

China's Top Future Leaders to Watch: Biographical Sketches of Possible Members of the Post-2012 Politburo (Part 3)

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The composition of the new Politburo, including generational attributes and individual idiosyncratic characteristics, group dynamics, and the factional balance of power, will have profound implications for China's economic priorities, social stability, political trajectory, and foreign relations. To a great extent, these leaders' political position and policy preferences are often shaped or constrained by their personal experience, leadership expertise, factional affiliation, and bureaucratic portfolio. This series will provide concise and primarily fact-based biographies for 25 to 30 possible members of the next Politburo, focusing on the following three aspects: personal and professional background, family and patron-client ties, and political prospects and policy preferences.¹ The aim is to present a complete set of biographical sketches of all members of this supreme leadership body by the time the 18th Party Congress has wrapped up in the fall of 2012.*

Ling Jihua 令计划

- Born 1956
- Director of CCP General Office (2007–present)
- Politburo member (2002–present)
- Member of Secretariat (2007–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2007–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Ling Jihua was born in 1956 in Pinglu County, Shanxi Province. He joined the CCP in 1976. He attended an undergraduate program in politics at the China Youth University for Political Science in Beijing (1983–85) and received a master’s degree in Business Management through part-time studies at Hunan University (1994–96). He was a “sent-down youth” (manual laborer in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution) in Pinglu County, Shanxi Province, from 1973 to 1975, and was also a worker in a print factory in the county. Ling served as a clerk and deputy secretary of the Pinglu County CCYL Committee (1975–78), an official at the CCP Committee of Yuncheng Prefecture (1978–79), and an official in the Propaganda Department of the CCYL Central Committee (1979–83), during which time he also worked as a clerk in the General Office of the CCP Committee of Hebei Province (1982–83). Ling served as deputy head of the Theoretical Research Division of the Propaganda Department of the CCYL Central Committee (1985–88), director of the Office of the CCYL Secretariat (1988–1990), deputy director of the General Office of the CCYL Central Committee and editor in chief of the CCYL magazine (1990–94), director of the Propaganda Department of the CCYL Central Committee (1994–95), head of the Third Research Team of the General Office of the Central Committee of the CCP (1995–97), deputy director (1997–98) and director (1998–2003) of the Research Office of the Central General Office of the CCP, and deputy director of the Central General Office of the Central Committee of the CCP (1999–2007). Ling was first elected to the Central Committee as an alternate member at the 16th Party Congress (2002).

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Ling advanced his career largely through the CCYL and is widely considered a prominent *tuanpai* official in the fifth generation of leaders.² Ling has long been regarded as one of President Hu’s most important aides. They met each other when both worked at the CCYL Central Committee in the early 1980s. In the mid- and late 1990s, Ling helped draft speeches and memos for Hu. In 1999, Hu promoted Ling to be deputy secretary of the General Office and director of Hu’s own office. Ling’s parents were both low-level officials.³ One of Ling’s five siblings, his elder brother Ling Zhengce, previously served as director of the Reform and Development Commission of the Shanxi Provincial Government and is currently vice chairman of the CPPCC Shanxi Provincial Committee. Ling Jihua’s wife, Gu Liping, is a founder and director-general of a well-endorsed nonprofit public foundation called Youth Business China (YBC), which is jointly sponsored by the CCYL, the China Youth Federation, and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce. She previously served as chairperson in a few information

technology companies.⁴ The couple have one son who attended the School of International Affairs at Peking University from 2007 to 2011.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

As a two-term Politburo member, Liu is likely to be promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC). He will most likely succeed Li Changchun and become the new “propaganda tsar” of the country. But the possible reduction of the number of PSC seats from nine to seven may undermine Liu’s chance for promotion. It is expected that he will continue the policy of tight control over media and the internet.

Meng Jianzhu 孟建柱

- Born 1947
- State councilor (2008–present)
- Minister of Public Security (2007–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2002–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Meng Jianzhu was born in 1947 in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province (some official biographers say that Meng was born in Wuxian County, Jiangsu Province, and that Suzhou was his ancestral home). Meng joined the CCP in 1971. Early in his career, he worked as a sailor, a dispatcher, a branch Chinese Communist Youth League secretary, and a branch party secretary of the Transportation Fleet of the Qianwei Collective Farm, Shanghai (1968–1976). Meng served as deputy party secretary and head of the Qianwei Collective Farm (1977–1986), party secretary of Chuansha County, Shanghai (1986–1990), and party secretary of Jiading County, Shanghai (1990–91). He graduated with a master’s degree (through part-time studies) in Engineering Systems from the Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering (1991). Meng served as party secretary of the Rural Work Commission of the CCP Committee of Shanghai (1991–92), deputy chief of staff of the Shanghai Municipal Government (1992–93), vice mayor of Shanghai (1993–96), and deputy party secretary of Shanghai (1996–2001). He was transferred to Jiangxi Province and served there as party secretary (2001–2007). Meng was first elected to the Central Committee as an alternate member at the 15th Party Congress (1997).

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Meng has long been considered a “member of the ‘Shanghai Gang’” (a leader who has advanced largely through strong patron-client ties with Jiang Zemin, who was in charge of Shanghai in the 1980s). Meng was also favored by Zhu Rongji when Zhu was in charge of Shanghai as mayor and party secretary. It was believed that Meng failed in a power struggle with Chen Liangyu for the post of mayor of Shanghai in 2001 and then moved to Jiangxi Province to serve as party secretary. Meng’s wife, Jiang Qifang, previously served as deputy party secretary of the Shanghai Wenguang Communication Group and head of the Shanghai Cable TV station.⁵

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

Should Meng be selected to serve as a member on the next PSC, it would constitute a two-level promotion. He would most likely succeed Zhou Yongkang as secretary of the Central Political and Legislative Committee, which is responsible for public security. If he does not make the PSC, he would likely be able to obtain a seat in the Politburo and concurrently serve in one of the following three posts: secretary of the Central Political and Legislative Committee, vice premier, or party secretary of Shanghai. Meng’s policy priority will be to maintain sociopolitical stability and promote Shanghai’s role as the dual global center of finance and shipping.

Hu Chunhua 胡春华

- Born 1963
- Inner Mongolia party secretary (2009–present)
- Chairman of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region People’s Congress (2010–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2007–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Hu Chunhua was born in 1963 in Wufeng County, Hubei Province. Hu joined the CCP in 1983. He received a bachelor’s degree in Chinese Literature from Peking University (1979–1983) and graduated with a master’s degree (through part-time studies) in World Economics from the Central Party School (1996–99). Hu went to Tibet after graduating from Peking University and worked as a clerk at the Organization Department in the CCP Committee of Tibet (1983–85), an official at the newspaper *Tibet Youth Daily* (1985), and an official at the Tibet Hotel (1985–87). Hu advanced his political career largely through the Chinese Communist Youth League. He served as deputy secretary (1987–1992), and secretary (1992–95) of the CCYL in Tibet. He also worked as deputy head of Linzhi Prefecture, Tibet (1992) and deputy party secretary and head of Shannan Prefecture, Tibet (1995–97). He served as a member of the Secretariat of the CCYL National Committee and vice chairman of China’s Youth Federation (1997–2001). In July 2007, Hu returned to Tibet where he served as secretary general of the CCP Committee of Tibet (2001–03), and deputy party secretary and executive vice governor of Tibet (2003–06). He then served as the first secretary of the Secretariat of the CCYL Central Committee (2006–08). Hu served as acting governor and deputy party secretary of Hebei Province (2008–09) and then governor of Hebei Province (2009).

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Hu Chunhua established his patron-mentor relationship with Hu Jintao in Tibet when the latter served as party secretary there (1988–1992). Hu Chunhua has been widely regarded as “a carbon copy of Hu Jintao.”⁶ Both come from humble family backgrounds, both were student leaders in their college years, both advanced their political careers primarily through the CCYL, both worked in arduous work environments such as Tibet, both served as provincial party secretaries at a relatively young age, and both have low-profile personalities. Hu Chunhua’s parents were farmers in a poor village and he has six siblings. Hu got married in Tibet and the couple have one daughter.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

If the Chinese top leadership decides to select a leader of the sixth generation to the PSC in order to extend the continuity of leadership beyond the fifth generation, Hu Chunhua would be a prime candidate, and could possibly succeed Li Changchun to become China’s new “propaganda tsar.” Based on his personal and professional experiences, Hu Chunhua will likely take a populist approach and choose social justice and economic equality as his hot-button policy issues, which may include poverty alleviation, social welfare, and the allocation of more financial and human resources to less-developed regions.

Wang Huning 王沪宁

- Born 1955
- Member of Secretariat (2007–present)
- Director of the Central Policy Research Center of the CCP Central Committee (2002–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2002–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Wang Huning was born in 1955 in Shanghai Municipality (his ancestral/family home is usually cited as Laizhou County, Shandong Province).⁷ Wang joined the CCP in 1984. He studied French language in the Cadre Training Class at Shanghai Normal University in Shanghai Municipality (1972–77) and attended the graduate program in International Politics at Fudan University in Shanghai Municipality (1978–1981), where he also received a master’s degree in law (1981). He was a visiting scholar at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa (USA) and the University of California at Berkeley (1988–89). Wang speaks French fluently, and holds the rank of professor. He began his career as a cadre in the Publication Bureau of the Shanghai Municipal Government (1977–78). After receiving his master’s degree, he remained at Fudan University in Shanghai and served as an instructor, associate professor, and professor (1981–89), then as chairman of the Department of International Politics (1989–1994) and dean of the law school (1994–95). Wang moved to Beijing in 1995 and served as head of the Political Affairs Division of the Central Policy Research Center (CPRC) of the CCP Central Committee (1995–98), and deputy director of the CPRC (1998–2002).

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Wang Huning is one of the very few leaders who are favored by both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. Wang is believed to have served as an informal channel for communication between Jiang and Hu in recent years. In the late 1980s he established his patron-mentor relationship with Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong who were then top leaders in Shanghai, and thus he is a member of the “Shanghai Gang.” Since Hu succeeded Jiang as general secretary of the CCP and president of the PRC in 2002–2003, Wang has become a top aide to Hu and has frequently accompanied him on domestic and international trips. Wang’s ex-wife, Zhou Qi, is the daughter of a vice-minister ranking leader who worked in the area of state security and intelligence. Wang and Zhou were classmates in the master’s program at Fudan, and Zhou later received a Ph.D. in political science from Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) and currently serves as a research fellow in the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). The couple divorced in 1996 and do not have any children. Wang was recently remarried.

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

Wang will most likely obtain a seat in the Politburo at the 18th Party Congress and concurrently serve one of the following posts: director of the CCP Propaganda Department, state councilor (the post that Liu Yandong currently holds), party secretary of Shanghai or another major city/province. Wang is believed to have been a principal

drafter of the theory of the “three represents” expounded by Jiang.⁸ In his early career as a political science professor and law school dean at Fudan University in the 1980s, Wang published many books and was considered a leading scholar advocating neo-authoritarianism.⁹ Wang Huning recently republished a 1986 article in which he argued that “public security, prosecutors, and the court merging into one” was one of the main reasons for the prevalent human rights violations such as torture and vandalism during the Cultural Revolution. He stated unambiguously that “the Cultural Revolution could happen only in a country without an independent judicial system.”¹⁰ Wang’s hot-button issues may include the promotion of rule of law and political reforms.

Guo Jinlong 郭金龙

- Born 1947
- Beijing Municipality party secretary (2012–present)
- Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP (2002–present)

Personal and Professional Background

Guo Jinlong was born in 1947 in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province. He joined the CCP in 1979. He received an Undergraduate education in Physics/Acoustics from the Physics Department of Nanjing University in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province (1964–69). Early in his career, Guo worked as a technician in Zhongxian County, Sichuan Province. He also worked as a volleyball coach in the Sports Bureau, instructor in the Propaganda Department, deputy director of education, and director of culture, all in Zhongxian County (1969–1983). Guo eventually served as head of Zhongxian County (1983–85). In 1985, Guo was appointed deputy director of the Rural Policy Research Office and Provincial Rural Economy Commission of Sichuan Province. He served as deputy party secretary and secretary of Leshan City, Sichuan Province (1987–1993). After briefly serving as deputy party secretary of Sichuan Province (1994), Guo served as deputy party secretary of Tibet (1994–2000). He was promoted to party secretary of Tibet in 2000. Guo served as party secretary of Anhui Province (2004–07). A full member of the CCP Central Committee since 2002, Guo was elected as an alternate member of the 15th Central Committee of the CCP (1997), and as a full member of the 16th CCP Central Committee (2002) and 17th CCP Central Committee (2007). In November 2007 he was transferred to Beijing Municipality where he has served as acting mayor and deputy party secretary. Guo also served as the executive president of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (2007–08). In January 2008 Guo was appointed mayor of Beijing Municipality and concurrently served as deputy party secretary (2007–2012).

Family and Patron-Client Ties

Guo has long been considered a protégé and political ally of Hu Jintao. It is unclear when and where they first met. Both advanced their earlier careers in poor inland regions. Two years after Hu Jintao left Tibet for Beijing to serve as a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in 1992, Guo moved to Tibet where he served as deputy party secretary and then party secretary. It was widely believed that Hu Jintao nominated him to become acting mayor of Beijing on the eve of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Guo married when he worked in Zhongxian County, and his wife worked in the radio and television bureau in the same county.¹¹

Political Prospects and Policy Preferences

Given the fact that Guo was recently promoted to become party secretary of Beijing, he will most likely obtain a seat in the Politburo at the 18th Party Congress while remaining in his current post as the party chief of the capital city. Based on his previous leadership experiences and recent public speeches, Guo's hot-button policy issues may include

urban development (especially the improvement of public transportation), affordable housing, environmental protection, public health, and social welfare reform.

Notes

*The author thanks Paul Cavey, John Hoffman, John Langdon, and Yinsheng Li for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Chinese leaders' biographical information and career experiences are primarily based on the official Chinese media entity Xinhua News Agency, <http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/index.htm>.

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the role of and the selection process for the Politburo Standing Committee, see Cheng Li, "The Battle for China's Top Nine Leadership Posts," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter 2012): 131–145; and Li Cheng, *The Road to Zhongnanhai* (通往中南海之路; New York: Mirror Books, 2012).

² *Tuanpai* (团派) literally means "league faction," referring to the officials who advanced their careers through the ranks of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), especially those officials who worked at the provincial and national levels of the CCYL leadership in the early and mid-1980s when Hu Jintao served as its head. For more discussion of *tuanpai* and Ling's prominent status in the fifth generation, see Ai Yanghua 艾仰桦 and Chen Xiaoming 陈晓铭, *Power and Influence of the Chinese Communist Youth League Faction* (共青团势力; New York: Mirror Books, 2009); and Jia Yumin 贾玉民, *The Fifth Generation: The Main Protagonists at the 18th Party Congress* (第五代: 中共十八大主角; New York: Mirror Books, 2010).

³ Some Hong Kong sources reported that Ling Jihua's grandfather and father were Chinese traditional medical doctors; see *Oriental* (东方), October 27, 2007. It is likely that Ling's father spent his earlier career as a medical doctor and later became a government official.

⁴ This discussion about Gu Liping 谷丽萍 is based on *Australian Daily* (澳洲日报), June 14, 2012. Also see <http://dailynews.sina.com/bg/chn/chnnews/ausdaily/20120614/02503471093.html>.

⁵ For more discussion of the background of Meng Jianzhu and his wife Jiang Qifang 蒋其芳, see Meng Jianzhu, "The peacefully completed Beijing Olympic Games and a better chance for career promotion" (孟建柱: "平安奥运" 加码仕途), *CBF China's Economy and Commerce Monthly* (CBF中国经贸聚焦), October 15, 2008, http://www.gotoread.com/mag/11948/sarticle_28829.html.

⁶ For more discussion about Hu Chunhua's patron-client ties with Hu Jintao, see Ren Huayi 任华一, *The Sixth Generation: The CCP's Last Generation of Successors* (第六代: 中共末代接班群; New York: Mirror Books, 2010); and Ke Wei 柯畏, *The Rising Stars of the CCP's Sixth Generation* (中共第六代明星传; Hong Kong: New Culture Press, 2010).

⁷ Sohu.Com, posted on October 24, 2008, <http://news.sohu.com/20081024/n260235669.shtml>.

⁸ In contrast to the Marxist notion that the Communist Party should be the "vanguard of the working class," Jiang's theory claims that the CCP should represent the "developmental needs of the advanced forces of production," the "forward direction of advanced culture," and the "fundamental interests of the majority of the Chinese people."

⁹ For the early career of Wang Huning and his writings, see "Hu Jintao's two mysterious right-hand men: Ling Jinhua and Wang Huning" (胡锦涛身边的神秘左右手: 令计划和王沪宁), *Social Perspective* (社会聚焦), posted on April 7, 2010, http://bbs.tiexue.net/post2_4181927_1.html.

¹⁰ Wang Huning 王沪宁, "The Reflection of the Cultural Revolution and the Reform of China's Political System" (文革反思与政治改革). *Readers' Digest* (文摘), February 23, 2012, originally appeared in *The World Economic Herald* (世界经济导报), May 1986.

¹¹ For more discussion of Guo Jinlong's earlier career, see Xu Yilong 徐一龙, "Guo Jinlong: From a coach in Zhongxian County to mayor of the city hosting the Olympic Games" (郭金龙: 从忠县教练到"奥运市长"). China Executive Union Website, posted February 16, 2008, <http://www.ceocoo.net/news/show.aspx?id=2156&cid=25>.