically important General Office. Over the next two years, however, he had placed new top officials in several more, including Zhang Quanjin as head of the Organization Department and Zeng Qinghong as secretary of the Central Committee Organs Work Committee.

Now that Hu has completed capture of the top posts in the PRC political order, the cautious

efforts he has made to place his own associates in the central party apparatus may begin to accelerate. Circumstances described earlier indicate that a turnover in the party General Office may be in the offing. With systematic preparations set to begin far ahead of the 17th Party Congress's 2007 date, Hu could well find himself in an improved position from which to pursue his goal.

Notes

¹Leadership over the party LSGs early in the Hu regime was assessed in "Party Politburo Processes under Hu Jintao," *China Leadership Monitor* 11 (summer 2004), pp.11–12.

²The peculiar fortunes of the "peaceful rise" concept are discussed in Robert Suettinger's article, "The Rise and Descent of 'Peaceful Rise,'" *China Leadership Monitor* 12 (fall 2004).