

The Status and Characteristics of Foreign-Educated Returnees in the Chinese Leadership

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The Chinese authorities claim that they have made an effort to recruit foreign-educated returnees into all walks of life in the country, including the political leadership. Yet do China's top leaders really trust Western-educated returnees? Can the Chinese political system genuinely open its doors to talented people returning from the outside world? This study shows that the percentage of returnees in high leadership positions is still very small. They usually serve in functional areas such as education, science and technology, finance, foreign trade, and foreign affairs. The lack of returnee leaders is further revealed by the fact that most of them spent only one to three years overseas; and very few have solid academic credentials or broad professional experience.

“What is the most precious essence in the 21st century?” asks the master of an underworld gang in the 2005 popular Chinese movie, “A World Without Thieves.”
“Talent (*rencai*),” replies the master himself.

To a great extent, this intriguing view echoes the strategic thinking of the Chinese leadership. Soon after taking charge of both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State in the spring of 2003, Hu Jintao convened a Politburo meeting to focus on China's human resources.¹ In December 2003, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council held the first-ever joint conference to address the issue of human resource development.² At the conference, the Chinese leadership officially adopted the “strategy of strengthening China through human capital” (*rencai qiangguo zhanlue*).³ Hu argued that the development of human resources is crucial, not only in terms of China's need to “cope with the increasingly competitive international environment,” but also to “consolidate the ruling base of the CCP.”⁴ He specified that China should allocate more economic resources to all three “key links” of human capital: training, recruiting, and utilizing talent.⁵

Hu's notion of talents obviously refers to both home-trained and foreign-educated elites. Recruiting and making good use of foreign-educated Chinese nationals, however, has become Hu's stated top priority. Since Deng Xiaoping's milestone decision to send a large number of students and scholars to study abroad in 1978, a total of 814,884 Chinese nationals have pursued foreign studies, with a large percentage going to the United States.⁶ During the past few years, thanks to attractive recruitment policies, a booming economy, and other factors, China has witnessed a tidal wave of foreign scholars

returning to their native country. By the end of 2004, some 197,800 foreign-educated Chinese students and scholars had returned to the PRC. Among the 617,000 who have remained abroad, some 427,000 are still pursuing academic studies, research, or other exchange programs.⁷ They constitute a potentially enormous source of talent and human capital for China.

Those who have already returned to China, often called “returnees” (*haiguipai*), have played an important role in all walks of life in the country, including educational institutions, research centers, investment banks, insurance agencies, state or private enterprises, consultant companies, law firms, non-governmental organizations, media networks, art galleries, etc. In Shanghai, for example, returnees have established about 3,000 private enterprises.⁸ The ideas, values, knowledge, skills, and experiences that these returnees have brought back to their native land may profoundly contribute to the country’s coming-of-age in the years to come. The growing power and influence of returnees may also change both China’s image in the international community and the ways in which China interacts with the outside world.⁹

Returnees in the Political Establishment: Symbolic or Substantial?

Those returnees who serve in public offices, in the leadership of both the government and the Party, are particularly relevant. Unlike other groups of returnees who usually have influenced China’s development *outside* the political establishment, returnees-turned-officials can have a more direct impact on the political process *within* decision-making circles. The presence and growing power of Western-educated elites in the Chinese leadership should be an important indicator of the openness and the political transformation of the country.

The Chinese authorities claim that they have made an effort to recruit returnees into the political establishment. In 2000, Zeng Qinghong, then the head of the CCP Organization Department, stated that students and scholars returning from study abroad should be seen as an important source for political recruitment.¹⁰ Zeng also specified that some outstanding returnees be immediately appointed to leading bureau-level posts (*juzhang*). According to Zeng, these leaders with foreign educational backgrounds may be promoted to even higher posts after serving as bureau heads for a few years.

Some Western-educated returnees have indeed been integrated into the Chinese leadership. These returnees include Minister of Education Zhou Ji (Ph.D. in engineering, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1984), Chairman of the China Banking Regulatory Commission, Liu Mingkang (MBA, London University, 1987), and Vice President of the Supreme Court Wan Exiang (J.D., Yale University, 1988). Western-educated political elites in China are likely to become even more prominent as the transition of power to the next generation takes place in about a decade.¹¹

Yet these policy changes raise a number of questions regarding the status of foreign-educated returnees in China. Is the recruitment of returnees to the political establishment largely a symbolic gesture? Does China’s top leadership really trust

Western-educated returnees? Can the Chinese political system genuinely open its door to talented individuals returning from the outside world? What is the status of returnees in high political offices, e.g. at the ministerial- and provincial-level of leadership, and how are they distributed by rank? Who are the most prominent returnees in the Chinese leadership? What are the professional and political characteristics of returnees? In what bureaucratic and functional areas do returnees exert strong influence or hold real power? Will the uneven regional and bureaucratic distribution of returnee leaders provide an important clue to new tensions and conflicts in Chinese elite politics? Alternatively, will the growing power and influence of returnees contribute to political pluralism in the Chinese political system? By addressing these crucial questions, we can make an accurate assessment of the political power and influence of foreign-educated returnees in present-day China.

Data, Definition and Overview

This study focuses on returnees in three of the most prominent Chinese political leadership groups: 1) members and alternates of the current Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; 2) leaders of all 28 ministries and commissions under the State Council, including ministers, vice ministers, and assistant ministers;¹² 3) provincial leaders in China's 31 provincial-level administrations, including provincial Party secretaries, deputy Party secretaries, governors, and vice governors. An analysis of these most important returnee-turned-political leaders will contribute to our understanding of the status and characteristics of this emerging group as a whole. Biographical data on leaders have been derived primarily from official Chinese sources.¹³

This study defines a returnee as a Chinese native who was born in China, left to study overseas as a student, visiting scholar or guest researcher for *over one year*,¹⁴ and who has returned to China to work on either a temporary or permanent basis. This study includes primarily those who studied in Western countries, Japan and Singapore. However, it does not include leaders who studied in the former Soviet Union or other socialist countries such as Politburo Standing Committee member Luo Gan and Politburo members Cao Gangchuan and Zhang Dejiang studied in East Germany, Russia, and North Korea, respectively.

This study also excludes those leaders whose foreign experiences were attributed to their appointments to Chinese embassies. For example, Zeng Peiyan, a Politburo member, served in China's Washington embassy from 1982 to 1984. Xiong Guangkai, an alternate member and deputy chief of General Staff Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), worked in Chinese embassies in Germany for more than two decades. Hua Jianmin, state councilor and secretary general of the State Council, received technical training in the United States for four months in 1982. He is excluded from this study because studied abroad for was less than one year.

Altogether, 61 leaders of the three groups in this study meet the returnee criteria as defined in this paper.¹⁵ Table 1 shows the percentage of foreign-educated among China's high-ranking leaders. Returnee leaders account for 4.5% of the full members and

8.2% of the alternates on the 16th Central Committee of the CCP, as well as 13.6% of ministerial leaders, and 5.8% of provincial leaders. Despite all the rhetoric by top Chinese leaders regarding the need to recruit and promote returnees to the political establishment, the overall presence of returnees among high-ranking leaders remains very small.

Table 1.
Percentage of Foreign-Educated Among High-Ranking Leaders in 2005

| <i>Leadership Level</i> | <i>Total Number***</i> | <i>Number of Foreign Educated</i> | <i>Percentage of Foreign Educated</i> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Full Members of the 16th Central Committee of the CCP | 198 | 9 | 4.5% |
| Alternate Members of the 16th Central Committee of the CCP | 158 | 13 | 8.2% |
| Ministerial Leaders* | 184 | 25 | 13.6% |
| Provincial Leaders** | 397 | 23 | 5.8% |

NOTES:

*These include ministers, vice ministers, and assistant ministers.

**These include Party secretaries, deputy Party secretaries, governors, vice governors, and assistant governors.

*** Biographies for all full and alternate members are available. Total numbers of ministerial leaders (184) and provincial leaders (397) refer to those whose biographies are available, and exclude the small number of leaders whose biographies are unavailable.

Table 2.
Positions of Returnee Leaders in this Study

| <i>Duration</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Vice Premier/State Councilor | 2 | 3.3% |
| Full Minister | 3 | 4.9% |
| Vice Minister | 18 | 29.5% |
| Assistant Minister | 4 | 6.6% |
| Provincial Chief (Full Party Secretary/Governor) | 1 | 1.6% |
| Deputy Provincial Party Secretary | 2 | 3.3% |
| Vice Governor | 16 | 26.2% |
| Assistant Governor | 3 | 4.9% |
| President/Vice President of Academies | 7 | 11.4% |
| Others | 5 | 8.2% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

Table 2 shows the specific positions of all 61 returnee leaders in this study. The majority serve as vice ministers and vice governors. The two highest ranking leaders with experience of foreign studies are Huang Ju, executive vice premier of the State Council, who received technical training in an auto factory in Japan from 1980-81; and Chen Zhili, state councilor and former minister of education, who spent two years studying material science at Penn State University in the United States from 1980-82. Among the 62 provincial chiefs (full Party secretaries and governors), only one, Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Liangyu, has studied abroad. Chen studied at Birmingham University in England in 1992. All three of these leaders advanced their political careers from Shanghai and were widely considered to be key members of Jiang Zemin's Shanghai Gang.

Seven returnees hold leadership positions at academies or educational institutions. They include Lu Yongxiang (president of the Chinese Academy of Science), Bai Chunli (vice president of the Chinese Academy of Science), Xu Kuangdi (president of the Chinese Academy of Engineering), Zhai Huqu (president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Research), Pan Yunhe (president of Zhejiang University), Huang Jiefu (president of Zhongshan Medical School) and Min Weifang (Party secretary and vice president of Beijing University). They are included in this study because of their membership on the Central Committee of the CCP. The category "Others" in the table includes Wang Huning (director of the Central Policy Research Center), Cao Jianming (vice president of the Supreme People's Court), Wan Exiang (vice president of the Supreme People's Court), Lin Mingyue (vice president of All China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots), and Liu Jie (president of Anshan Iron and Steel Group Corp.)

Returnees' Foreign Experiences: Status, Period, Country, and Field

Approximately one-half of returnees were visiting scholars or post-doctoral fellows when they studied abroad (see Table 3). Minister of Science and Technology Xu Guanhua and President of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and former Shanghai mayor Xu Kuangdi were both visiting scholars in the West in the early 1980s. Xu Guanhua spent two years majoring in information technology at Stockholm University in Sweden in 1979-81; and Xu Kuangdi first conducted metallurgy research at Imperial College in London in 1982-83, and then at an industrial firm in Sweden in the following year. They were among the first wave of Chinese students and scholars who were sent to study abroad in the reform era. During that period, approximately 80% of "*liuxue ren yuan*" (foreign-educated personnel) went abroad as visiting scholars, and less than 10% attended graduate school.¹⁶

Table 4 shows that a majority of these returnees (55.8%) studied abroad during the 1980s. Two career diplomats, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and former ambassador to the United States Yang Jiechi, and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhang Yesui, studied abroad in the early 1970s. During the early and mid-1970s, China sent a small number of students abroad to study foreign languages. This was largely to fill the growing need for interpreters following President Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and the PRC's newly-established or resumed diplomatic relations with Japan, Great Britain, and France. Both Yang and Zhang studied international affairs at the London School of

Economics and Yang also attended Bath University. A small number of leaders have gone to study abroad in recent years. For example, Li Hongzhong, currently Party secretary of Shenzhen, studied public administration at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government as a visiting scholar in 1999.

Table 3.
Distribution of Overseas Educational Attainment of Chinese Leaders

| <i>Overseas Educational Attainment</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--|---------------|-------------------|
| Postdoctoral Study | 2 | 3.3% |
| Ph.D. | 20 | 32.8% |
| J.D./M.D. | 1 | 1.6% |
| MBA | 1 | 1.6% |
| M.A./M.S. | 6 | 9.9% |
| B.A./B.S. | 1 | 1.6% |
| Visiting Scholar | 30 | 49.2% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

NOTES: This study only counts the highest degree attained.

Table 4.
Periods When Chinese Leaders Studied Abroad

| <i>Period</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Early 1970s | 2 | 3.3% |
| Late 1970s | 5 | 8.2% |
| Early 1980s | 17 | 27.9% |
| Late 1980s | 17 | 27.9% |
| Early 1990s | 10 | 16.4% |
| Late 1990s | 10 | 16.4% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

The other half of returnees in the high-ranking leadership obtained academic degrees, including 20 Ph.D. degrees (32.8% of the total). Table 5 lists those who received advanced degrees. Most of them studied abroad during the 1980s. Some of them attended prestigious universities such as Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Oxford, and Michigan. The majority currently serve as vice ministers and vice governors. With the exception of President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Lu Yongxiang and Vice Minister of Water Resources Suo Lisheng, all are in their 50s or 40s. The youngest, Zhang Taolin, vice governor of Jiangsu, was born in 1961.

Table 5.
High-Ranking Chinese Leaders Who Received Advanced Foreign Degrees

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Born</i> | <i>Native Province</i> | <i>Current Position</i> | <i>Country</i> | <i>Foreign School</i> | <i>Years</i> | <i>Degree</i> | <i>Academic Field</i> |
|----------------|-------------|------------------------|---|----------------|---|--------------------|-----------------|---|
| Lu Yongxiang | 1942 | Zhejiang | President of Chinese Academy of Sciences | Germany | Aachen Industrial Univ. | 1979-81 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Zhou Ji | 1946 | Hubei | Minister of Education | USA | SUNY, Buffalo | 1980-84 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Wu Qidi (f) | 1947 | Zhejiang | Vice Minister of Education | Switzerland | Sulies Institute of Tech. | 1981-86 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Zhang Xinsheng | 1948 | Jiangsu | Vice Minister of Education | USA | Harvard Univ. Colorado State Univ., Denver | 1998-00 1986 | M.A., M.P.A. | Architecture, Public Administration |
| Zhai Huqu | 1950 | Jiangsu | President of China Academy of Agriculture | UK | Birmingham University | 1984-87 | Ph.D. | Biology |
| Liu Mingkang | 1946 | Fujian | Chair, China Securities Regulatory Commission | UK | Univ. of London | 1985-87 | MBA | Finance |
| Wan Exiang | 1955 | Hubei | Vice President of Supreme People's Court | USA | Yale Univ. | 1986-88 | J.D. | Law |
| Zhang Baowen | 1946 | | Vice Minister of Agriculture | USA | Univ. of Minnesota | 1984-86 | M.A. | Agriculture Edu. |
| Wang Xiaochu | 1953 | Beijing | Vice Minister of Personnel | USA | Simmons College | | M.A. | Library Science |
| Wang Min | 1956 | Hebei | Vice Minister of Land Resources | Germany | Technical University at Braunschweig (joint degree) | 1988-91 | Ph.D. | Geography |
| Zhao Baige (f) | 1952 | Shanghai | Vice Minister of Family Planning Commission | UK | Oxford Univ. | 1985-88 | Ph.D. | Biological Medicine |
| Gao Hucheng | 1951 | Shanxi | Vice Minister of Commerce | France | Paris No. 7 Univ. | 1982-85 | Ph.D. | Sociology |
| Ma Songde | 1946 | Jiangsu | Vice Minister of Science & Tech. | France | Paris No. 6 Univ. | 1983-86 | Ph.D. | Computer |
| Jiao Yong | 1956 | Shandong | Vice Minister of Water Resources | UK | Imperial College London | 1991-95 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Cheng Jinpei | 1946 | Jiangsu | Vice Minister of Science & Tech. | USA | Northwestern Univ. | 1982-87 | Ph.D. | Chemistry |
| Suo Lisheng | 1944 | Hubei | Vice Minister, Water Resources | USA | Univ. of Michigan | 1984-89 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Sun Laiyan | 1957 | Jiangsu | Vice Minister, National S & T Defense Commission | France | French National Science Lab. | 1987-93 | Ph.D. | Physics |
| Ding Wei | 1956 | Jiangsu | Assistant Minister, Culture | UK | Univ. of Exeter | 1978-81 | M.A. | Foreign Language Management |
| Yi Gang | 1958 | Beijing | Assistant Governor of People's Bank | USA | Hamlin Univ. Univ. of Illinois | 1980-82 1982-86 | MBA, Ph.D. | Economics |
| He Quan | 1952 | Jiangsu | Vice Governor, Jiangsu | Australia | Macquarie Univ. | 1997-00 | M.A. | Economics |
| Zhang Taolin | 1961 | Jiangsu | Vice Governor, Jiangsu | Germany | Bonn Univ. | 1986-89 | Ph.D. | Agriculture |
| Yan Junqi (f) | 1946 | Jiangsu | Vice Mayor, Shanghai | Denmark | Technical University of Denmark | 1984-87 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Guo Shenglian | 1957 | Fujian | Vice Governor, Hubei | Ireland | National Univ. | 1986-90 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Yu Dehui | 1959 | Guangdong | Vice Governor, Neimenggu | France | Paris No. 10 Univ. | 1984-91 | Ph.D. | Economics |
| Zhang Shaoqin | 1953 | Shanxi | Vice Governor, Shanxi | USA | Auburn Univ. | 1987-89 | Ph.D. | Engineering |
| Liu Xiaoming | 1956 | Guangdong | Assistant Governor, Gansu | USA | Tufts Univ, Fletcher School | 1982-83 | M.A. | International Affairs |
| Chen Youan | 1958 | Jilin | Assistant Governor, Gansu | Japan | | | Ph.D. | Finance |
| Min Weifang | 1950 | Beijing | Party Secretary and Vice President of Beijing Univ. | USA | Stanford Univ. | 1983-87 | Ph.D. | Education |

Of the 61 returnees who hold high-ranking leadership posts, 38 (62.3%) were born after 1950 (see Table 6). The two other leaders born in the 1960s are Vice Governor Gan Lin (born in 1963), a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Nottingham in England in 1997 and then at the Research Center of the Ministry of Agriculture of Canada from 1997-99; and Vice Minister of Construction Huang Wei (born in 1961), who studied at the University of California, Berkeley, as a visiting scholar in 1993-94.

Table 6.
Age Distribution of Foreign-Educated Leaders (2005)

| <i>Age in Years</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 60 or over (born before 1945) | 7 | 11.5% |
| 55-59 (born 1945-49) | 16 | 26.2% |
| 50-54 (born 1950-54) | 15 | 24.6% |
| 45-49 (born 1955-59) | 20 | 32.8% |
| 44 or under (born after 1960) | 3 | 4.9% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

Table 7.
Foreign Countries Where Chinese Leaders Studied

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Foreign Study in General</i> | | <i>Foreign Study Resulting in an Advanced Degree</i> | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
| USA | 29 | 43.9% | 11 | 37.9% |
| England | 13 | 19.7% | 6 | 20.7% |
| France | 4 | 6.1% | 4 | 13.8% |
| Germany | 4 | 6.1% | 3 | 10.3% |
| Japan | 4 | 6.1% | 1 | 3.4% |
| Canada | 3 | 4.5% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Australia | 2 | 3.0% | 1 | 3.4% |
| Sweden | 2 | 3.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Denmark | 1 | 1.5% | 1 | 3.4% |
| Ireland | 1 | 1.5% | 1 | 3.4% |
| New Zealand | 1 | 1.5% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Singapore | 1 | 1.5% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Switzerland | 1 | 1.5% | 1 | 3.4% |
| TOTAL | 66 | 100.0% | 29 | 100.0% |

NOTES: All countries where a leader studied are counted.

In terms of country of foreign study, the United States is ranked first in both “foreign study in general” and “foreign study resulting in an advanced degree” (see Table 7). There is a considerable gap between the number of Chinese students who studied in the United States and the number who studied in the United Kingdom, ranked second in both categories. Zhang Xinsheng, vice minister of education, received two master’s degrees from U.S. universities, including an M.A. in architecture and city planning from Harvard in 2000 and an MBA from Colorado State University at Denver in 1986.

Table 8 shows the distribution of academic fields among returnee leaders. Although a large fraction (24.6%) majored in engineering, the same proportion trained in economics and management, including MBA programs. Others studied political science, international affairs, and law. For example, Wang Huning studied political science as a visiting scholar in the United States in the late 1980s. Li Xiaoming (assistant governor of Gansu) received a master’s degree in international affairs from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1982-83. Cao Jianming and Wan Exiang, vice presidents of the Supreme People’s Court, both studied law in the West.

Table 8.
Distribution of Academic Fields

| <i>Field</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Engineering & Science | 31 | 50.8% |
| Engineering | 15 | 24.6% |
| Agronomy/Forestry | 2 | 3.3% |
| Architecture | 1 | 1.6% |
| Biology | 3 | 4.9% |
| Chemistry | 1 | 1.6% |
| Computer Science | 2 | 3.3% |
| Geology | 1 | 1.6% |
| Information Technology | 1 | 1.6% |
| Medical Science | 4 | 6.6% |
| Physics | 1 | 1.6% |
| Economics & Management | 15 | 24.6% |
| Auditing | 1 | 1.6% |
| Management (including MBA) | 4 | 6.6% |
| Economics | 5 | 8.2% |
| Finance | 4 | 6.6% |
| Statistics | 1 | 1.6% |
| Social Science & Law | 10 | 16.4% |
| International Affairs | 3 | 4.9% |
| Law | 2 | 3.3% |
| Political Science | 1 | 1.6% |
| Public Administration | 3 | 4.9% |
| Sociology | 1 | 1.6% |
| Humanities | 5 | 8.2% |
| Education | 3 | 4.9% |
| Foreign Language | 1 | 1.6% |
| Library Science | 1 | 1.6% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

In recent years, both the central government and local governments have sent many officials to Western countries and Singapore to study public administration, law and international affairs. According to the Chinese government source, China sent some 9,400 Party or government officials and 5,100 managers of large state-owned enterprises to study abroad in 2003 and 2004.¹⁷ Most were enrolled in one-month short programs, although some attended degree programs. For example, the government of Hebei Province recently sent several groups of municipal leaders to study in a one-year-long program on management in Singapore. Shijiazhuang Mayor Wu Xianguo, Qinhuangdao Party Secretary Song Changrui, Handan Party Secretary Nie Chenxi, Yingtai Mayor Jiang Deguo, and Langfang Mayor Wang Aimin all attended Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.¹⁸ Harvard University's Kennedy School, Syracuse University's Maxwell School, and the University of Maryland at College Park also offer public administration programs for young Chinese officials at the municipal and bureau levels of leadership. All these data suggest that the number of foreign-trained Chinese leaders in public administration, law, and politics will most likely increase in the years to come.

Returnees and *Tuanpai*: Two Diverging Career Paths?

An overwhelming number of returnees, about 72%, were born in China's coastal region. Table 9 shows that those who were born in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai account for 44.3%. In contrast, only one leader in this study, Xie Xiaojun (vice mayor of Chongqing), was born in China's vast western region. More importantly, a majority of these returnee leaders currently work in the coastal region, a total of 82% as shown in Table 10.¹⁹ This high percentage is primarily due to the fact that many of these leaders serve in the central government in Beijing. Nevertheless, these leaders usually advanced their careers from the coastal region. Vice Minister of Education Zhang Xinsheng, for example, had worked in his native province for over two decades, including his tenure as mayor of Suzhou for eight years, prior to his appointment in the central government.

Among the 35 returnees who serve in the central government, 27 (77%) had previous leadership experience in the coastal region, only five leaders (14%) advanced their careers from the inland region alone, and the other three (9%) had substantial work experience in both coastal and inland regions. According to several recent studies, approximately two-thirds of China's returnees have settled in Beijing and Shanghai.²⁰ China's top leadership and the provincial governments in the inland region are aware of the growing regional gap in human resources. They have made some efforts to recruit returnees to the inland region. In Gansu, for example, three returnees who are in their forties were recently appointed as assistant governors.

Returnees are also likely to advance their careers in fields such as education, science and technology, academic administration, foreign affairs, foreign trade, banking, and finance. To a great extent, returnees have already dominated the leadership of China's education, science and technology, and academic administration. In education, for example, returnees have not only held the posts of minister and vice minister, but also the top administrative posts at leading Chinese universities. In 2005, China's Ministry of

Education reported that about 60% of all top leaders (presidents, Party secretaries, and their deputies) of Chinese universities and research institutions had studied abroad.²¹

Table 9.
The Birthplace Distribution of Foreign-Educated Leaders

| <i>Birthplace</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Coast | 44 | 72.1% |
| Jiangsu | 14 | 23.0% |
| Zhejiang | 8 | 13.1% |
| Shanghai | 5 | 8.2% |
| Beijing | 4 | 6.6% |
| Fujian | 3 | 4.9% |
| Liaoning | 3 | 4.9% |
| Guangdong | 2 | 3.3% |
| Shandong | 2 | 3.3% |
| Hebei | 2 | 3.3% |
| Taiwan | 1 | 1.6% |
| Central | 14 | 23.0% |
| Hubei | 4 | 6.6% |
| Shanxi | 3 | 4.9% |
| Anhui | 2 | 3.3% |
| Jilin | 2 | 3.3% |
| Heilongjiang | 1 | 1.6% |
| Hunan | 1 | 1.6% |
| Jiangxi | 1 | 1.6% |
| Western | 1 | 1.6% |
| Chongqing | 1 | 1.6% |
| Unknown | 2 | 3.3% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

According to a recent study of faculty profiles conducted by Chinese scholar Chen Xuefei, 102 out of 132 (77%) top administrators at colleges, departments, research institutes, research centers, and key state labs at Tsinghua University are returnees.²² In 1999, 75% of university-level administrators and 74% of department-level administrators at Beijing University were returnees. Among 100 colleges surveyed by Chen, 51% of university-level administrators and 35% of college- and department-level administrators were returnees.²³

Table 11 lists the main areas of responsibility for returnees in this study. A leader's main area of responsibility is often identical to his or her main area of previous leadership experience. Approximately 79% of these leaders are in charge of the areas of science and technology, education, industrial development, finance, foreign trade and foreign affairs. Four (6.6%) have responsibility in Party affairs (organization or propaganda matters) and only one is in charge of rural development (1.6%).

Table 10.
Current Location of Foreign-Educated Leaders (2005)

| <i>Location</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Coast | 50 | 82.0% |
| Beijing | 36 | 59.0% |
| Shanghai | 4 | 6.6% |
| Jiangsu | 4 | 6.6% |
| Liaoning | 2 | 3.3% |
| Guangdong | 2 | 3.3% |
| Zhejiang | 1 | 1.6% |
| Hebei | 1 | 1.6% |
| Central | 4 | 6.6% |
| Hunan | 2 | 3.3% |
| Shanxi | 1 | 1.6% |
| Hubei | 1 | 1.6% |
| Western | 7 | 11.5% |
| Gansu | 4 | 6.6% |
| Neimenggu | 2 | 3.3% |
| Chongqing | 1 | 1.6% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

Table 11.
Main Area of Responsibility of Foreign-Educated Leaders

| <i>Area</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Science & Technology | 14 | 23.0% |
| Education | 10 | 16.4% |
| Industrial Development | 8 | 13.1% |
| Finance | 6 | 9.8% |
| Foreign Trade | 6 | 9.8% |
| Foreign Affairs | 4 | 6.6% |
| Party & Personnel Affairs | 4 | 6.6% |
| Urban Construction | 3 | 4.9% |
| Medicine & Health Care | 3 | 4.9% |
| Legal Affairs | 2 | 3.3% |
| Rural Development | 1 | 1.6% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

In contrast, Hu Jintao and many top national leaders usually advanced their careers in inland provinces and received their leadership experience from within the party organization, the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), and provincial and local administrations.²⁴ The contrast between foreign-educated returnees and China-trained elites seems to reflect two distinct and increasingly diverging geographic and occupational career paths for political leaders. My recent study of 22 high-ranking leaders who have advanced their careers through CCYL (Hu Jintao's main protégés, often called *tuanpai*) shows that none of them has had work experience in foreign trade, finance, or banking and none has studied abroad. Instead, they have had substantial leadership experience in rural administration, local governance, and Party organization and propaganda affairs.²⁵

The difference between *tuanpai* and returnees in terms of professional expertise and career backgrounds may imply that, due to their respective weaknesses and limitations, they need each other and therefore they must share power. But it can also suggest that returnees generally do not hold the real power. They can play a leadership role only in some functional areas and their chances for further political promotion are quite limited. The contrast between returnees and *tuanpai* signifies the potential for conflicts over power and policy between these two groups.

The 22 *tuanpai* leaders currently serve as provincial chiefs (Party secretaries and governors) (13), full ministers of the State Council (seven), and heads of the CCP central departments (two). They account for 21%, 25%, and 50% of the total numbers in these three levels of leadership, respectively. Most of them are in their early 50s and are members or alternates of the 16th Central Committee. They are likely the most prominent players in the next round of Chinese elite politics.

In contrast, returnees usually hold deputy positions at these levels of leadership. Only three returnees (Xu Guanhua, Zhou Ji, and Zhou Xiaochuan) serve as full ministers of the State Council, only one returnee (Chen Liangyu) serves as a provincial chief (Shanghai party secretary), and none of them holds the directorship of any of the four CCP central departments. Most of returnee leaders in their early 50s do not have membership (full or alternate) on the 16th Central Committee.²⁶

Among the 61 high-ranking leaders in this study, 12 (19.7%) are not members of the Chinese Communist Party (see Table 12). Most of them serve as vice governors or vice ministers. These include Vice Governor of Liaoning Teng Weiping, Vice Governor of Shanxi Zhang Shaoqin, Vice Governor of Hubei Guo Shenglian, Vice Governor of Hunan Gan Lin, Vice Minister of Science and Technology Cheng Jinpei, Vice Minister of Agriculture Zhang Baowen, Vice Minister of Health Jiang Zuojun and Vice Minister of Water Resources Suo Lisheng. During the past decade, as part of administrative reform, each provincial and ministry-level administration in China often has had one non-CCP member serving as vice governor or vice minister. This leader is often in charge of health care, science, and education in the jurisdiction.

In recent years, an increasing number of non-CCP leadership posts have been filled by returnees. This trend may reflect the Chinese authorities' intention to recruit more returnees to the political leadership. But it also reveals the fact that returnees can only play a marginal, narrow, sometimes symbolic, leadership role in the political establishment. In general, Chinese authorities are still hesitant to appoint returnees to the most crucial positions in the provincial and ministerial leadership.

Table 12.
CCP Membership of Foreign-Educated Leaders

| <i>Party Membership Status</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| CCP Member | 46 | 75.4% |
| Non-CCP Member | 12 | 19.7% |
| Unknown | 3 | 4.9% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

Some of the prominent returnee leaders in this study were already lower level officials prior to their foreign studies. In other words, they were already within the political system before going to study abroad. For example, Zhou Xiaochuan was already a member of the State Economic Reform Commission before he went to study in the United States in 1987-88. Chen Liangyu was head of Huangpu District in Shanghai before he went to study at Birmingham University in England in 1992. Similarly, Shanghai Vice Mayor Zhou Yupeng had served as head of the Luwan District of Shanghai for years when he went to study at New York University in 1995.

Most of the returnee leaders in this study, however, were college instructors or researchers prior to their studies in the West during the early 1980s. Examples include prominent returnee leaders such as Chen Zhili, Xu Kuangdi, Xu Guanhua, and Lu Yongxiang. They were scholars and scientists in their own right. This is in sharp contrast to many younger officials who were sent to study abroad in the late 1990s. This latter group includes primarily officials, not scholars. They were sent abroad, not for their academic credentials, but primarily because of their promising political careers.

Almost all of the returnee leaders in this study received government or institutional funding (*gongfei*) to study abroad. Those self-sponsored students and scholars (*zifei*), referring to Chinese nationals who use their own funds from relatives, friends, and/or foreign institutions to study abroad, are very unlikely to be recruited to high-ranking political posts, even though they currently constitute about 95% of the total number of Chinese scholars who studied abroad in the reform era.²⁷ Obtaining a bureau-level position, for example, usually requires four years of work experience in sub-bureau-level leadership.²⁸

Table 13 shows the duration of study by high-ranking leaders in this study. A majority of them (73.8%) spent less than three years abroad. Only 11.4% stayed overseas more than six years. Most of these years were spent in intensive study for a Ph.D. degree. Very few taught at foreign universities after completing their studies. One exception is Yi Gang, assistant governor of People's Bank. He began his studies in the United States in 1980 as an MBA student at Hamlin University and then continued to study for a Ph.D. in economics at the University of Illinois. After receiving his Ph.D. degree in 1986, he began to teach at Indiana University, where he received tenure and became an associate professor in 1992. In 1994, after studying and teaching in the United States for 14 years, he returned to China, where he first taught at the Center of China Economic Research at Beijing University. Three years later, he was appointed deputy secretary general of the Currency Policy Commission of People's Bank. After serving as division head of currency policy, he became assistant governor of People's Bank in 2004.

Table 13.
Duration of Study Abroad of High-Ranking Leaders

| <i>Duration</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1 year | 20 | 32.8% |
| 2-3 years | 25 | 41.0% |
| 4-5 years | 7 | 11.5% |
| 6-7 years | 5 | 8.2% |
| 8-9 years | 1 | 1.6% |
| More than 10 years | 1 | 1.6% |
| Unknown | 2 | 3.3% |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100.0% |

Yi Gang's substantial length of foreign experience and the solid academic credentials are just the kind of talent that China needs most at present, especially in the high-level decision-making circles. But an examination of the biographic information of returnees in the Chinese ministerial and provincial leadership reveals that Yi Gang is an exception rather than the norm.

Returnees as Aides to Top Leaders: Growing Influence or the Illusion of Importance?

Yi Gang's academic credentials may be unique among the high-ranking returnee leaders in China at present, but he should not be considered unusual among returnee scholars who are associated with the leading think tanks affiliated with top universities such as Beijing University (Beida) and Tsinghua University. At Beida's Center of China Economic Research (CCER) where Yi Gang used to teach, for example, all 24 of the

faculty members studied abroad as degree candidates. All but one received doctoral degrees in economics, mainly from prestigious universities such as Chicago, Stanford, and Michigan.²⁹

These U.S.-educated economists have largely redesigned the curriculum and research methods in the fields of economics and management at Beida in line with the American model, particularly the “Chicago model.” The CCER not only has strong ties with international academic communities, but also frequently provides consultancy and policy recommendations for Chinese top leaders.³⁰ Distinguished returnee scholars such as Lin Yifu, Zhou Qiren, Song Guoqing, and Liang Neng have played an extremely important role in helping Chinese leaders to understand the ever-changing global economic and financial landscape and to make sound economic and social policies.

Tsinghua and *Beida* are now home to some of the most influential think tanks in the country. There are, for example, more than two dozen prominent research centers and institutes at Tsinghua, including the Center for China Studies (CCS), the Center for the Study of Contemporary China (CSCC), the National Center for Economic Research (NCER), and the Institute of International Studies (IIS). The most important resources for think tanks are, of course, research scholars or thinkers. Not surprisingly, research centers and institutes are often “built around a single, strong-minded individual,” as Barry Naughton observed in his study of China’s economic think tanks a few years ago.³¹ Hu Angang (CCS), Hu Zulu (NCER), Li Qiang (CSCC), and Yan Xuetong (IIS) are good examples, and they are all returnees who either received Ph.D.s from foreign universities or spent many years abroad as visiting scholars.

University-based think tanks have also appointed some distinguished Chinese nationals who live and work overseas as non-resident fellows. These non-resident fellows often spend a few weeks or months every year at Chinese universities giving lectures or engaging in joint research endeavors with colleagues in the PRC. This kind of arrangement, often called the “dumbbell model” (*yaling moshi*), further enhances international scholarly collaboration. Among all 36 nonresident fellows of the NCER at Tsinghua, 30 hold doctoral degrees (most of them in economics). Twenty-two (61%) obtained doctoral degrees in the United States, including nine at Harvard University.

The CCS headed by Hu Angang has been particularly active in contributing to policy changes in the Chinese government during the past few years. Hu received his Ph.D. degree in engineering from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, but he spent much time abroad in the 1990s, serving as a post-doctoral fellow at Yale University in 1991, a visiting professor at Murray State University in the United States in 1993, a research fellow at the School of Arts and Sciences at MIT in 1997, and a guest lecturer for the department of economics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1998.

The center was established jointly by Tsinghua University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1999 to serve as a “think tank for the highest-level decision-making circles in the country.”³² The CCS aims to identify China’s goals of long-term development and to influence governmental policies. During the past six years, the CCS has issued over 700 “reports on the state of China” (*guoqing baogao*). According to Hu

Angang, the CCS submitted 37 reports to the State Council under the leadership of Zhu Rongji. In response, senior leaders in the State Council made comments on these reports 39 times.³³ In addition, during the SARS epidemic of 2003, the CCS issued 30 special reports on various issues related to the health crisis, including media coverage, public opinion, foreign reactions, the state budget for health care, and the impacts of the crisis on economy and tourism.³⁴

In 2004, in the aftermath of SARS, Hu Angang wrote a report in which he argued that “insecurity in health” (*jiankang buanquan*) is the largest challenge to China’s security and development in the future. According to Hu, China’s development over the past decade has been paradoxical: while the income per capita increased significantly, the number of the people with chronic diseases also increased considerably. Based on Hu’s study, approximately 80% of China’s population has no health insurance.³⁵ Meanwhile, China consumes more tobacco and alcohol than any other country. China has the world’s largest population of smokers (350 million), and about one million Chinese people die of smoking-related cancers every year.³⁶ In addition, approximately 200-300 million people in China have no access to clean drinking water.³⁷ Hu’s assessment of the health care crisis as China’s most daunting challenge has received much attention in the official Chinese media during the past two years. It is perhaps not coincidental that China’s top leaders, especially Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, have paid much more attention to the issue of health care and the AIDS epidemic than did their predecessors.

Some returnees have played an even more direct role in advising top leaders. In the late 1990s, for example, Wang Huning served as deputy director of the CCP Central Policy Research Center and Cao Jianming as vice president of the People’s Supreme Court. Both spent many years early in their careers in the West as visiting scholars (Wang at the University of Michigan and Iowa State University, and Cao at San Francisco State University and the Gente University in Belgium). They assisted Jiang in some crucial areas such as ideological evolution, legal issues related to China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and tensions across the Taiwan Strait. Wang is believed to have been a principal drafter of the theory of the “three represents” expounded by Jiang.

Similarly, some of the most prominent aides to Hu Jintao, for example, Xia Yong (director of the State Bureau of Secrecy), Yu Keping (deputy director of the Central Bureau of Translation of the CCP), and Wang Jisi (director of the Institute of International Strategic Studies at the Central Party School), had previously spent several years studying in Western countries before working with Hu. Xia studied at Harvard University as a post-doctoral fellow for two years; Yu taught as a guest professor at Duke University and the Free University in Germany; and Wang worked as a visiting scholar at Oxford University (1982), the University of California at Berkeley (1984-85), and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (1990-91). These three aides have been instrumental in the formation of Hu’s domestic and foreign policies, including the development of the concepts of “people-centered growth,” the “governing capacity of the CCP,” and “China’s peaceful rise.”

All of these aides have dual identities as both officials and scholars. They are, in fact, more like government officials than scholars or members of think tanks. Yet, their

previous professional backgrounds, their close contact with top leaders, and their considerable influence on China's decision-making process also enhance the role of think tanks. One may argue that the growing political influence of returnees is merely an illusion, a false assessment of their importance. China's top leaders—Jiang or Hu—know what they want and in what direction China should go. It may be that their reliance on returnee advisors or their promotion of returnees is primarily a public show, designed to enhance the legitimacy of the Chinese leadership and its domestic and foreign policies. Yet these returnee-led research centers or think tanks also serve as a bridge between the Chinese government and international scholarly communities, and between policy-making circles and public intellectuals. This dynamic seems to make up for the limited role of returnees in the political leadership.

Conclusion

Despite all the rhetoric from top Chinese leaders claiming they want to recruit talented people, both home-trained and foreign-educated, for political leadership, China's political system is neither open enough or bold enough to accommodate a large number of returnees. The percentage of foreign-educated people at the ministerial- and provincial-level of leadership is still very small. Those returnees who have been recruited into the leadership usually serve in the functional areas of education, science and technology, foreign trade, and foreign affairs. They do not have the opportunity to broaden their leadership experience beyond their specific fields. Thus, compared with grassroots-oriented *tuanpai* officials, returnees are at a disadvantage for further political advancement in their careers. The deficiencies of returnee leaders are underscored by the fact that most spent only one to three years overseas as visiting scholars, and very few have solid academic credentials or broad professional experiences abroad.

Nevertheless, the career paths of Chinese political elites are increasingly divergent. Although the diversity of the demographic, educational, and administrative backgrounds of leaders is perhaps a positive development that can potentially contribute to political pluralism in China, the history of contemporary China has shown that differences in the educational backgrounds and career experiences of political leaders are often the source of tensions and conflicts. Yet one can also argue that because of their difference in expertise, credentials, and experiences, contending elite groups need each other and therefore must share power.

At a time when China faces daunting challenges both at home and abroad, China's top leaders are in great need of the expertise, skills, and knowledge of foreign-educated Chinese nationals. At the same time, they cannot really trust these returnees. To reconcile this dilemma, the top leadership has turned to returnee-led think tanks affiliated with China's top universities. This dynamic interaction between power and knowledge, between national interest and transnational perspective, is a fascinating development in China today.

Returnees are a diverse lot, and they differ profoundly from one another in terms of their views, values, and visions. As their numbers increase in China, it is not difficult

to imagine that they will exert more political influence and demand more power. Arguably no country is really run by the best and brightest. Therefore, an important secret in governance is not to completely alienate this group. A smart statesman understands the great importance of getting talented people to work *for* the political establishment rather than *against* it. Hu Jintao has been quite successful in terms of his rhetoric about human capital. But rhetoric and symbolism can go only so far. The next few years will test whether or not China can move towards a more open and competitive political system in which *tuanpai*, returnees, and other elite groups can share power.

Notes

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¹ *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), May 24, 2003, sec. A, p. 8.

² Hu Jintao stated, "The conference [on such a topic] is the first ever held by the CCP, and also the first held since the founding of the PRC. It shows that we consider the issue of the development of human resources to be highly important, and, to put it on a strategic level, in Party and national development." *People's Daily*, English online. <http://english.people.com.cn>. December 21, 2003.

³ Two months earlier, at the meeting on the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Chinese Students Who Studied in America and Europe, Hu gave a long speech elaborating on the strategy of strengthening China by improving its human capital. *Renmin ribao*, October 9, 2003, 1-2.

⁴ *People's Daily*, English online. <http://english.people.com.cn>. December 21, 2003.

⁵ For the transcripts of Hu's remarks at the conference, see <http://news.xinhuanet.com>. December 20, 2003.

⁶ This number, which includes students and scholars who studied abroad from 1978 through the end of 2004, is based on the statistics released by the Ministry of Education in February 2005. See <http://news.xinhuanet.com>, February 27, 2005. The data on the percentage of these students and scholars who went to the United States by the end of 2004 were not available. It was reported by the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C. that, by 2003, the total number of Chinese students and scholars who had studied overseas since 1978 was about 700,000, including some 200,000 in the United States. China News Agency, May 31, 2003, quoted from <http://taisha.org>, July 27, 2003.

⁷ See <http://news.xinhuanet.com>, February 27, 2005.

⁸ *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation daily), January 1, 2005, p. 1.

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the impact of U.S.-China educational changes during the reform era, see Cheng Li, ed. *Bridging Minds across the Pacific: U.S.-China Educational Exchanges 1978-2003*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005.

¹⁰ See <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>. September 25, 2000.

¹¹ The fifth and sixth generations of Chinese leaders are likely to consist of more returnees than the fourth generation of leaders, whose formative years occurred during the Cultural Revolution. See Cheng Li, "Emergence of the Fifth Generation in the Provincial Leadership," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 6 (Spring 2003).

¹² These do not include leaders in the bureaus and organizations directly under the State Council, although some of them may have the rank of vice minister.

¹³ The sources include: The CCP Organization Department and the Research Institute of the CCP History under the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, comp. *Zhongguo gongchandang lijie zhongyang weiyuan dacidian* (Who's who in the Central Committees of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-2003). Beijing: The CCP Archive Press, 2004; Shen Xueming and others, comp., *Zhonggong di shiwujie zhongyang weiyuanhui zhongyang jilu jiancha weiyuanhui weiyuan minglu* (Who's who among the members of the 15th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the 15th Central Discipline Inspection Commission). Beijing: *Zhonggong wenxian chubanshe*, 1999; and www.xinhuanet.com. In addition, I have collected biographic information, often through search engines, from online websites such as <http://www.sina.com>, www.yahoo.com.cn, and www.sohu.com.

¹⁴ The duration of one year may be cumulative resulting from more than one stay abroad.

¹⁵ Some ministerial and provincial leaders also serve on the CCP Central Committee as full or alternate members. They are not double-counted in the total of 61 returnee leaders, but are counted in each category to which they belong (as shown in Table 1).

¹⁶ Du Ruiqing, *Chinese Higher Education*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, p. 95.

¹⁷ *Renmin ribao*, March 22, 2005, p. 9.

¹⁸ See <http://www.xinhuanew.com>. The Hebei government website. October 12, 2005.

¹⁹ For a comparative case study of the educational and professional backgrounds of top leaders in resource-rich, coastal Jiangsu Province and resource-scarce, inland Guizhou Province, see Cheng Li, "Bringing China's Best and Brightest Back Home: Regional Disparities and Political Tensions" *China Leadership Monitor*, Issue No. 11 (Summer 2004).

²⁰ In 2002 approximately 50,000 returnees had settled in Shanghai, as reported in the official *People's Daily*. These individuals accounted for one-third of the total number of returnees in the country at the time. *Renmin ribao*, December 30, 2003, 13. In 2004, among the total of 170,000 returnees in China, some 104,000 settled in Beijing and Shanghai. *Ershiyi shiji* (The 21st Century), June 21, 2005.

²¹ See <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>. April 16, 2005.

²² Chen Xuefei, "Rencai liudong yu liuxue zhi pingshuo" (Mobility of human resources and an assessment of the effects of study abroad). *Shenzhen xueren*, July 2003.

²³ My study in 2003 of 936 senior administrators (presidents, Party secretaries, vice presidents, and deputy Party secretaries) at 134 universities shows that 313 (33.4%) of them were returnees. Cheng Li, "Coming Home to Teach: Status and Mobility of Returnees in China's Higher Education," in Li, ed. *Bridging Minds across the Pacific*, p. 84.

²⁴ Cheng Li and Lynn White, "The 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?" *Asian Survey* Vol. 43, No. 4 (July/August 2003): 553–97.

²⁵ Cheng Li, "Hu's Policy Shift and the *Tuanpai*'s Coming-of-Age." *China Leadership Monitor*, Issue No. 15 (Summer 2005).

²⁶ Exceptions are Wang Huning (director of the Central Policy Research Center of the CCP), Cao Jianming (vice president of People's Supreme Court), Li Hongzhong (party secretary of Shenzhen), Yin Yicui (deputy party secretary of Shanghai), and Bai Chunli (vice president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences). Wang is a full member and all others are alternates of the 16th Central Committee.

²⁷ *Nanfang zhoumo* (Southern weekend), April 14, 2005.

²⁸ *Shijie ribao*, April 21, 2005, p. A3.

²⁹ An earlier version of this article entitled "Political Aspects of the Returnees: Their Rise to Power and Growing Political Influence" was presented at an international conference, "'People on the Move': The Transnational Flow of Chinese Human Capital," held at the Center on China's Transnational Relations, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, on October 20-21, 2005. This earlier version has a more detailed discussion of the role of returnee-led think tanks.

³⁰ In addition to recruiting a large number of returnees to his Center, Lin has also appointed several internationally-known American scholars to serve on the advisory board or the board of directors of the CCER, along with some prominent Chinese government officials. For example, prominent American economists Gregory Chow (Princeton University), Lawrence Lau (Stanford University), Robert Mundell (Columbia University and the Nobel Laureate in Economics in 1999), Douglas North (University of Washington), and Dwight Perkins (Harvard University) currently serve on the advisory board of the CCER. Pieter Bottelier, former chief of the World Bank's mission in Beijing and currently adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University, and Peter F. Geithner, former Asia Director of the Ford Foundation and currently an advisor at the Asia Center of Harvard University, serve on the 12-member board of directors at the Center. Others on the board include Beijing Mayor Wang Qishan, Governor of the People's Bank Zhou Xiaochuan, and former Trade Representative of China Long Yongtu.

³¹ Barry Naughton, "China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s." *China Quarterly*, No. 171 (September 2002): 629.

³² See <http://people.com.cn>. January 9, 2005.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For the list of the special reports, see <http://ccs.tsinghua.edu.cn>.

³⁵ Hu Angang, "Zhongguo renlei buanquan de zuida tiaozhan—jiankang buanquan" (Insecurity in health: The largest challenge to China's security). *Guoqing baogao* (Report on the state of China). No. 653 (December 10, 2004).

³⁶ *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), March 28, 2005, p. 11.

³⁷ Hu, "Zhongguo renlei buanquan de zuida tiaozhan."; and see also <http://business.sohu.com>. June 19, 2005.