

A Pivotal Stepping-Stone: Local Leaders' Representation on the 17th Central Committee

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Besides their relatively young age, the six rising stars in the new Politburo—Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Wang Qishan, Wang Yang, and Bo Xilai—have one important thing in common. They have all had leadership experience as provincial chiefs. An analysis of the career development of those members of the Politburo and Central Committee with local leadership experience can not only shed light on the primary pathway top Chinese politicians have trod to the pinnacle of power, but can also reveal a great deal about crucial issues such as center-province relations, the distribution of power between geographic regions, and the competition for policy initiatives between political factions.

Local leadership experience, especially province-level administration, has long been seen as an important stepping-stone for China's national leaders.¹ Never before in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC), however, has the Politburo been populated by so many members whose political backgrounds have included service as provincial chiefs (i.e., Party secretaries and governors).² All four of the Politburo Standing Committee members who were newly elected at the recent 17th Party Congress have had substantial leadership experience as provincial Party secretaries. Consequently, all of the nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee save one (Premier Wen Jiabao) had experience as provincial chiefs prior to their ascent to this supreme decision-making body. Furthermore, the six rising stars in the top leadership—the new Politburo members in their 50s—either recently served or currently serve as provincial Party secretaries. Five of them—Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Wang Yang, and Wang Qishan—obtained their Politburo seats at the 17th Party Congress when they were provincial or municipal Party secretaries. Another rising star, Bo Xilai, then minister of commerce, also had leadership experience as governor of Liaoning for several years, and was appointed Party secretary of Chongqing after the 17th Party Congress.

Provincial leaders have also been well represented in the 17th Central Committee (CC) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Of the 371 full and alternate members of the new Central Committee, 154 are local leaders, including 62 provincial chiefs, 62 deputy provincial leaders, and 30 municipal or prefecture level leaders. Collectively, these 154 members, whose primary function on the CC is to represent their localities, form the largest constituent group (41.5 percent) in the 17th Central Committee, compared with 84 (22.6 percent) from the central ministries, 65 (17.5 percent) from the military, 46 (12.4 percent) from the mass organizations, enterprises, educational

institutions, and other functional groupings, and just 22 (5.9 percent) from the central Party organizations.

In contrast, leaders with ministerial backgrounds did not score nearly as well as their colleagues in the provincial leadership in the competition for higher offices during the 17th Party Congress. Among the ten newly elected Politburo members, only Bo Xilai was promoted directly from the ministerial leadership. Wang Gang and Liu Yandong came from the CCP central organizations, while Xu Caihou came from the military. The other six new Politburo members—the aforementioned five provincial and municipal Party secretaries plus 61-year-old Tianjin Party secretary Zhang Gaoli—were all promoted from the provincial leadership. Tellingly perhaps, Ma Kai, the minister of the powerful National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), failed to obtain a membership in the Politburo, and Chen Deming, executive vice minister of the NDRC and Ma Kai's anticipated successor, was not even elected to be a full member in the 17th Central Committee. With only an alternate membership, Chen will not have a chance to run this most important commission in the State Council. It has been widely believed that many delegates of the 17th Party Congress from the local administrations voted against Ma and Chen due to the NDRC's unfavorable policy measures toward local governments.³

The large representation of local leaders in both the Politburo and the Central Committee reflects the growing power and influence of top politicians of the country's 31 province-level administrations. An analysis of the career paths of the members of the new Politburo and Central Committee with local leadership experience can help illustrate how the central authorities try to contain economic localism and region-based factionalism through the promotion and reshuffling of provincial leaders. Such an analysis can also shed light on the CCP's strategic priorities for the country's regional development, especially in terms of how the competition for resources and policy initiatives between the coastal provinces and inland regions is likely to unfold. Finally, the distribution of power among the competing factions is as evident at the provincial level as at the national level, and deserves our attention. For instance, the information about how many of Hu Jintao's protégés who advanced their careers through the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) currently hold provincial chief posts is one of the most crucial factors for an assessment of Hu's power.

On the Path to the Pinnacle of Power

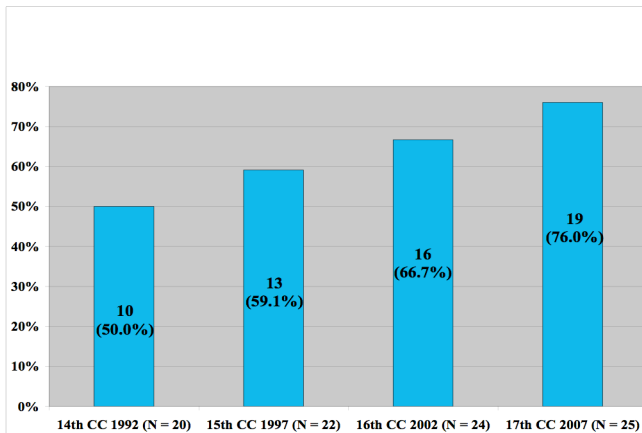
Of all the political credentials for a top leadership position in China during the reform era, arguably the most pivotal one is experience as a provincial Party secretary. Jiang Zemin was promoted from the post of Shanghai Party secretary to become the secretary general of the CCP in 1989. Hu Jintao had served as Party secretary in both Guizhou and Tibet before being promoted to be a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in 1992. Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, two top contenders for power in the so-called fifth generation of the Chinese leadership, both served as Party secretaries in two province-level administrations (Xi in Zhejiang and Shanghai, and Li in Henan and Liaoning).

Chart 1 shows the increase of the percentage of members with experience as provincial chiefs in the Politburo over the past 15 years: from 50 percent in 1992, to 59

percent in 1997, to 67 percent in 2002, and to 76 percent in 2007. Over three-fourths of the current Politburo members have leadership experience as provincial chiefs. In addition to Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping, and Li Keqiang, four other Politburo members, Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, Hui Liangyu, and Zhang Gaoli, served as provincial Party secretaries in two provinces. Zhang Dejiang has had even broader provincial leadership experience than his aforementioned colleagues in the Politburo, having served as provincial chief in three provinces (Jilin, Zhejiang and Guangdong). Ten leaders (40 percent) were elected to the 17th Politburo directly from their posts as provincial chiefs: Shanghai Party secretary Xi Jinping, Liaoning Party secretary Li Keqiang, Jiangsu Party secretary Li Yuanchao, Beijing Party secretary Liu Qi, Beijing mayor Wang Qishan, Tianjin Party secretary Zhang Gaoli, Chongqing Party secretary Wang Yang, Guangdong Party secretary Zhang Dejiang, Xinjiang Party secretary Wang Lequan, and Hubei Party secretary Yu Zhengsheng.

Chart 1

Increase of Politburo Members with Experience as Provincial Chiefs



In an emerging political norm, the Party secretaries of the four major cities under the direct leadership of the central government—Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing—apparently are now entitled to seats on the Politburo.⁴ Soon after the 17th Party Congress, Shanghai Party secretary Xi Jinping moved to Beijing where he now heads the Secretariat, and Chongqing Party secretary Wang Yang was transferred to Guangdong where he succeeded Zhang Dejiang as provincial Party secretary. Two other Politburo members, Yu Zhengsheng and Bo Xilai, took over the top posts of Shanghai and Chongqing that were vacated by Xi and Wang, respectively.

Xi, Yu, Bo, and Wang Qishan are all “princelings” (leaders who come from families of high-ranking officials) and they usually advanced their careers from economically developed coastal areas. In contrast, leaders who advanced their careers through the ranks of the CCYL, known as *tuanpai* leaders, currently occupy a large number of top provincial posts in inland provinces. A total of 22 *tuanpai* leaders held the posts of provincial chiefs on the eve of the 17th Party Congress; 16 of these (73 percent) served in inland provinces. Examples of these officials include former Chongqing Party secretary Wang Yang, Xinjiang Party secretary Wang Lequan, and former Guangxi Party secretary Liu Qibao. Both the transfer of *tuanpai* leader Wang Yang from the inland city

Chongqing to Guangdong and the transfer of princeling Bo Xilai from the central government in Beijing to Chongqing reflected Hu Jintao's effort to blur the clear distinction—and to reduce the growing tension—between the princeling-led coastal regions and the *tuanpai*-led inland provinces.

The Coastal-Inland Division

Table 1 lists the provincial leadership experience of the members of the 17th Politburo analyzed by coastal vs. inland backgrounds. All 25 members have had some sort of

Table 1

Provincial Leadership Experience of the Members of the 17th Politburo

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Coastal Regions</i>	<i>Inland Regions</i>
Hu Jintao	Anhui		<i>Gansu (1975–82), Guizhou (1985–88), Tibet (1988–92)</i>
Wu Bangguo	Anhui	Shanghai (1983–92)	
Wen Jiabao	Tianjin		<i>Gansu (1979–82)</i>
Qia Qinglin	Hebei	Fujian (1985–96), Beijing (1996–2002)	
Li Changchun	Liaoning	Liaoning (1985–90), Guangdong (1998–2002)	Henan (1990–98)
Xi Jinping*	Shaanxi	<i>Hebei (1982–85), Fujian (1985–2002), Zhejiang (2002–07), Shanghai (2007)</i>	
Li Keqiang*	Anhui	Liaoning (2004–07)	Henan (1998–2004)
He Guoqiang	Hunan	<i>Shandong (1982–91), Fujian (1996–99)</i>	Chongqing (1999–2002)
Zhou Yongkang	Jiangsu	<i>Liaoning (1979–85), Shandong (1989–90)</i>	Sichuan (1999–2002)
Wang Gang*	Jilin		<i>Xinjiang (1977–81)</i>
Wang Lequan	Shandong	Shandong (1975–91)	Xinjiang (1991–present)
Wang Zhaoguo	Hebei	Fujian (1987–90)	<i>Hubei (1979–82)</i>
Wang Qishan*	Shanxi	Guangdong (1997–2000), Hainan (2002–03), Beijing (2003–07)	
Hui Liangyu	Jilin	Jiangsu (1999–2002)	Jilin (1974–90), Hubei (1992–94), Anhui (1994–99)
Liu Qi	Jiangsu	Beijing (1998–present)	<i>Hubei (1985–93)</i>
Liu Yunshan	Shanxi		Neimenggu (1982–93)
Liu Yandong*	Jiangsu	<i>Beijing (1981–82)</i>	
Li Yuanchao*	Jiangsu	<i>Shanghai (1983), Jiangsu (2000–07)</i>	
Wang Yang*	Anhui		Anhui (1981–99), Chongqing (2005–07)
Zhang Gaoli*	Fujian	<i>Guangdong (1984–2001), Shandong (2001–2007), Tianjin (2007–present)</i>	
Zhang Dejiang	Liaoning	Zhejiang (1998–2002), Guangdong (2002–07)	Jilin (1983–98)
Yu Zhengsheng	Zhejiang	Shandong (1985–97)	Hubei (2001–07)
Xu Caihou (M)*	Liaoning	Liaoning (1984–85)	Jilin (1982–84)
Guo Boxiong (M)	Shaanxi	Beijing (1993–97)	Shaanxi (1982–93, 1997–99)
Bo Xilai*	Shanxi	Liaoning (1984–2004)	

Notes: * = New members. M = Military. *Italics* indicate leadership posts below the level of vice governor, but above the bureau level in the provincial government.

provincial leadership experience. A majority of them have worked in provinces other than those in which they were born. More than half of these leaders had substantial

provincial leadership experience and they typically served at the provincial level of leadership for over a decade. Almost half of them (12) have had leadership experience in both coastal and inland regions. Eight leaders worked exclusively in the coastal regions and another five leaders worked exclusively in the inland regions.

A closer look at the provincial experience of the members of 17th Politburo, however, shows that those leaders who advanced their careers from the coastal regions have enjoyed a higher likelihood of promotion than their counterparts working in the inland regions (see table 2). In terms of Politburo members' experience serving exclusively in either coastal or inland regions as top provincial leaders at the levels of vice governor or above, nine leaders (Wu Bangguo, Jia Qinglin, Xi Jinping, Wang Zhaoguo, Wang Qishan, Liu Qi, Li Yuanchao, Zhang Gaoli, and Bo Xilai) worked exclusively in the coastal regions, compared with four (Hu Jintao, Zhou Yongkang, Liu Yunshan, and Wang Yang) whose service occurred exclusively in the inland regions. As for the most recent provincial posts of the new crop of Politburo members, eleven worked in the coastal regions and six in the inland regions. The advantage of the leaders who advanced from the coastal regions is even more impressive if one considers the fact that the number of China's inland provinces (20) is almost twice that of the coastal provinces (11).⁵

Table 2

A Comparison of Regional Distribution of Power among Provincial Leaders Serving on the 17th Politburo and Central Committee (A Coastal-Inland Analysis)

	<i>Coastal Regions</i>		<i>Inland Regions</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Politburo</i>						
Politburo members' experience as top provincial leaders (exclusively in coastal or inland regions)	9	69.2	4	30.8	13	100.0
Politburo members' current and/or immediate past provincial leadership experience	11	64.7	6	35.3	17	100.0
<i>Central Committee (CC)</i>						
Provincial leaders under 50 years old (born after 1957)	8	24.2	25	75.8	33	100.0
Provincial leaders with postgraduate education	38	37.3	64	62.7	102	100.0
Provincial leaders on the CC who advanced their careers in the Chinese Communist Youth League	26	40.6	38	59.4	64	100.0
Provincial leaders who work in the province in which they were born	17	30.4	39	69.6	56	100.0

An analysis of the coastal-inland division in the membership of the 17th Central Committee, as opposed to the Politburo, reveals a somewhat different trend. Provincial leaders in inland regions are usually younger than their counterparts in coastal regions, giving inland leaders an important advantage: their younger ages make them eligible for further promotions. Table 2 shows that there are 25 provincial leaders in inland regions who are under 50 years old, three times more than the number of provincial leaders (8) in coastal regions at the same age cohort. Provincial leaders from inland regions who serve on the 17th CC are more likely to hold postgraduate degrees, which can open doors for further promotion. There are more inland leaders (38) who have advanced their careers

through the CCYL than there are among coastal leaders (26). In a broad context, the former group's patron-client ties with Hu Jintao will likely offer them an edge in intense political competition for higher offices in the future. A total of 39 leaders in inland regions currently work in the provinces in which they were born, compared with 17 leaders with such backgrounds in coastal regions. These leaders who work in their native places are usually more popular than those who are transferred from elsewhere, and they are thus more likely to receive public endorsement in local elections than outsiders. If the above analysis holds any insights for political forecasting, it is that the 18th Politburo will likely have more members who advance their careers from inland regions than those in the current Politburo.

Regional Representation

The Chinese authorities seem to be seriously concerned about obtaining balance in regional representation in the national leadership. Each and every one of China's five geographic regions has at least one leader who was elected to the 17th Politburo, in addition to the Politburo members who served as provincial Party secretaries in four major cities directly under the leadership of the central government. These include Liaoning's Li Keqiang for the northeastern region, Jiangsu's Li Yuanchao for the eastern region, Guangdong's Zhang Dejiang for the southern and southwestern region, Hubei's Yu Zhengsheng for the central region, and Xinjiang's Wang Lequan for the northern and northwestern region. Similarly, five provincial leaders served on the Membership Qualification Committee of the 17th National Congress of the CCP, with each of them representing a geographic region. These included Heilongjiang Party secretary Qian Yunlu for the northeastern region, Shandong Party secretary Li Jianguo for the eastern region, Sichuan Party secretary Du Qinglin for the southern and southwestern region, Henan Party secretary Xu Guangchun for the central region, and Hebei Party secretary Zhang Yunchuan for the northern and northwestern regions.⁶ These arrangements reflect the top leaders' efforts to achieve a more balanced regional representation in the national leadership.

The concern for equal regional representation is more evident in the distribution of full membership seats on the 17th Central Committee. A strong political norm in Chinese elite recruitment in the past decade has been that, with the exception of Tibet and Xinjiang, each province-level administration has two full membership seats on the Central Committee. Table 3 (next page) presents the distribution of provincial leaders holding full and alternate memberships on the 15th, 16th, and 17th CCs. The political norm that each province has two full membership seats on the Central Committee has been effective since the 15th CC in 1997. As for the 17th CC, without any exception the provincial Party secretary and governor occupy these two full membership seats for any given province. Although provincial chiefs may soon be promoted to the central government or transferred to other provinces, this distributional norm was strictly applied at the time the CC was elected.

Table 3

Distribution of Provincial Leaders Holding Full and Alternate Memberships on the 15th, 16th, and 17th CCP Central Committees

	15th CC (1997)			16th CC (2002)			17th CC (2007)		
	FM	AM	Total	FM	AM	Total	FM	AM	Total
Beijing	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	2	4
Tianjin	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	3	5
Hebei	2	3	5	2	2	4	2	4	6
Shanxi	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	2	4
Neimenggu	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	4	6
Liaoning	2	1	3	2	3	5	2	3	5
Jilin	2	3	5	2	2	4	2	2	4
Heilongjiang	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	2	4
Shanghai	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	1	3
Jiangsu	2	3	5	2	2	4	2	4	6
Shandong	2	4	6	2	5	7	2	3	5
Zhejiang	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	3	5
Anhui	2	2	4	2	3	5	2	3	5
Fujian	2	2	4	2	3	5	2	4	6
Henan	2	3	5	2	2	4	2	3	5
Hubei	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	4	6
Hunan	2	3	5	2	2	4	2	3	5
Jiangxi	2	2	4	2	3	5	2	3	5
Guangdong	2	5	7	2	6	8	2	4	6
Guangxi	2	3	5	2	4	6	2	5	7
Hainan	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	3	5
Sichuan	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	2	4
Chongqing	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	3	5
Guizhou	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	3	5
Yunnan	1	4	5	2	3	5	2	3	5
Xizang (Tibet)	2	2	4	3	2	5	3	2	5
Shaanxi	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	2	4
Gansu	2	2	4	2	3	5	2	3	5
Qinghai	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2	4
Ningxia	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	1	3
Xinjiang	2	3	5	4	3	7	4	3	7
Total	61	84	145	65	87	152	65	89	154

Notes: FM = Full member; AM = Alternate member.

The number of the alternate seats, however, varies from province to province, as well as from one Central Committee to the next. On the 16th CC, for example, Guangdong leaders had six alternate seats, the largest number of seats among all provinces. On the 17th CC, Guangxi leaders obtained five alternate membership seats, more than any other province-level administration at the time. With the exception of those in Hebei, Shanxi, and Guizhou, deputy secretaries in all 31 province-level CCP committees were elected as alternate members of the 17th CC.⁷ Hebei deputy Party secretary Zhang Yi was elected as deputy secretary of the Central Discipline Inspection Committee (CDIC) at the 17th Party Congress; Shanxi deputy Party secretary Jin Yinhan and Guizhou deputy Party secretary Wang Fuyu, however, have neither alternate membership on the 17th CC, nor do they serve as members of the CDIC.

It is interesting to note that Shanghai has only one alternate member on the 17th CC, deputy Party secretary of Shanghai Yin Yicui, representing the Shanghai municipal leadership.⁸ In fact, Yin received the fourth lowest number of votes among the 167 alternate members who were elected to the 17th CC. This may reflect the Chinese political establishment's reservations about supporting leaders who might have been associated with Chen Liangyu, the former Party secretary of Shanghai who was purged in 2006 on corruption charges.

The Distribution of Provincial Leaders' Birthplaces

It has been widely noted that China's national leaders often come disproportionately from certain geographic regions.⁹ For example, the southern region, which constitutes about 11 percent of China's total population and contributes about 12.4 percent of the country's GDP, has had only five to seven natives serving as full members on any of the four CCs during the past 25 years, amounting to only about 2.5 percent of the full CC membership during this period (see table 4).¹⁰ Meanwhile, natives of the eastern region, especially Shandong and Jiangsu provinces, have always been overrepresented in the national leadership, constituting about 40 percent of the full membership in the CCs. This geographic pattern of the birthplace distribution of the full membership has largely remained the same for the 17th CC.

Table 4

Distribution of Birthplaces (by Regions and Provinces) of Full Members of the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th CCs

Native Province	14 th CC (N = 189)		15 th CC (N = 193)		16 th CC (N = 198)		17 th CC (N = 204)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
North								
Beijing	4	2.1	5	2.6	7	3.5	7	3.4
Tianjin	4	2.1	3	1.6	3	1.5	3	1.5
Hebei	22	11.6	10	5.2	10	5.1	21	10.3
Shanxi	7	3.7	7	3.6	3	1.5	7	3.4
Neimenggu	1	0.5	2	1.0	2	1.0	4	2.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	38	20.0	27	14.0	25	12.6	42	20.6
Northeast								
Liaoning	7	3.7	14	7.3	10	5.1	11	5.4
Jilin	8	4.2	10	5.2	7	3.5	8	3.9
Heilongjiang	2	1.1	2	1.0	5	2.5	5	2.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	17	9.0	26	13.5	22	11.1	24	11.8
East								
Shanghai	3	1.6	2	1.0	6	3.0	5	2.5
Jiangsu	25	13.2	33	17.1	30	15.2	22	10.8
Shandong	24	12.7	25	13.0	22	11.1	23	11.3
Zhejiang	14	7.4	11	5.7	13	6.6	12	5.9
Anhui	5	2.6	10	5.2	9	4.5	11	5.4
Fujian	2	1.1	4	2.1	2	1.0	4	2.0

(continues)

Table 4 (continued)

	14 th CC (N = 189)		15 th CC (N = 193)		16 th CC (N = 198)		17 th CC (N = 204)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Native Province</i>								
Taiwan	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	0	0	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	74	39.1	86	44.6	82	41.4	77	37.7
Central								
Henan	5	2.6	5	2.6	13	6.6	10	4.9
Hubei	10	5.3	5	2.6	9	4.5	9	4.4
Hunan	8	4.2	12	6.2	11	5.6	5	2.5
Jiangxi	2	1.1	6	3.1	2	1.0	4	2.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	25	13.2	28	14.5	35	17.7	28	13.7
South								
Guangdong	4	2.1	6	3.1	4	2.0	3	1.5
Guangxi	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	1.0
Hainan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	5	2.6	7	3.6	5	2.5	5	2.5
Southwest								
Sichuan (inc. Chongqing)	9	4.8	7	3.6	7	3.5	9	4.4
Guizhou	1	0.5	2	1.0	2	1.0	2	1.0
Yunnan	2	1.1	0	0	2	1.0	0	0
Xizang (Tibet)	1	0.5	2	1.0	2	1.0	2	1.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	13	6.9	11	5.6	13	6.6	13	6.4
Northwest								
Shaanxi	3	1.6	4	2.1	10	5.1	7	3.4
Gansu	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	1.0	1	0.5
Qinghai	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5
Ningxia	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	3	1.5
Xinjiang	2	1.1	3	1.6	2	1.0	3	1.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	6	3.2	8	4.2	16	8.1	15	7.4
Unknown	8.7	5.8						
Total	189	100.0	193	100.0	198	100.0	204	100.0

Sources: For the 14th CC, see *China News Analysis*, nos. 1588–89 (1–15 July 1997): 15–20; Zang Xiaowei, “The Fourteenth Central Committee of the CCP, Technocracy or Political Technocracy,” *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993), 795. For the 15th CC, see Li Cheng and Lynn White, “The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party,” *Asian Survey* 38, no. 3 (March 1998), p. 246; some previously unknown figures are updated.

A notable new development on the 17th CC, however, has been the rapid increase in the number of natives of Hebei Province. The number of full members who were born in Hebei increased from 10 (5.1 percent) on the 16th CC to 21 (10.3 percent) on the 17th CC. Senior leaders with Hebei origins include Jia Qinglin (member of the Politburo Standing Committee), Wang Zhaoguo (member of the Politburo) and He Yong (member of the Secretariat). In 2007, Hebei natives took over the top posts of several important ministries, including Ma Wen (minister of Supervision), Yin Weimin (minister of Personnel), Geng Huichang (minister of State Security), and Zhang Qingwei (minister of the Commission of Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense).

In the new Politburo, the natives of the eastern region remain overrepresented in relation to the population as a whole, with 11 out of 25 seats, or 44 percent of the membership in this body (see table 1). These 11 leaders include four natives of Anhui (Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Li Keqiang and Wang Yang), and four natives of Jiangsu

(Zhou Yongkang, Li Yuanchao, Liu Qi, and Liu Yandong). Meanwhile, Shanxi natives occupy three seats (Wang Qishan, Liu Yunshan, and Bo Xilai) in the new Politburo. Ling Jihua, a new member of the six-person Secretariat, is also a Shanxi native. In contrast, there are no natives of Guangdong or Sichuan—two of the most populous provinces in the country—serving on the Politburo. In fact, there is a marked absence of natives of China’s south and southwestern regions on this very important decision-making body. This is in contrast to the early years of the reform era when the country was largely controlled by “strongmen” from Guangdong (such as Ye Jianying) and Sichuan (e.g., Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun, and Yang Baibing), who appointed many of their fellow natives, including Xie Fei in Guangdong and Xiao Yang in Sichuan, to important positions.¹¹

Like some other sources of elite divisions, these same birthplace ties can be instrumental in either factional conflict or political compromise. During the Jiang Zemin era, for example, leaders from Shanghai and neighboring areas dominated the Politburo Standing Committee, contributing to the elite cohesion on the one hand, while causing tremendous factional tensions on the other hand. The presence of a large number of leaders in the central government who had Shanghai origins or connections in the 1990s and early 2000s suggests that region-based favoritism could serve as a determining factor in the career mobility of political leaders. It remains to be seen whether the geographic identity of top leaders will continue to play a crucial role in Chinese elite politics.

Local Leaders Serving in Their Native Areas and Center-Local Relations

An important trend in the formation of provincial and municipal elites in China during the two past two decades has been that a majority of their members are appointed for leadership positions in their native areas. This trend challenges the “law of avoidance” by which mandarins were prohibited from serving in their native provinces and counties, a policy practice characteristic of traditional China for centuries that was continued during the Mao era.¹² This study of 154 members of the 17th CC who serve as local leaders suggests that the trend of increasing political localism continues despite the recent regulations issued by the central authorities to restrain this practice in the elite selection at various sub-national levels of leadership.¹³ These instructions, such as the *Regulations for the Selection of Party and Government Officials*, aim to strengthen China’s political institutionalization by providing specific guidelines for local leadership reshuffling, especially in terms of reinforcing the “law of avoidance.”¹⁴

In practice, however, a significant number of provincial and municipal leaders currently work in the same regions in which they were born. Meanwhile, a majority of provincial leaders are promoted from provinces that they have served in for a long time. Table 5 (next page) shows that 24 percent of provincial chiefs and 44 percent of deputy provincial leaders serve in their native places. These include Shaanxi Party secretary Zhao Leji, Shandong governor Jiang Daming, and Ningxia governor Wang Zhengwei, all of whom were appointed to their current posts in 2007. Also, about 15 percent of provincial chiefs and 11 percent of deputy provincial leaders in this study serve in provinces that share a border with their birth provinces. More importantly, about 52 percent of provincial chiefs and 77 percent of deputy provincial leaders serving on the

17th CC were promoted from the same provinces in which they previously served (see table 6, next page).

Table 5

Correlation between Birthplace and Workplace of Provincial Leaders Who Serve on the 17th CC

<i>Birthplace-Workplace Correlation</i>	<i>Provincial Chiefs (N = 62)</i>		<i>Deputy Provincial Leaders (N = 92)</i>		<i>Total (N = 154)</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
From the Same Province	15	24.2	40	43.5	55	35.7
From Nearby Province	9	14.5	10	10.9	19	12.3
From Distant Province	38	61.3	41	44.6	79	51.3
Unknown			1	1.0	1	0.7
<i>Total</i>	62	100.0	92	100.0	154	100.0

Apparently, the proposed regulations for frequent cross-province reshufflings of local leaders have experienced some difficulties. Although provincial chiefs, especially Party secretaries, have been regularly reshuffled in recent years, the rate of transfer of deputy provincial-level leaders and below is still quite low. As table 6 shows, among the 92 local leaders at the deputy provincial level and below who serve on the 17th CC, only 15 percent obtained their current leadership posts through cross-province reshufflings and only 8 percent were transferred in from the central government. The political norm is that the lower the level of leadership at which an official works, the less likely the official is to have been transferred in from elsewhere.

Table 6

Promotion Pattern of Provincial Top Leaders Who Serve on the 17th Central Committee (2007)

	<i>Provincial Chiefs (N = 62)</i>		<i>Other Provincial Leaders (N = 92)</i>		<i>Total (N = 154)</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
From the Same Province	32	51.6	71	77.2	103	66.9
From Another Province	17	27.4	14	15.2	31	20.1
From the Central Government	13	21.0	7	7.6	20	13.0
<i>Total</i>	62	100.0	92	100.0	154	100.0

Two factors may have contributed to the lack of enforcement of reshuffling of local leaders. First, the recent efforts by the Chinese central authorities to select local leaders through election and public evaluation in fact discourages the nomination or appointment of candidates from elsewhere. All other things being equal among the candidates, the populace and local political establishment tend to prefer candidates from

their native places. The central authorities' demands that local leaders be more accountable to the constituents they serve further moves away from the practice of appointing outsiders to positions of local leadership.

Second, since Hu Jintao took charge of the CCP in 2002–2004, China has experienced a major policy shift from Jiang Zemin's more elitist development strategy to Hu's more populist approach.¹⁵ According to Hu and his like-minded colleagues in the new leadership, at a time when China faces such serious challenges as environmental degradation, energy scarcity, employment pressures, and vast economic disparities, the Chinese government's top priorities should be on issues of social fairness and social harmony instead of emphasizing solely the speed of economic growth. The implementation of this new developmental strategy apparently requires a new kind of political elite with skills and credentials in the areas other than economic growth. In such an environment, a candidate's technical expertise may not be as valuable as his or her social popularity. Leadership experience in an advanced coastal region is helpful, but experience in working with poor and backward regions is even more critical to a candidate's career advancement. These new selection criteria are particularly beneficial for leaders who advanced their careers through the CCYL, who are arguably more effective in dealing with these kinds of social issues. This explains the large representation of *tuanpai* leaders (42 percent) among the 154 CC members who work in various levels of local leadership.

Final Thoughts

All the developments discussed above have added new dynamics and tensions to the increasingly complicated center-local relations of the PRC. It is premature to conclude that the Chinese central authorities are less effective in controlling local governments than before. The fact that provincial chiefs' career prospects depend on their bosses in Beijing speaks unambiguously about the enormous power of the central Party-state over local administrations in this highly hierarchical and authoritarian political system.

But at the same time, top national leaders also need to build up their political capital and resources through close ties with some of the most important regions in the country. The priority that the top Party elite has placed on leadership experience as a Party secretary, especially in major provinces and cities, serves to make such posts pivotal stepping-stones for entrants into the top national leadership, and thus further enhances the political weight of local power in present-day China. Local demands for an even distribution of membership seats across provinces and regions in both the Central Committee and the Politburo have become increasingly institutionalized. Although provincial and municipal leaders in economically advanced coastal regions have occupied more seats in the new Politburo, their advantages are far less evident in the new Central Committee. Differences among the members of these important decision-making bodies—geographical, sociological, occupational, generational, and factional—and their growing consciousness of these differences deserve greater attention for analysts of Chinese elite politics. The dynamics and tensions among local leaders and between the center and provinces may potentially contribute to a more pluralistic and more collective leadership in China in the years to come.

Notes

¹ The author is indebted to Yinsheng Li for his research assistance. The author also thanks Christina Culver and Scott W. Harold for suggesting ways in which to clarify the article.

² This also includes Party secretaries and mayors in China's four major cities directly under the leadership of the central government.

³ See "Dezui difang shipiao Ma Kai weijin Zhengzhiju" [Due to the loss of votes from local governments, Ma Kai failed to enter the Politburo] *Mingpao*, 7 December 2007. Also see <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>, 7 December 2007.

⁴ For the importance of the top leadership in China's four major cities, see Cheng Li, "The Leadership of China's Four Major Cities: A Study of Municipal Party Standing Committees," *China Leadership Monitor* 21 (Summer 2007).

⁵ The coastal region includes Liaoning, Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan. The rest of China's provinces are considered inland provinces.

⁶ Two other provincial leaders, Xinjiang deputy Party secretary Ismail Tiliwaldi and Tibet deputy Party secretary Legqog, also served on the Membership Qualification Committee. But they represented ethnic minorities rather than provinces.

⁷ Since 2006, with the exceptions of the minority regions, each province-level CCP committee has two deputy Party secretaries and one of them serves as governor or mayor. In the minority regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang, each has four deputy provincial Party secretaries.

⁸ Three other leaders who are based in Shanghai also hold alternate membership status on the 17th CC. These are: Zhang Jie (president of Jiaotong University), Xu Lejiang (CEO of the Bao Steel Corp.), and Lin Mingyue (advisor to the Shanghai Port Authority). But like their peers elsewhere, these leaders are usually considered to be the representatives of constituencies such as educational institutions, enterprises, and the Taiwanese association in the mainland, respectively.

⁹ For example, see Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993): 757–786; Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Full-Fledged Technocratic Leadership with Partial Control by Jiang Zemin," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 3 (March 1998): 231–264; and Zang Xiaowei, "The Fourteenth Central Committee of the CCP: Technocracy or Political Technocracy?" *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993): 787–803.

¹⁰ These data are based on statistics compiled by the Chinese government in 1999–2000. For the population numbers, see National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Diwuci quanguo renkou pucha gongbao* [The Fifth National Census of the Population of the People's Republic of China], No. 2, 15 May 2001. For the GDP data, see <http://www.stats.gov.cn/nds/j/zgnj/2000/C08c.htm>.

¹¹ As Alice Lyman Miller has observed, "The coalition of leaders that governed China in the 1980s consisted mainly of leaders who either were from or had had long career experience in China's Southwestern province of Sichuan . . . or South China." See "Overlapping Transitions in China's Leadership," *S AIS Review* 16, no. 2 (Summer–Fall 1996): 24.

¹² Ying-mao Kau, "The Urban Bureaucratic Elites in Communist China: A Case Study of Wuhan, 1949–1965," in A. Doak Barnett, ed., *Communist Chinese Politics in Action* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1972), 227; and Cheng Li, "Political Localism Versus Institutional Restraints: Elite Recruitment in the Jiang Era," in Barry Naughton and Dali L. Yang, eds., *Holding China Together: Diversity and National Integration in the Post Deng Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 29–69.

¹³ The Chinese authorities have issued more regulations on elite recruitment in the past few years than during any previous period of CCP history. For a detailed discussion of these regulations, see <http://www.xinhuanet.com>, 17 January 2006.

¹⁴ For the whole document, see http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/18/content_695422.htm. The CCP Central Committee also issued regulations regarding supervision; see http://news3.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2003-07/13/content_971053.htm.

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of this policy shift, see Cheng Li, "Hu's Policy Shift and the Tuanpai's Coming-of-Age," *China Leadership Monitor* 15 (Summer 2005).