
THE DYNAMICS OF ELITE POLITICS DURING THE JIANG ERA

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In structural, functional and normative respects, elite politics during Jiang Zemin's era has become more rational, normal and predictable. While Jiang himself probably deserves some credit, as this occurred on his watch, the causes of many of these positive changes in Chinese elite politics were largely systemic and autonomous in their origins.

Unlike China's leaders in the 1980s, there is little evidence to suggest that Jiang and his key advisors on inner-Party affairs had a blueprint—much less a vision—for transforming elite politics in the 1990s and beyond. Indeed, many of the notable changes during Jiang's tenure in office have been the result of decisions and initiatives taken during the 1980s. But with the passage of time, after the immediate post-1989 interregnum, the earlier initiatives have taken root and germinated. Cumulatively, they amount to a fairly comprehensive overhaul of the ways in which the Party, state and military elite operate, the sources of recruitment into the elite and the bases for elite legitimacy. This article briefly takes account of the changes in Chinese elite politics during the Jiang era in several realms.

Jiang as Paramount Leader: Hua Guofeng Redux?

Clearly Jiang Zemin is no Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping. He does not even possess the authority or gravitas of a Chen Yun, Yang Shangkun or Peng Zhen. Nor is his leadership style as innovative as Hu Yaobang or Zhao Ziyang. Many analysts compared Jiang to Hua Guofeng when Jiang took power in 1989, assuming that he would be a weak and ineffective leader whose tenure would be short-lived. While Jiang has survived, his leadership style has resembled that of Hua Guofeng in several respects.

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Both leaders lacked charisma, and consequently tried to compensate by building a personality cult of sorts. Both grew their hair long and dyed it black to project a Mao-like aura. Similarly, while he usually wears Western suits that accord with the executive-like image first cultivated by Zhao Ziyang (who was following the lead of other East Asian rulers), Jiang is careful to wear a Sun Yat-sen tunic (Mao suit) when meeting the military and at some of the Party

conclaves, again presumably to present an image of continuity with Mao. Both Jiang and Hua worked hard at creating an aura of authority—authorizing their photographs to run next to other luminaries in the Chinese Communist pantheon, issuing cryptic edicts that few understood (or paid much attention to) and trying to elevate their own mundane “thought” to high ideological status. Both were comfortable speaking in Marxist lexicon, both argued the case for ideological theory building, and both were sensitive to the concerns of the neo-Maoist Left.¹ Both were catapulted to office under circumstances of pronounced factionalism among the senior elite, were tapped for the top spot by the exiting paramount leader (Mao and Deng respectively), and each wrapped his own claim to legitimacy in this quasi-dynastic anointment. Neither had any real previous experience in central-level politics, having spent the majority of their careers in provincial administration, and neither had any military experience or ties to the PLA. Both tried to cultivate a statesmanlike persona, using international travel to boost their image at home and abroad. Domestically, both Hua and Jiang demonstrated an inability to enunciate a convincing personal “vision” for the nation’s future. Neither man put forward any significantly original ideas. To be sure, both leaders have given multiple speeches and have had various writings ascribed to them—but the content hardly seems innovative and certainly has failed to inspire the nation.

In Jiang Zemin’s case, this inability has been turned into an asset and reveals one of the most noteworthy characteristics of his rule. Since Jiang has offered few programmatic policy ideas of his own, his answer is to adopt the ideas of others. Jiang is hardly alone as a national leader in this respect (indeed the United States under George W. Bush is presently poised to enter such a period). Once in office, leaders frequently become mouthpieces for their staff and constituencies. Jiang has been particularly adroit at adopting positions advocated by various parts of the Chinese bureaucracy—Party, state and military.² He has also spoken for different geographical constituencies (witness the current campaign to develop the western part of the country) and sectoral interests.

In part, Jiang’s ability to adopt (and sometimes quickly abandon) others’ agendas reveals his own lack of vision, but it also reflects a fundamental evolution in the nature of Chinese elite politics during his period of rule. As Joseph Fewsmith’s contribution to this symposium notes, today there are no sweeping “isms” (*zhuyi*) that offer comprehensive prescriptive solutions to China’s increasingly complex problems and challenges. While *policy* needs to be

¹ Today this takes the form of Deng Liqun’s coterie of ideologues, journals and institutes of Party history.

² For a discussion of how he has done this with respect to the PLA, and a variety of sub-constituencies within the PLA, see David Shambaugh, “China’s Commander-in-Chief: Jiang Zemin and the PLA”, in C. Dennison Lane et al. (eds), *Chinese Military Modernization* (London: Kegan Paul International and Washington DC: The AEI Press, 1996), pp. 209–45.

more concrete, specific, and adaptable to variant conditions, *politics* has become much more based on constituencies. Today's political scene is different from the bureaucratic bargaining so evident a decade ago, as constituencies are less institutionally rooted and more focussed on issues specific to their interests. Accordingly, coalitions are more fluid—and the successful leader is one who is able to cultivate, forge and hold such coalitions together.

Jiang Zemin has excelled at cultivating disparate constituencies; and it is remarkable that, after more than a decade in power, he has no clearly identifiable institutional or personal opponents. Indeed his conciliatory style has bridged differences and forged agreement among the elites. Jiang has been all things to all constituents. This reveals an astute personal political sense (as well as adept management by his staff "handlers") of who to cultivate or conciliate and when to do so. In the past such tactics would have been labeled "opportunism" (*jihuizhuyi*) and such a leader would have been accused of having no ideological compass. But times have changed and such policy flexibility can be a political asset.

Over the past decade, as power has become more institutionally, fiscally and spatially decentralized, elite politics has necessarily also become more diffuse. It has also become less personalized and more oriented to incremental problem solving—which, as is discussed below, is commensurate with a broader shift to technocratic leadership. Jiang's managerial style has coincided perfectly with these systemic changes, and consequently he has been the right leader for the right time.

Changes in Elite Policymaking

A second and related characteristic of the Jiang era lies in the more pluralized institutional sphere of elite policymaking.³ Policy is now formed on a more inclusive rather than exclusive basis, with a broader band of consultative organs involved in the process and also a shift in the principal loci of executive policy deliberation and decision-making to a wider and slightly different set of institutional actors. Here too one can trace the origins of this process of institutional pluralization to the pre-Jiang era, as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang initiated many of the changes that occurred during the 1990s.

At the apex of the system, several institutions are involved in the policy process. The Standing Committee of the Politburo remains the ultimate decision-making authority for Party affairs, while military decisions rest with the Central Military Commission (also a Party organ). These days the Standing Committee reportedly meets at least twice monthly, but can also be called into session when

³ Much of the analysis in this section is based on interviews conducted with staff members in three different central Party research units during September 2000.

necessary.⁴ Decision-making on key economic matters apparently lies with the Premier's office and certain State Council commissions.⁵ Neither the Politburo itself nor the Secretariat of the Central Committee have been proactive policymaking institutions under Jiang (unlike during the 1980s). Rather, the policy deliberations have been centered in several other institutions. The first of these is the General Office of the Central Committee, which has emerged under Jiang's aide-de-camp Zeng Qinghong as the principal nerve centre for transmitting documents, convening meetings, commissioning studies and developing policy options for the Standing Committee. The General Office has also seemingly strengthened its supervision of the main Central Committee departments: the Organization, United Front Work, Propaganda, and International Liaison Departments. Zeng Qinghong has personally taken control of the Organization Department—and, in this capacity, is overseeing the assembly of the new Central Committee roster and Nomenklatura to be unveiled at the 16th Party Congress in 2002.

The elite policymaking system has also relied heavily on leadership small groups (*lingdao xiaozu*). These organs, which are sometimes ad hoc and sometimes formal and permanent, have always been an important part of the elite decision-making system in China,⁶ but their role and importance has been strengthened during Jiang's reign. This has particularly been the case with the Taiwan Affairs Leading Group and the Foreign Affairs Leading Group, both of which Jiang chairs. In December 2000 a new National Security Leading Group was established, also chaired by Jiang, to formulate and coordinate responses related to international and regional military and strategic crises. It is said to have been established because of Jiang's dissatisfaction with the way China's foreign policy machinery responded to the Kosovo crisis and the bombing of the Chinese embassy. It is unclear, however, what the division of labour will be between this new body and the existing Foreign Affairs Leading Group, both of which are apparently staffed by the Central Committee's Foreign Affairs Office.⁷ A further

4 Interview with a staff member of a central Party research unit, 13 September 2000. Special circumstances, such as the outbreak of the Kosovo crisis and the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, have warranted special (expanded) Standing Committee meetings.

5 Particularly the State Development Planning Commission and the State Economic and Trade Commission.

6 One source reported that a total of 278 leadership small groups existed between 1949 and 1992. A complete list is given in Wang Jingsong, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu yu zhengzhi* (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1995), pp. 278–441.

7 Vivien Pik-Kwan Chan, "PRC Launches New Top-Level National Security Advisory Group", *South China Morning Post*, 12 December 2000; "China Sets Up Security Council", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 December 2000.

group of importance is the Finance and Economics Leading Group, also chaired by Jiang.⁸

Another key high-level organ that has gained importance under Jiang Zemin is the Policy Research Office of the Central Committee. Jiang has relied heavily on the intellectuals and specialists of this body, many of whom he brought to Beijing from Shanghai, for policy advice on a broad range of issues. For example, former Fudan University political scientist Wang Huning has been a key figure in this office in formulating Jiang's "Three Emphases" and "Three Representations" campaigns, as well as pushing for the expansion of village-level elections.

Think tanks and research institutes have also expanded in number and in their importance in the policy process during Jiang's tenure. Although this continues the trend begun under Zhao Ziyang,⁹ under Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji the number of think tanks has proliferated, the quality of their research has improved and their policy advice is more sought by leaders and government institutions.¹⁰ Over the past two decades, the central-level think tanks have evolved from being information gatherers to information analysers to information initiators. In recent years the State Council ministries have similarly moved from being exclusively policy implementers to being increasingly policy initiators.

Even the provinces and the general public are permitted increased input into central-level policies. For example, provincial governments were specifically invited to have inputs into the drafting of the recent 10th Five-Year Plan, and the State Planning Commission opened a Web site in November 2000 to solicit public reactions to the draft. Similar inputs and redrafting have occurred with legislation before the National People's Congress and provincial congresses.

This is all indicative of the broad trend towards a more consultative, consensual, and rational policymaking process.¹¹ The policy decisions that the

⁸ Other important bodies include the Taiwan Economic and Trade Leading Group, Rural Work Leading Group, Party Building Leading Group, Party History Leading Group, Propaganda and Education Leading Group, Foreign Propaganda Leading Group, Cryptography Leading Group, Comprehensive Public Order Leading Group and the Foreign Affairs Consultative Leading Group. This last body, formed in 1998 and also chaired by Jiang, is primarily made up of retired senior diplomats, and is intended to provide alternative advice to the more powerful Foreign Affairs Leading Group.

⁹ See, for example, Nina Halpern, "Social Scientists as Policy Advisers in Post-Mao China: Explaining the Pattern of Advice", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, Nos 19–20 (1988).

¹⁰ Murray Scot Tanner (ed.), *China's Think Tanks* (forthcoming); and "Characteristics of Zhu Rongji's Think Tanks", *Xin Bao* (Hong Kong), 15 January 1999, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service *China Daily Report*, 20 January 1999.

¹¹ See Frederick Teiwes, "The Paradoxical Post-Mao Transition: From Obeying the Leader to 'Normal Politics'", *The China Journal*, No. 34 (July 1995).

Chinese elite wrestle with today are increasingly complex and have multiple linkages across issue areas, and they require professional expertise and information. Policy choices must be defined more empirically and decided inductively, based on a wide variety of considerations, instead of being decided deductively from a guiding ideology or ad hoc considerations. As a result, the policy process at the top has become more rational (in the Weberian sense), and decisions are taken after feasibility and pilot studies are made and advice is sought from various quarters. Once policies are formulated, implementation is more carefully monitored than in the past, there is more regularized feedback from lower levels and alterations are made along the way. This policymaking style is in keeping with another distinguishing trend of the Jiang era elite, the rise of a technocracy,¹² and reflects the shifts in elite recruitment during the period.

Elite Recruitment and Turnover

Elite circulation has also evolved: recruitment channels have become more diversified while elite exit patterns have become more predictable. There has been significant elite turnover during the Jiang era, with 56 per cent of the 193 full Central Committee members being replaced by new faces at the 15th Party Congress in 1997. A similar turnover is expected at the 16th Congress in 2002, as the mandatory retirement regulations push the so-called third generation to give way to the fourth. While mandatory retirement itself became a *de jure* norm during the 1980s,¹³ by the late 1990s it had become a *de facto* norm at higher levels. Increasingly, exiting office truly means leaving the active policymaking elite.¹⁴ Thus today there is no truly paramount leader or set of elders pulling the strings from behind the scenes (whether Jiang does once he retires in 2002 remains to be seen). This is a significant change in Chinese elite politics.

As a result of more predictable and regularized exit patterns,¹⁵ elite politics is no longer a zero-sum, winner-take-all game.¹⁶ Elite power is now more vested

12 See Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); 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*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (March 1998); and David Shambaugh, “The Fifteenth Party Congress: Technocrats in Command”, *Issues and Studies* (January 1998).

13 Melanie Manion, *Retirement of Revolutionaries in China: Public Policies, Social Norms, Private Interests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

14 For instance, Liu Huqing, Zhang Zhen, Bo Yibo, Song Ping and the other remaining elders have truly retired.

15 Contrast this norm with the earlier patterns of sudden and often violent exit. See Michel Oksenberg, “Exit Patterns in Chinese Politics”, *The China Quarterly* (September 1976); and

in institutions than in individuals. For example, membership on the Politburo, the Central Committee Secretariat and the Central Military Commission is primarily determined today by the leader's Party, state and military positions, rather than their sway as individuals.

Elite socialization and career paths into the elite have also changed during the Jiang period. The current crop of third-generation central-level leaders are a combination of industrial technocrats and Party *apparatchiks*. The latter have generally spent their careers working in the Communist Youth League and inner-Party affairs, while the former all possess university technical training, with qualifications in engineering, electronics automation, and so on (18 of the 24 Politburo members possess these qualifications). Many of the technocrats worked their way up through the system as economic planners, factory managers or industrial bureaucrats, and a fair number received postgraduate or vocational training in the former Soviet Union during the 1950s. Many of the fourth-generation elite are also technocrats in training and outlook, but as Li Cheng's pathbreaking research indicates, there is also a greater proportion trained in law, finance and public administration.¹⁷ Many graduated from universities on the eve of the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution (most notably from Qinghua or Beijing University), and many have also received advanced training in the Central Party School in Beijing. But they have generally not been trained abroad, are not well travelled and do not speak foreign languages. They are, after all, the Cultural Revolution generation. Despite their more diversified career paths in China (as compared with the third generation), the insularity and relative lack of cosmopolitanism of the fourth-generation leaders stands in stark contrast to China's increased integration into world affairs. (Given his important position, China's vice-president and Jiang's heir apparent, Hu Jintao, has done little overseas travel.)

A large number of the fourth generation cut their professional teeth in the provinces, with several candidates for central leadership positions having served as first Party secretary, governor, or mayor of more than one province or

Lowell Dittmer, "Patterns of Elite Strife and Succession in Chinese Politics", *The China Quarterly* (September 1990).

16 This view was most persuasively argued by the late Tsou Tang in "Chinese Politics at the Top: Balance-of-Power Politics or a Game to Win All?", *The China Journal*, No. 34 (July 1995); and Joseph Fewsmith, "Elite Politics", in Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar (eds), *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms* (Cambridge: Harvard Contemporary China Series, 1999).

17 Li Cheng, "Jiang Zemin's Successors: The Rise of the Fourth Generation of Leaders in the PRC", *The China Quarterly* (March 2000); and *China's Leaders: The New Generation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

municipality.¹⁸ Some, such as Vice-Premier Wen Jiabao, are bureaucratic generalists with broad experience, while the administrative experiences of others is limited to a single economic sector or inner-Party portfolio.¹⁹

Foreign analysts have a woefully inadequate sense of the career paths, worldviews and managerial styles of this prospective generation of leaders. It is particularly uncertain how the searing socializing experience of the Cultural Revolution affects them. It is probable that like the current generation of technocratic leaders, the fourth-generation elite will also tend to tackle problems incrementally, rather than viewing issues systemically or looking for comprehensive solutions. Nor are they likely to be ideologues bent on remolding society, but rather will also likely be pragmatic problem solvers.

Another important characteristic of the Chinese elite today concerns the military leadership. The PLA high command has undergone substantial turnover during the Jiang era, and is expected to experience more personnel changes at the meeting of the Central Military Commission that will immediately follow the 16th Party Congress. The major path into the military leadership today parallels elite recruitment on the Party side—PLA generals have all received a professional military education at the National Defence University in Beijing and/or key command staff colleges, such as those at Shijiazhuang, Nanjing and Xian. They are military professionals, having worked their way up through the ranks, commanding units and achieving technical competence in field operations and with weaponry. Some in the senior high command have combat experience from the 1979 Vietnam border war or the 1988 Nansha conflict. With a few notable exceptions, those who have made their careers in the General Political Department as political commissars have not advanced into the upper ranks in recent years and a number of them have in fact lost their positions since the purge of the Yang Baibing network in 1992–93.

Having largely spent their careers in regional field commands, the PLA leadership today displays a distinctly insular and non-cosmopolitan worldview.²⁰ Few of them have travelled abroad or can speak a foreign language. The PLA leadership's understanding of the complexities of modernization or modern warfare tends to be relatively shallow and their exposure to modern armies is

18 These include Hu Jintao, Li Changchun, Jia Qinglin and Xie Fei. The number of the fourth generation who have served or are serving as provincial deputy Party secretaries or vice-governors is remarkably high. See Li Cheng, “Jiang Zemin’s Successors”, p. 11 (Table 2).

19 Those with backgrounds in economics include Wu Bangguo, with experience of SOE reform, and Dai Xianglong, with financial sector experience. Those who have emerged from a series of inner-Party portfolios include Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, Luo Gan and Wei Jianxing.

20 See David Shambaugh, “China’s Military Views the World: Ambivalent Security”, *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Winter 1999/2000).

minimal. In general, they think tactically and not strategically, focusing on military aspects of warfare rather than the political and strategic dimensions of security. Despite a professional military education, they can hardly be considered defence intellectuals.

It is notable that the new military leadership is no longer composed of soldier-politicians, severing the previously strong and symbiotic Party-army link. This presents important implications for understanding the new dynamics of this relationship, and the political future of the PRC. Professionalism and a corporate identity are growing in the armed forces, with the military resisting Party encroachment into its affairs as well as Party attempts to pull the army into issues concerning domestic politics or security.²¹ The long-standing “interlocking directorate” of the Party and army elite is being bifurcated, and perhaps with it the army’s willingness to rescue the Party when its rule is challenged. In general, when contrasted with the past, the Jiang era has witnessed the relative depoliticization and increased autonomy of the military. It is important not to overstate these twin trends, as the PLA still remains the Party’s army in many important respects, yet at the same time it is clear that the military has achieved significant autonomy from the Party over the past decade.

Changing Bases of Elite Authority

In the pre-Jiang era, authority rested on the twin bases of power and patronage. Senior elites enjoyed prestige and legitimacy by virtue of a kind of tautological “path dependency”: they were in power, therefore ipso facto they should be in power. Elite status conveyed authority and legitimacy. One qualified for entry into the political elite in different ways—primarily through pre-1949 revolutionary experience, post-1949 activism during political campaigns, or certain institutional channels such as the Communist Youth League—but once in power one did not generally exit the elite. If so, it was usually the result of purge, death or other irregular means, as regularized patterns of elite turnover were virtually non-existent.²²

Another source of entry into the elite was patronage. Protégés often rose to the top, occasionally propelled rapidly as “helicopters” through selection and promotion by high-level patrons, and stayed in power under their protection. Patronage has long been a defining characteristic of Chinese elite politics—the countless examples including Jiang Zemin himself. Senior leaders would often “talent spot” when they toured provinces and localities (Hua Guofeng’s rise is one notable example, as it was when touring his own home county that Mao first met Hua, who was a Party secretary in Hunan).

²¹ See Andrew Scobell, *Chinese Army Building in the Era of Jiang Zemin* (Carlisle: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2000).

²² Oksenberg, “Elite Patterns”.

Patronage still matters, but not as much. While certain members of the fourth generation are candidates for top positions largely as a result of patronage,²³ there are now other paths into the elite. Nor does power necessarily bestow legitimacy any longer. Indeed, while Jiang Zemin himself possesses considerable power, he does not command strong authority among the populace. Several of the most prominent fourth-generation leaders also lack legitimacy, despite having been in power for some time.

Today, elite legitimacy is based far more on broader factors.²⁴ The strength of the economy is a key source, and as a result Premier Zhu Rongji seems to enjoy broad popular support despite having administered bitter economic medicine to certain sectors. Popular approval today is not unlike that in other countries, where people regularly ask themselves whether they are better off than last year. However, higher disposable income is not all that matters to people, who believe it is also the responsibility of elites and government to provide an improved quality of life. As incomes rise, such expectations increase. A cleaner environment, better access to education, improved health care, more parks and public spaces, and expanded transport and communications infrastructure all now count on the “legitimacy index”, along with negative indicators, of which corruption tops the list. There is widespread cynicism among the Chinese citizenry that the Party-state is seriously riddled with corruption at all levels and this has had a decidedly deleterious effect on regime and elite legitimacy.

As has been noted by many observers, the other major source of elite legitimacy these days is nationalism. Being tough on Taiwan is one way for the elite to tap this source of legitimacy. Standing up to perceived American hegemony is another. Playing the “war card” against Japan is a third. The most senior leaders, particularly President Jiang Zemin, possess yet another source—the opportunity to represent their nation abroad and receive visiting dignitaries at home. This advantage taps into the long-standing Chinese yearning for international dignity and recognition of China as a great power. Chinese politicians, the Foreign Ministry, and propaganda officials are increasingly adroit at manipulating the symbols of international diplomacy to this end. Meticulous planning of photo opportunities is now standard for pre-trip advance parties sent by the Foreign Ministry and by the offices of senior Chinese leaders. For example, while the meeting of the leaders of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council at the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in October 2000 received relatively little news coverage around the world, it was front-page

²³ Pertinent examples are Hu Jintao, whose patron was Song Ping, Zeng Qinghong (Jiang Zemin), Luo Gan (Li Peng), Wu Bangguo (Zhu Rongji) and Wang Zhaoguo (Deng Xiaoping).

²⁴ Also see the discussion in Frederick Teiwes, “The Problematic Quest for Stability: Reflections on Succession, Institutionalization, Governability, and Legitimacy in Post-Deng China”, in Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu (eds), *China under Jiang Zemin* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

news in China for days. Chinese citizens were treated to extensive coverage of Jiang Zemin dining, meeting, greeting and talking with Presidents Chirac, Putin and Clinton and Prime Minister Blair.

A final source of elite legitimacy is based on meritocratic criteria. It matters more these days how one reaches the ranks of the senior elite than the fact that one is there. As expectations of regime performance have increased, so too have expectations of elite competence. Leaders are expected to be university educated, well versed in the relevant issues, and to have held a number of responsible administrative positions in the hierarchy and/or in the provinces.

Chinese leaders today are also expected to be proactive, articulate and visible. Jiang and Zhu Rongji have set new standards for public accessibility and, in Zhu's case, candor. Even displaying occasional emotion—such as Jiang crying at Deng's funeral or Zhu in his stern finger-wagging warning to Taiwan on the eve of the 2000 presidential election there—can be a public virtue for Chinese leaders in an era when elite politics is increasingly concerned with public relations.

These changes in the sources of elite legitimacy are in keeping with the evolution to a more open and constituency-based political system, as described above. As the political system and nation continue to evolve in a more open and modern direction, public and international expectations of the fourth-generation elite will only become more stringent over time. The need to comply with China's international obligations and to behave in non-disruptive ways externally will increasingly be coupled internally with greater expectations and demands for an improved quality of life and a more open and responsive polity. How Hu Jintao and company respond to these unprecedented challenges will not only profoundly affect their own legitimacy as members of the political elite, but also the staying power of the Chinese Communist Party.

