

Factional Pull: Measuring the “Tuanpai Effect” on Elite Formation from 1992 to 2012

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Abstract

Factionalism has, since the 1970s, been one of the key elements in explaining both Elite formation and leadership change in the People’s Republic of China. Despite becoming more “civilized” and bound by institutional constraints, factions and other factional groups still play an important role in Elite recruitment, even if Cadres have to go through extensive “field testing” in order to be promoted. In turn, this article focuses on one of the most important political forces present on the Chinese political scene since the 1980s: the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL). Through extensive use of statistical methods, the article tries to measure the “tuanpai effect” on career patterns since 1992 in order to see what, how and up until when the latter affects a Cadre’s promotability. Lastly, this research opens up a discussion on whether the CCYL is a clearly defined and cohesive “faction” or simply a self-repeating promotion channel being used by opportunistic Cadres.

Keywords: *Factionalism, recruitment channel, Elite formation, Tuanpai/CCYL, Central Committee*

1. Introduction

Factionalism is perhaps the most iconic element defining Chinese Elite studies since its *debut* back in the early to mid-1970s (Nathan, 1973; Tsou, 1976). Countless studies have since tried to assess the role of factions in Chinese politics using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Bo, 2007b; 2010; Choi, 2012; Fewsmith, 2013; Huang, 2010; Huang, 2000; Kou, 2010; Lam, 2007; 2010; 2015; Li, 2013; Miller, 2011; 2013; Shih *et al.*, 2012; Wang, 2006), be it from a “winner-takes-all” (Tsou, 1976) or a “balancing” approach (Nathan, 1973; Bo, 2007a; 2009).¹ Criticisms have also been raised regarding this notion and its usage as an independent variable to analyze Elite formation (Breslin, 2008; Zeng, 2013). More studies have since started to emphasis

leadership institutionalisation (Kou, 2010; Zeng, 2013; 2014). However, some like Fewsmith (2013) and Shirk (2002) question this assumption. Even if we can observe an on-going standardization, factions will remain of importance for the foreseeable future in Chinese communist Elite formation.

Our inquiry focuses on one of the main forces currently active on the Chinese political landscape: the Chinese Communist Youth League [CCYL] (*Zhongguo Gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan*, 中国共产主义青年团).² Structured around a Party mass organisation totalling around 90 million members back in 2014 (*People's Daily*, 2014), the *tuanpai* (团派) “recruitment channel” or faction has produced 38 of the 399 new Central Committee members since 1992,³ out of which seven have then become Politburo members. Considering its non-negligible importance in terms of top Elite formation during the last two decades, the objective of the article is to attentively measure how the *tuanpai* variable operates (e.g. how does it influence career and promotion patterns? Where does it lead?, etc.).

I posit that the *Gongqingtuan* – insofar as it is a promotion channel – is an intermediate variable that is likely to be associated with some other core determinants pivotal for Politburo membership, which includes for example holding provincial chief positions (Bo, 2007; 2009; Li, 2005). The latter is also likely to allow for continuously faster promotion thus making its member more “promotable” than non-*tuanpai* individuals. However, this accelerated career track, all things being equal, does not exonerate one from having to go through a certain “path” in order to be promoted.

In turn, we expect these individuals to be better positioned and promoted faster than their non-*tuanpai* counterparts and to exhibit a certain ability to “sprint”, even just a bit faster than other Cadres, thus impacting their career path and role in the Party-State apparatus.

Therefore, one of the main objectives of this article is to measure the influence – through statistical analysis – of the *tuanpai* variable on promotion patterns and to see how and when the latter becomes relevant for top promotions (i.e. where and how far can each selected indicator can take an individual to?). This research attempts to do so by comparing career patterns of *tuanpai* and non-*tuanpai* individuals in order to see how and when, by examining samples from 1992 to 2012, each of the defined *tuanpai* variables take “traction” (i.e. when during a Cadres’ career the selected position plays a role).

As such, the main contribution of this article lie in its reassessment of the *tuanpai* variable’s influence on Elite formation. It is important to note, this article proceeds from a top-down approach and focuses on trends and shared characteristics instead of focusing on each individual’s account. This work, which remains exploratory in nature, encompasses a limited number of variables commonly found in the Chinese Elite literature while leaving some

(e.g. impact of economic performance [Landry, 2003; Li and Zhou, 2005] and education [Li and Whyte, 1990] on promotion) aside for the time being.

2. Faction or Structure: a Brief Look Back at the Chinese Communist Youth League

Founded in 1925, the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) focused on student recruitment and on expending teachings of Marxism-Leninism to workers, peasants and students in order, at first, to mobilize them for the revolutionary effort. The latter also fought side by side with the Party during the civil war against the Nationalist Party (Pringsheim, 1962). They were later mobilised during the Cultural Revolution, turned against their own structure and became a vector of the Centre’s political struggle (Funnell, 1970). The CCYL does indeed have a very special place in the Party apparatus as it continuously supplies the Party with new “pre-screened” Party members. It also mirrors the latter’s structure both in terms of organization (e.g. Central Committee, town CCYL secretary, propaganda department, etc.) and recruitment policy.

However, the current version of the tuanpai “clique”, as depicted in the Elite literature, has more recent origins and is first centered around the character of Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) (Zheng and Chen, 2009). The latter was at the apex of the CCYL from 1952 up until being removed from his First Secretary positions during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution (Funnell, 1970).

Following his reintegration at the Centre in 1977 – holding the head of the Central organization department position – and his entry into the Politburo back in 1978, Hu Yaobang proceeded to promote a number of individuals, one of whom is Hu Jintao, to the higher instances of the CCYL (Shi *et al.*, 2010) in order to prepare them to hold important Party positions. One of the objectives was to circumvent ageism and favouritism inside the Party and to bring more pro-reform Cadres at the Centre. Most of these individuals came from more humble backgrounds (Wu, 2006) and had considerable practical experiences which could benefit the on-going reform process. They were seen as more in tune with the current “infusion” of liberalism of the mid-1980s, yet, considering their strong CCYL commitment to the CCP, they still were great defenders of the one Party rule.

As a political force, the tuanpai came into play during the end of the Deng era – with Hu Jintao’s ascension to the Politburo. They later struggled to maintain equilibrium during and after the Jiang era. Even if Jiang Zemin was able to position some of his men (or what was left of the original Jiang-centric “Shanghai gang” [Wang, 2006]) after 2002, the factional balance shifted, since 2007, in favour of both the tuanpai and the rising Princlings (*Taizidang*, 太

子党).⁴ Some individuals, especially in the former group, used the *tuanpai* networks, as children of the Party, to gain momentum and climb the ladder while also using personal networks of influence.

Many key provincial positions have since then been occupied by these individuals (Li, 2002; 2005). Yet, promoted individuals were not “parachuted” into place since most of them, as Li Cheng notes, were already cumulating sub-provincial experiences prior to their promotion to provincial-chief positions. To a certain extent, they still had to follow the path leading to higher positions as to avoid Hu Jintao being called out for favouritism (Li, 2005).

Since Hu Yaobang, the *tuanpai* clique has achieved its goal of creating a channel for younger Cadres to get fast-tracked to higher Party positions. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent it will remain relevant – as a cohesive entity – in the near future. However, the recruitment structure and what it allows for is most likely to endure and to be used by other opportunistic Cadres.

In addition, as Li Cheng (2002) points out, new CCYL provincial secretaries or Central Committee members are probably not purposively building a *tuanpai* faction in the highest echelons of the Party. However, coming from similar backgrounds, they are likely to set and develop rewarding relationships amongst themselves (e.g. encouraging promotion, supporting policies, etc.) as they are linked by a shared experience in the Communist Youth organization.

Therefore, the inquiry at hand ponders this possible “repeating promotion channel” and the remnants of the Hu Jintao effect by assessing the influence and the association levels of precise *tuanpai* positions with other Party and Government positions rather than testing the patronage effect *per se*. The latter can certainly be of importance, however we expect people holding these positions to nonetheless “sprint with small steps” (Kou and Tsai, 2014) because even if there is some form of patronage effect, promoted individuals would still have to bend to the current promotion rules and follow the “path” drawn by previous/current top leaders to avoid destabilizing the fragile ongoing institutionalization.

3. Data Sets and Methodology

Data sets – last verified in July 2016 – used in this research come from three sources: (1) dictionary of Central Committee members 1921-2003 (Central Organisation Committee, 2004); (2) Government Leaders database (CPC News); (3) Baike.⁵ Triangulating these resources provided the most up-to-date information on all of the individuals’ background, key positions and dates.

The inquiry begins with the 1992 turnover, or when the *tuanpai* was gaining momentum on the Chinese political scene with Hu Jintao’s direct nomination on the Standing Committee of the Politburo.⁶ This cut-off point

Table 1 Population Specifics

<i>Name</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Returning</i>	<i>New Central Committee Members</i>		
			<i>Total</i>	<i>Military</i>	<i>Non-military</i>
Central Committee new members 1992	189	107	82	24	58
Central Committee new members 1997	198	86	112	29	83
Central Committee new members 2002	204	90	114	28	86
Central Committee new members 2007	207	101	106	24	82
Central Committee new members 2012	210	91	119	29	90
Total	1008	475	533	134	399

is based on the assumption that Hu, during his early 1980s ascension through the *tuanpai* structure, would be most capable at this moment to place some of its supporters for future promotion. Therefore, this starting point would seem appropriate as we could only count one individual fitting our definition of *tuanpai* and five more who have had any other type of *tuanpai* experience in the 1987 Central Committee newcomers' group.

Members of the military apparatus have not been taken into account as they are not the main concern for the *tuanpai* group nor are they the ones governing China (Bo, 2007a; 2009; Lam, 2007).

The complete background of each individual (n=399) was organized according to the official ranking structure (*Lingdao zhiwu cengci fenwei*, 领导职务层次分为). All experiences were counted from the prefecture-level (*Ting Ju ji zhengzhi*, 厅局级正职) up until their respective entries into the Central Committee. In addition, all individuals have had their “end-of-career” positions and experiences accounted for (i.e. what were the last and highest positions reached by every individual). As such, the comparison I lay in this article proceeds from two distinct moments in every Cadres' career: (1) background upon entry into the Central Committee – as to compare all individuals on an equal footing; (2) complete career data in order to see if whether or not end-of-career achievements, both in terms of positions and levels reached, would differ from *tuanpai* and non-*tuanpai* individuals.

However, before proceeding any further, we ought to define what we mean by *tuanpai*, and which indicators were used to find and count these individuals. There are currently several concurring definitions of the “*tuanpai* faction”, all of them with different characteristics and scopes. For

example, Zheng and Chen (2009) define the latter, or the “tuanpai clique” as encompassing individuals “who share working experience in the same organization [the Central Committee of the CCYL].”⁷ Some other definitions are based on the “patronage” effect of either Hu Jintao (Bo, 2007a; Dittmer, 2003)⁸ or even Hu Yaobang – for earlier periods (Shih *et al.*, 2012; Shih *et al.*, 2010).⁹ As such, each definition encompasses a different number of individuals, some of which might even be associated with other competing forces inside the Party-State.¹⁰

Therefore, it is important to note that the definition used in this article does not encompass the “patronage effect” (Zeng, 2013) of certain factional leaders on individuals being promoted to leadership positions from outside the tuanpai structure as many individuals (with no ties to factional leaders) now see the latter as a fast-tracking route to higher positions (Kou and Tsai, 2014) with little to no policy nor ideological commonalities (Dittmer, 2003).

As such, to be counted as tuanpai in any of the selected turnovers (Table 1), an individual ought to have occupied any of the following: (1) a tuanpai provincial secretary position (*Gongqingtuan Sheng shuji*, 共青团省委书记)¹¹; a secretary of the Central Secretariat of the Communist Youth League position (*Gongqingtuan Zhongyang shujiichu shuji*, 共青团中央书记处书记); (3) First Secretary of the Central Secretariat of the Communist Youth League position (*Gongqingtuan Zhongyang shujishu diyi shuji*, 共青团中央书记处第一书记). These three are respectively prefecture, sub-provincial (*Sheng Bu ji fuzhi*, 省部级副职) and provincial-level positions (*Sheng Bu ji zhengzhi*, 省部级正职).

The distinction I posit here between the “patronage effect” and the structure itself draws on the one made by Wang Zhengxu (2006) in regards to the “Jiang-centric” Shanghai gang in contrast to the “Shanghai-promoted” gang.

Furthermore, although I agree with both Breslin (2008) and Bo (2007b) that taking into account provincial tuanpai positions stretches the definition a bit too far, some of the previously presented definitions could account for even more individuals than the one used in this article. That being said, the objective of this definition is to set three indicators and to measure them independently to see which – if any – positions are associated with which other variables and which of the three can be considered the most influential for top Elite formation.

In subsequent parts, the tuanpai variable is assessed for association with several commonly found elements in the Chinese Elite literature: (1) Regional/Provincial experiences; (2) types of positions cumulated; (3) where – region/provinces – these positions have been held; (4) age and promotion speed.

Regional experiences were counted up from the same level while being regrouped under four categories [(1) Eastern; (2) Central; (3) North-East and (4) Western China (Lien, 2012)]¹² and only when an individual occupies a

political position in one of the latter (Annex 1: positions 1 to 6). Holding a position in two different provinces located in the same region has been counted as two experiences.

Annex 1 includes both political and administrative positions from the prefecture all the way to the provincial/ministerial level. All positions have been counted as binary variable.

The age factor encompasses two types of items: (1) age of each individual for every level; (2) assessment of promotion speed via the threshold indicator (i.e. completion of thresholds). Thresholds are cut-off values set by newly selected Politburo members’ age difference per level ($[\min+\max]/2$)¹³ to which the average of all of the levels’ standard deviation is added. The levels counted for thresholds are: entry into the Party [0], prefecture [5], sub-provincial [4], provincial [3a], Central Committee [3b], sub-national [2] and national [1].

These values change according to new Politburo entries and thus directly affects the number of thresholds one can hope to reach on time. Furthermore, threshold assessment, which draws on the idea of “sprinting with small steps” (Kou and Tsai, 2014), provides a different perspective on time management which directly contrasts subtraction or trend analysis more commonly found in studies addressing Elite formation.

Lastly, a subset of positions and levels have been selected for the end-of-career comparison. This last part takes into account the positions seen as key for Elite formation: (1) Provincial chief positions [Annex 1: position types 5 and 6]; (2) Minister [Annex 1: position type 14]. I want to see who was ultimately able to reach these positions and in turn, considering their importance for Politburo membership (Bo, 2007b; Li, 2010), if the latter two are more associated with tuanpai individuals or not. In terms of levels, the last section examines if reaching the provincial/national deputy level [*Guojiaji fuzhi*, 国家级副职] or even the national level [*Guojiaji zhengzhi*, 国家级正职] is more associated with tuanpai individuals or with their counterparts.

Variables are examined via extensive binary logistic regression (parametric).¹⁴ For the age factor, the latter is also used in addition to student *t*-tests (non-parametric) in order to determine if there is a statistical difference – in terms of age – between tuanpai and non-tuanpai individuals and where, in terms of levels, is the latter located. Finally, Bayes’s theorem of conditional probability will be used to assess the association between each ranks for each group.

Finally, results are first presented using the “encompassing” variable (i.e. having held any of the previously listed tuanpai positions). If the latter turns out to be significant, results are to be deconstructed to see if any of the subgroups accounts for a larger share of the variation. Statistically non-significant results are not displayed in tables yet might be discussed if deemed appropriate to do so.

4. Results: Measuring the Tuanpai “Factional Pull”

4.1. Assessing the “Geographic Pull”

The first step of this inquiry follows tuanpai individuals and looks at their regional experiences in order to see if they do cumulate these kinds of experiences, and if so where and at what point of their career.

The only major difference may lie in the number of individuals having regional experience. Using Table 2’s data, we can calculate that 81.56 per cent of tuanpai individuals have had regional experience in contrast to 63.16 per cent for their counterparts upon entry into the Central Committee. This trend continues up until the end (or current positions for the 2012 and some individuals in the 2007 population) of each group’s career. As such, 89.5 per cent of tuanpai individuals have had – or is currently holding – regional experience, in contrast to 67 per cent for their counterparts. In turn, this indicates that we are more likely to find tuanpai working their way up through

Table 2 Regional Experience: Data [Compressed]

<i>Data Sets</i>	<i>Individuals with experience</i>	<i>Two or more experiences</i>	<i>Region 1</i>	<i>Region 2</i>	<i>Region 3</i>	<i>Region 4</i>
Newly promoted Central Committee members 1992-2012 (<i>n</i> =399)	259	84	110	60	43	116
Newly promoted Central Committee members 1992-2012 (without Tuanpai individuals [<i>n</i> =361])	228	75	98	52	38	102
Tuanpai individuals (1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38])	31	9	12	8	5	14
<i>Complete Career Assessment [Including Post-Central Committee Positions]</i>						
Newly promoted Central Committee members 1992-2012 (<i>n</i> =399)	276	120	148	89	56	160
Newly promoted Central Committee members 1992-2012 (without Tuanpai individuals [<i>n</i> =361])	242	102	132	75	46	140
Tuanpai individuals (1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38])	34	18	16	14	10	20

Source: Author’s database.

either (geographic) Party or Government positions in contrast to other types of positions for their counterparts.

This distinction between having regional experience or not is statistically significant (Table 3). In addition, it seems that tuanpai individuals are more likely to cumulate more regional experience after becoming Central

Table 3 Regional Experience (Logistic)

<i>Variable Tested: Having Regional Experience</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38])	.949	.432	.028
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28])	1.585	.620	.011
<i>Complete Career Assessment [Including Post-Central Committee Positions]</i>			
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38])	1.430	.540	.008
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28])	1.382	.621	.026
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – two regional experiences or more)	.826	.345	.017
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – two regional experiences or more	.916	.395	.020

Table 4 Level of Regional Experience (Logistic)

<i>Variable Tested: Level on Which Regional Experiences are Held</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – Sub-provincial experiences)	1.037	.412	.012
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Sub-provincial experiences	1.504	.550	.006
<i>Complete Career Assessment [Including Post-Central Committee Positions]</i>			
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – Sub-provincial experiences)	1.241	.458	.007
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Sub-provincial experiences	1.337	.550	.015
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =4]) – two or more provincial-level positions	2.393	1.161	.039

Committee members as demonstrated by Table 2. However, no single region is statistically significant upon entry into nor after the Central Committee.

Results listed in Table 4 go one step further by assessing on which specific level regional experiences are held (i.e. prefecture/sub-provincial/provincial). Evidently, the *tuanpai* variables seem to be associated with sub-provincial positions during both moments (i.e. upon reaching the Central Committee and after), yet for different reasons: (1) *tuanpai* individuals were able to reach sub-provincial positions (Annex 1: Types 3 and 4) before their entry into the Central Committee; (2) provincial-level positions (Annex 1: Types 5 and 6) have simply been held by too many individuals to be considered relevant for any groups when we take into account the entire career path of each individual.

One sub-*tuanpai* group stood out during the analysis: the First Secretaries of the Central Secretariat. These individuals are strongly associated with holding two or more provincial-level positions (Table 4). The latter are, according to the literature, of crucial importance for possible future Politburo membership (Bo, 2007b; Choi, 2012; Li, 2010). However, the region in which these provincial, sub-provincial or even prefectural experiences are held is not statistically significant for *tuanpai* individuals.

Looking at these results, we can assume that the *tuanpai* variable, insofar as it is tied to regional experience – especially at the sub-provincial level, gives some individuals an edge in terms of both mobility for reaching certain positions before other Cadres or to be better placed for subsequent promotions.

4.2. “Pulled” toward Specific Positions? Or toward Key Positions in Certain Location?

However, is this mobility translated into positions deemed important or more influential for top Elite formation (e.g. provincial-chief positions [Li, 2005])? This section focuses on both position types [Annex 1: 1 to 6] as well as measuring the possible importance of these positions in specific locations.

These results show that *tuanpai* individuals seem to be more on a “political path” (i.e. cumulating political positions [Types 1 to 6]) rather than focusing on higher administrative functions (Types 7 to 14). If we consider *tuanpai* as “politicrats” (*Zhenggong ganbu*, 政工干部), then these observations concur with the ideas of Zang Xiaowei (2004; 2006) and Zhou Xueguang (2001) regarding functional differentiation (*Fenshuhua*, 分殊化), its impact on career patterns and its internal path dependency effect. In turn, this differentiation also influences the promotability of Cadres in the Party-State apparatus (Zang, 2004). However, these are but simple propositions on what types of positions are associated with *tuanpai* individuals in general.

Table 5 Position Types (Logistic)

<i>Variables Tested: Annex 1 Position Types 1 to 14; Ratio of Positions 1-6 vs. 7-14</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Type 4 positions	1.903	.449	.015
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [<i>n</i> =14]) – Type 11 position	1.833	.828	.027
<i>Complete Career Assessment [Including Post-Central Committee Positions]</i>			
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38]) – Type 4 positions	.987	.396	.013
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Type 4 positions	1.099	.472	.020
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [<i>n</i> =14]) – Type 6 positions	1.466	.569	.010
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =4]) – two or more Type 6 positions	3.042	1.029	.003
<i>Position Ratio: Political Positions vs. Administrative Position</i>			
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38])	.871	.373	.020
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28])	1.271	.472	.007
<i>Non-tuanpai</i>			
Non-tuanpai individuals – having more administrative or having held no positions at all [1 to 14]	.886	.396	.025

Table 6 goes one step further by showing results of the intersection between position types [1 to 6] and regions 1 to 4 in order to determine if certain types are favoured in a specific location in contrast to being significant on their own.

Aside from the types listed on Table 6, no other positions were statistically significant upon entering the Central Committee with most positions in region 2 showing a negative slope (association). This means that tuanpai individuals are in general climbing through North-East and Western China during the beginning of their careers. However, upon career completion, no sub-provincial positions remain significant and Type 6 – Provincial-level Party Secretary – in regions 2 and 3 comes out as statistically significant.¹⁵

The absence of the First Secretaries is also noticed for sub-provincial and prefecture-level positions. However, this can easily be explained by their career patterns inside the tuanpai structure which supplies prefectural and

Table 6 Position in Region (Logistic)

<i>Variables Tested: Annex 1 Position Types 1 to 6 in Regions 1 to 4</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [n=28]) – Type 1 in region 3	1.574	.698	.024
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [n=28]) – Type 4 in region 4	.856	.407	.035
<i>Complete Career Assessment [Including Post-Central Committee Positions]</i>			
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [n=14]) – Type 6 in region 2	1.668	.624	.008
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [n=4]) – Type 6 in region 2	2.535	1.018	.013
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [n=38]) – Type 6 in region 3	1.671	.577	.004
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [n=28]) – Type 6 in region 3	1.696	.621	.006
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [n=14]) – Type 6 in region 3	2.137	.714	.003

sub-provincial positions all the way to their current provincial-level positions. As such, these few “top tuanpai” are bypassing the competition all the way up to the provincial level to then merge – as Table 6 demonstrates – with the rest of the group by collecting Provincial-level Party Secretary positions. As previously expressed in Table 5, First Secretaries are associated with the accumulation of two of these positions and, as Table 6 shows, one of these two is likely to be located in region 2 – Central China.

We could tentatively posit that the tuanpai faction is not harnessing East coast positions for the benefit of – possibly – other competing factional groups. In turn, this could suggest a form of “division of labour” both in terms of positions and regions between intra-Party competing forces. As such, tuanpai individuals might be relying on the “sponsored mobility” effect (Zang, 2006; Walder and Li, 2001), which requires occupying more inland positions to later come back and be promoted to higher levels, rather than experiences in the economic powerhouse that is the East Coast.

In general, this structure allows individuals to bypass lots of prefecture-level positions to merge at the sub-provincial level and then keep climbing through political positions. However, it allows “higher” tuanpai individuals to shortcut both levels to then directly merge at the end of the provincial level.

In turn, this gives these individuals a tremendous advantage over other Cadres completing one or even several tenures on lower levels.

Most forms of *tuanpai* included in the definition are also associated with provincial-level Party Secretary positions, which is the modal occupation of newly appointed Politburo members since 1992. This suggests that the *tuanpai* structure is able to “pull” individuals toward key positions: controlling the latter is of crucial importance for policy implementation agendas.¹⁶

As another subset of the same argument, I also tested: (1) Party positions inside either the organization, propaganda, united front department or the Party school on either one of the county (*Zhengchuji*, 正处级), prefecture, sub-provincial and provincial (*Zhengbuji*, 正部级) level; (2) prefecture-level city secretary general (*Diji shiwei mishuzhang*, 地级以上市委秘书长) and provincial secretary general (*Shengwei mishuzhang*, 省委秘书长); (3) any form of business experience; (4) provincial-level disciplinary commission secretary (*Shengwei jiwei shuji*, 省委纪委书记). This adds an additional 20 variables accounted for each individual upon entry into the Central Committee [Table 7].

Table 7 shows *tuanpai* individuals overrepresented in prefecture-level Party positions. It is unclear to what extent these positions can help or be considered as having an effect on a Cadre’s career. However, they are important in the larger scheme of promotions inside the Party-State apparatus. Furthermore, results regarding provincial organisation and propaganda departments reflect the previous finding of Li Cheng (2009).

As expected, business experience has nothing to do whatsoever with *tuanpai* individuals. Furthermore, as Table 7 shows, these individuals, as Wu puts it, managed “to gain moral high ground in the CCP’s anti-corruption campaign” (2006). In turn, results do mirror these two statements.

However, what remains of interest to us is the statistical significance of provincial political positions as the latter are mostly associated with better prospects for Politburo membership.

Table 7 Party Positions Association (Logistic)

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/ First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38]) – Provincial director of the Organization department	1.060	.537	.048
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Provincial director of the Propaganda department	1.184	.592	.045
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38]) – Provincial Secretary of the disciplinary committee	1.524	.609	.012

4.3. Being “Pulled” to the Top: Age and Promotion Speed

This last section, which addresses the “temporal pull”, is structured around four sub-interrogation: (1) is there a statistical difference between tuanpai and non-tuanpai in terms of age?; (2) where is this variation located?; (3) can we quantify this variation?; (4) does the variation – if any – persist once individuals have passed the Central Committee?

Results of *t*-tests [Annex 3]¹⁷ partially answer questions 1 and 2. The tuanpai promoting structure seems to mostly fast-track individuals through both the prefecture and sub-provincial levels. The distinction is, however, statistically non-significant for the Central Committee¹⁸ and entry into the Party levels [0].

This steady variation can be explained by the fact that the tuanpai structure provides a prefecture-level position for just under 75 per cent of these individuals. This allows them to bypass more conventional positions (e.g. city mayor, Party secretary, etc.), to gain faster access to a prefecture-level position (e.g. CCYL provincial secretary, etc.) and to finally merge faster, in general, at the sub-provincial level back in the non-CCYL structure. This small shortcut also allows them to save at least one tenure worth of time (more or less five years) thus remaining younger than their counterparts.

The provincial level positions, aside from national positions, are probably the hardest to obtain for Cadres and came out statistically non-significant for one reason: upon entry into the Central Committee, around 27 per cent of non-tuanpai and 16 per cent of tuanpai individuals do not reach this level. Performing a *t*-test on these individuals does, however, point in the direction of a very statistically significant variation [$t_{a/2}(294)3.4298P.0007$] between tuanpai and non-tuanpai individuals upon entry into the Central Committee. Looking at the end of career data [Annex 3], these missing values are reduced to seven per cent for non-tuanpai and five per cent for tuanpai individuals. If we incorporate these “new” values into our calculation, we get statistically significant variations between both groups, except for the 2012 turnover. This is explained by the fact that 13 per cent of its members have yet to reach provincial/ministerial positions (as of August 2016).

Annex 2 shows an average difference of 4.3 years per level between tuanpai and non-tuanpai individuals, with the largest variations located at the prefecture, sub-provincial and provincial levels (average of 5.47 years younger per level). This slight variation is also expressed by Graphic 1 [Annex 4]. However this difference has yet to be quantified and assessed for statistical significance. In turn, this variation was measured by five years increment indicators – five and ten years in our case – below the overall age average per ranking level (i.e. was an individual five years younger than the age average of a specific level? If so, how long can this variation be maintained?) [Table 8].

Table 8 Age Variation Per Level and as Composed Indicator

*Variables Tested: Being 5 Years Below Each Level's Age Average; 10 Years Below; Having been 5 Years Below Level 5, 4, and 3's Age Average; Having been 10 years Below Level 5, 4, and 3's Age Average; Having been 5 Years Below Level 5, 4, 3, CC's Age Average; Having been 10 years Below Level 4, 3, CC's Age Average.**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Tuanpai Individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [n=38])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture, sub-provincial, provincial, and Central Committee]	1.992	.558	.000
10 years below age average [sub-provincial, provincial and Central Committee]	3.746	1.132	.001
<i>Tuanpai Individuals (Central Secretariat [n=14])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture, sub-provincial, provincial and Central Committee]	2.137	.714	.003
10 years below age average [sub-provincial, provincial and Central Committee]	3.956	.963	.000

Note: *Non-listed results are to be found on Annex 4.

What is of interest to us are not single level assessments [Annex 4], rather the “consistent” comparative advantage an individual might gain from holding each specific tuanpai position. In general, when accounting for the three CCYL positions a variation of between at least five years up until ten years is statistically significant for each level (Table 8). Specifically, the provincial secretary position is significantly associated with a variation of at least five to ten years at the prefecture and the sub-provincial levels [Annex 4]. Yet, a consistent ten years variation is statistically significant only for the Central Secretariat position. Since three out of four individuals who occupied the First Secretary position have been at least ten years below average from the prefecture to the Central Committee level, we can also safely assume the latter would also give a tremendous advantage to the individual holding it.

This implies that these positions have a similar “pulling effect”, yet the latter two can propel an individual for at least two more levels while allowing individuals to save almost two tenure’s worth of time. As such, if the end game is “promotability”, individuals holding Central Secretariat and First Secretary positions clearly have an advantage over other tuanpai and non-tuanpai individuals for ulterior national level positions.

Finally, the last section of this inquiry turns its attention to promotion speed by way of threshold values as indicators for each level [Annex 2].

Table 9 Promotion Speed [Threshold Assessment] (Logistic)

<i>Variables Tested: Levels 0 to 3; 2 and More, 3 and More, 4 and More</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – Threshold level 5	1.882	.611	.002
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Threshold level 5	2.702	1.204	.008
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – Threshold level 4	1.565	.540	.004
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – Threshold level 4	1.174	.551	.033
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – 2 thresholds or more	2.479	1.021	.015
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – 2 thresholds or more	2.128	1.026	.038
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38] – 3 thresholds or more	1.867	.539	.001
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =28]) – 3 thresholds or more	1.811	.620	.003
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [<i>n</i> =14]) – 3 thresholds or more	2.213	1.043	.034

This assessment method differs from what can be found in the literature as it accounts for reaching or not a specified value rather than looking at the total subtraction variation.

Table 9's results clearly show that fast-tracking happens through both the prefecture and sub-provincial levels. As expected from the *t*-tests results [Annex 3], entry into the Party, Provincial and Central Committee levels were statistically non-significant at the time individuals became full committee members. Even when measured with the end of career data – or current data – the provincial level remains not clearly associated with tuanpai individuals as too many non-tuanpai Cadres also were able to reach the latter.

These results are further confirmed through Bayes's theorem of conditional probability. The probability of having reached the prefecture-level while knowing an individual already entered the Party on time [P(5|0)] summed up to 79.5 per cent for tuanpai individuals, in contrast to 41.1 per cent for other Central Committee members. Results were respectively 79.2 per cent and 53.5 per cent for [P(4|5)] and of 15.6 per cent and 8.9 per cent for [P(3|4)]. This allows us to reduce our chances of being wrong when stating that, in general, tuanpai individuals have more chances to complete on time – and or faster than other individuals – both prefecture and sub-provincial levels.

Table 10 Top National Positions (Logistic)

<i>Variables Tested: Having Reached a National Deputy Position; Having Reached a National Main Position; Having Achieved Politburo Membership</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =38]) – National deputy position	.843	.368	.022
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [<i>n</i> =14]) – National deputy position	1.774	.556	.001
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =4]) – National deputy position	2.533	1.162	.029
Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [<i>n</i> =14]) – Politburo membership	1.684	.585	.004
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =4]) – Politburo membership	2.211	1.014	.029
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =4]) – National main position	2.454	1.195	.040
<i>Level 2 – National Deputy Position Threshold¹⁹</i>			
Tuanpai individuals (First Secretariat 1992-2012 [<i>n</i> =4])	3.254	1.166	.005

When looking at the slopes [B], we are more able to see which tuanpai position is more strongly associated with the “sprinting” effect and during which portion of a Cadre’s career the specified position would have the strongest impact. For everything below the provincial and national levels, it seems, the CCYL provincial secretary positions would be the most useful to get a head start toward higher positions. Therefore, the latter would enable a Cadre to reach both prefecture and sub-provincial level positions in time, yet it would not be of much use to reach the final steps toward the top of the Party-State apparatus.

The final testing (i.e. association and significance for national level positions) reveals where the “pull” for the last few steps is located. If the Gongqingtuan provincial secretary positions can bring an individual – all things being equal – all the way to the sub-provincial level, then the CCYL First Secretary position can “pull” an individual closer to national deputy positions [Guojiaji fuzhi, 国家级副职],²⁰ Politburo membership and, for the most part, national main positions [Guojiaji zhengzhi, 国家级正职]²¹. Furthermore, reaching the national deputy positions on time – by way of threshold assessment – is statistically significant only for the First Secretary position (Table 10). Being “on time” for this level implies that these individuals are most likely to still be promotable for even higher positions.

As such, again all things being equal – and without dismissing other factors – we can tentatively posit that the *tuanpai* variable, insofar as it is linked with other key elements associated with top Elite formation, does not only work as a recruitment channel, but can lead all the way to Politburo membership. As such, entering the *tuanpai* organizational structure, provided that an individual can reach at least one of the three listed positions composing our initial definition, can imply faster promotion and key positions.

However, this fast-tracking seems to be active at two distinct moments: pre- and post-provincial level. That being said, the second and most important “pull” seems to be more associated with higher and more difficult to reach *tuanpai* positions (i.e. First Secretary of the Central Secretariat). Therefore, the most optimal path would be to cumulate both provincial secretary and First Secretary positions to bypass the prefecture, sub-provincial and partially the provincial-level positions to then merge at the “end” of the provincial round and still remain highly promotable for national deputy positions.²² As it turns out, the last four First Secretaries were on average 15 years younger than non-*tuanpai* individuals and 12 years younger than their other *tuanpai* counterparts when reaching provincial-level positions. This amount of time can easily translate into higher positions even if the latter would be clogged for one tenure (five years). Their promotion speed, in general, remains an important comparative advantage (Zheng and Chen, 2009).

If this trend holds true, we can then posit that Zhou Qiang will most likely be promoted to the Politburo in 2017 and Lu Hao in 2022 (Payette 2016a). On the other hand, the future current First Secretary – Qin Yizhi [秦宜智] – is more uncertain as the latter is slightly older than Lu Hao and has not yet been promoted to the full Central Committee membership.²³ However, were he to be selected in 2017, he would still have to undergo between one and two turnovers in the Central Committee, bringing his possible entry in the Politburo between 2022 and 2027.²⁴

Individuals who recently (2008) and are currently (2013) holding the second most important *tuanpai* position – the Central Secretariat [*chu shuji*, 处书记] – [*n*=9], are already showing signs that what has been underlined might be true. Although it remains too early to tell for individuals such as Fu Zhenbang [傅振邦],²⁵ Xu Xiao [徐晓], Zhou Changkui [周长奎] and Luo Mei [罗梅],²⁶ we can already see individuals like Wang Xiao [王晓] – 2007 Central Committee alternate member (*Houbu weiyuan*, 候补委员) and Lu Yongzheng [卢雍政]²⁷ already merging toward sub-provincial positions. As for Yang Yue [杨岳] – 2012 Central Committee alternate member – and Wang Hongyan [汪鸿雁]²⁸, we can consider them to be “failed attempts” at merging into better positions so far. The latter merged to prefecture-level positions to then come back to the *tuanpai* structure. Finally, He Junke, currently holding

the executive office of the Central Secretariat position (*Changwuchu shuji*, 常务书记) could possibly become the next First Secretary in 2018.

Of course, these assumptions and prognostics are based on the observations and results presented in this article and do not take into consideration other informal manoeuvres or previously made arrangements.

4.4. Expanding the View: What about After 2012?

Since 2012, and more specifically since 2015-2016, Xi Jinping has tried to undermine the tuanpai structure by cracking down on its “rampant”²⁹ corruption issue (e.g. the case of Ling Jihua [令计划]).³⁰ As such, one can be left to wonder if the structure will actually hold its current characteristics or simply be tossed aside during the next turnover.

Although a complete answer cannot be given for the time being – as we would need the 2017 data sets, we can look at the second upcoming generation – born in the 1970s, for clues regarding recruitment patterns and the continuous use (or not) of the tuanpai structure.³¹

Out of the 190 Cadres born in the 1970s and currently holding at least a prefecture-level position, 49.5 per cent have already had some type of tuanpai experience. Out of these, 48 per cent have held/are holding some form of tuanpai positions and out of these, 65% have held the key provincial secretary position. 4.12 per cent of them have held the Central secretariat one. 38.46 per cent of the first ones have already merged and joined back either government or Party positions at the prefecture-level all across China; only 31 per cent of non-tuanpai individuals did. This difference might not seem significant at this moment, yet individuals holding these key tuanpai positions remain more likely to actually merge in the Party-State apparatus than their counterparts coming from the business sector, research centres, etc. As such, for the time being, and for the upcoming generation, tuanpai positions – as a “pulling” factor – do influence promotability and career trajectories toward the Centre.

That said, promotion speed remains, at this point, the most prominent distinguishing factors between tuanpai and non-tuanpai groups. On average, tuanpai individuals born in the 1970s are 2.3 years younger than their counterparts upon reaching the prefecture level, those who have held the provincial secretary positions are 3.5 years younger and the ones who have held the Central secretariat position are 4.31 years younger – almost one complete tenure. As demonstrated in a previous study, even the slightest difference (statistically significant or not when submitted to non-parametric testing) can still drastically alter one’s promotability, especially when measured by way of the threshold effect (Payette 2016b).³² As such, when applying the appropriate threshold values³³ to the 190 rising Cadres, we get an overall average of 1.2 thresholds (out of three possible for the time

being). However, *tuanpai* individuals did complete on average 1.39 thresholds in contrast to 0.98 for their counterparts. This average rises to 1.55 for individuals having held the provincial secretary position and to 2.25 for the ones holding the Central Secretariat position. This again indicates that the *tuanpai* structure is currently “pulling” individuals faster and that efforts at undermining the latter have yet to be felt.³⁴ Therefore, since all of the Cadres are effectively “sprinting with small steps” (Kou and Tsai 2014), time management (i.e. remaining promotable) and any form of quick start are of crucial importance in order to reach provincial or even national level positions.

To this effect, even with the consolidated effort of Xi Jinping and Wang Qishan to “stop” the *tuanpai* from producing either successors or top Elites, we can see that around half of the ascending Cadres are or have been part of the *tuanpai* structure. The former two might reconsider their decision since this “fast-tracking channel” can also be used by their own supporters to reach the Centre faster. As such, we could posit that the current *tuanpai* crackdown aims at removing some of Hu Jintao and Li Keqiang’s allies rather than to break the promotion channel *per se*.

5. Conclusion: Chosen to be *Tuanpai*? Or Choosing the *Tuanpai* Structure?

This article, centred on the general problematic of the role factions in top Elite formation, aimed to measure the “*tuanpai* effect” in order to see if this kind of network does provide one with better career opportunities and if so, how and at which moment of a Cadre’s career does it work?

As demonstrated, and according to the definition laid out in the methodology section, the *tuanpai* variable is statistically significant and associated with several of the core elements found in the Elite literature, namely: (1) having several regional experiences; (2) holding provincial-chief positions. Furthermore, on average, *tuanpai* individuals were “pulled” at faster speed, leaving them between five and ten years younger than their counterparts for two, three or even four consecutive ranking levels. As such, using the *tuanpai* structure does offer an important comparative advantage as it leaves individuals with one to two’s tenure time in case of setbacks or to be deemed more promotable for higher offices. For the best of them (i.e. the Central Secretariat and First Secretary position), we are talking about multiple provincial experiences, one or more provincial-chief experiences, and being considerably younger than other Cadres up until the Central Committee or higher.

Tuanpai individuals were able to, depending on which of the three positions were held, bypass one, two or even three levels, to then re-join the rest of the crowd while still being much younger and therefore very promotable.

Finally, the First Secretary position, insofar as it is the highest ranked tuanpai position, demonstrated a strong association with both national deputy and main positions, thus creating a possible path – all things being equal – directly to the top of the Party-State apparatus for the individual holding this “precious” position.

This leaves us to tackle one more issue which is the label of “faction” stamped on the CCYL structure. As the reader probably noted, this research assessed and attempted to measure the influence of three distinct tuanpai positions on the career of certain individuals while at the same time discarding their individual affiliations (i.e. if they are under the tutelage of someone else or if they are self-labelled as being part of a different network inside the Party).

For example, let us look at the contentious case of Han Zheng [韩正],³⁵ current Party Secretary of Shanghai. Han is more than often listed as “Shanghai Gang” rising star, however he did cumulate early in his career two tuanpai positions (i.e. Shanghai tuanpai vice-secretary and secretary). One could argue that this early use of the tuanpai structure allowed him to go over two ranking levels in two years instead of a more regular pace (one tenure is more or less five years). That being said, perhaps Shanghai ties could now better explain his fast ascension to his current key position.

In turn, the case of Han brings back the point raised by both Bo Zhiyue (2007b) and Kou and Tsai (2014) regarding tuanpai as being more of a “categorical group” rather than a faction as defined by either Nathan (1973) or Tsou (1976). Most of the current individuals rising or using the tuanpai structure (mainly the Central Secretariat and Provincial Secretaries) have little to no ties to individuals like Hu Jintao. Therefore, it is of no surprise to see a more eclectic group of individuals using the tuanpai promotion channel because, as shown here, it does indeed work.

The tuanpai path has thus become, in the words of Kou and Tsai (2014: 159-162), a “career trajectory for aspiring leaders” which should not be disregarded for possible ideological reasons. In turn, this “opportunistic” view of the tuanpai structure slightly undermines its supposed idealistic and pro-people inclination. To this effect, these characteristics seem to derive from either the factional chief (e.g. Hu Jintao as being pro-people) or from the sponsored mobility; accepting the work in Western China for prolonged periods of time considered as “being in touch with social issues.”³⁶ It remains unsure to what extent these elements – idealistic/pro-people – are the results of “being a tuanpai” or simply generational or based on specific individuals, especially when members of other factions or coming from drastically different networks are also using the channel.

Opportunistic Cadres, be they from Shanghai or even considered to be “Princes” or “Princesses” of the Party, are bound to do everything they can

to reach the top, including relying on several networks of support in order to do so. As such, the “factional game”, if ever there is one, might now be one of opportunity rather than loyalty or ideas as it once was during the Deng and Mao eras.³⁷

Notes

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1. The listed sources constitute but a sample of the entire body of literature that focuses on factions or uses factionalism as a variable in Chinese politics or Elite formation.
 2. The shorter term “Gongqingtuan” is to be used alongside CCYL.
 3. The definition of what is meant by tuanpai (e.g. which positions are counted, etc.) is in the methodology section.
 4. As it has also been underlined by Wu Junfei, there is a substantial overlap between the Princelings, the tuanpai and the Jiang-era Shanghai gang (2006).
 5. Despite being of questionable reputation, Baike has been used by other researchers such as Bo Zhiyue (2014).
 6. Other studies use a similar starting point or are tied to Hu Jintao reaching specific positions (e.g. First Secretary of the Central Secretariat of the CCYL, Central Committee, etc.) (Shih *et al.*, 2010; 2012).
 7. In this case, the definition could even reach any individuals having CCYL working experience (Zheng and Chen, 2009: 26).
 8. Li Cheng would go on to say that this definition encompasses the “close circle of Hu Jintao” back in the 1980s (Li, 2009).
 9. In both cases, Shih *et al.* focus on the Hu-centric tuanpai group (e.g. individuals who worked within two ranking steps of Hu during his time as First Secretary, etc.).
 10. Several authors have pointed out methodological issues with the usage of “faction” both as a variable and as an indicator simply because of the numerous issues related to categorization and possible overlaps (Kou, 2010; Dittmer, 2003).
 11. Li Cheng (2002) counted these provincial tuanpai leaders (the position) as being of importance when looking at the rise of this clique in the CCP’s ranks. In his view, these CCYL provincial leadership positions (i.e. tuanpai secretary) is bound to speed up their promotion inside the Party-State apparatus.

12. East China [Region 1: Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Shanghai]; Central China [Region 2: Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Shanxi]; North-Eastern China [Region 3: Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning]; Western China [Region 4: Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Xizang, Qinghai, Gansu, Xinjiang].
13. Thresholds values are set by the previous turnover’s newcomers (i.e. 2012 new Politburo members set the values for the 2017 thresholds).
14. All variables are tested independently unless indicated otherwise.
15. These results concur with some of Li Cheng’s finding back in 2005.
16. If a competing force were to control several key provinces via this position type, it would be harder to push for implementation of “unfavourable” policies, in turn leading to greater distortion and cross-bargaining with Beijing. These individuals are also very hard to remove or displace as they are technically self-supervised under the “one government, two court (*yi fu, liang yuan*, 一府, 两院) system.
17. The 1992 turnover is not listed in Annex 3 as only one individual fits the pre-established tuanpai definition.
18. With the exception of the 1997 turnover [$t_{a,2}(81)3.6778P.0004$].
19. Thresholds values can be found in Annex 2.
20. National deputy positions encompass regular Politburo membership, yet also include positions such as the Vice-Chairman of the National People’s Congress standing committee [*Quanguo Renda changweihui fuweihuizhang*, 全国人大常委会副委员长], etc.
21. This includes Standing Committee position, Presidency, Chairman of the National People’s Consultative Conference [*Quanguo Zhengxie zhuxi*, 全国政协主席].
22. It does then become understandable that young Cadres – “factionally” tuanpai or not – would see the CCYL structure as a short-cut towards top positions (Zheng and Chen, 2009).
23. Xi Jinping’s comments alongside Wang Qishan’s back in early August 2016 regarding the need to restructure the tuanpai structure might affect Qin’s future promotability. As the Party, lead here by Xi and Wang, is trying to “cut the head of the dragon [斩断团派龙脉],” one can wonder to what extent the tuanpai structure will remain a “promotion” channel after 2017 (Payette 2016a). This of course echoes the fall of Ling Jihua [令计划] at the hands of the *jiwei* [纪委] earlier this year. Ling, a close ally of Hu Jintao, had held the Central Secretariat position since 2007.
24. This excludes possibility of “reshuffling” at the top or even suddenly being investigated for wrongdoing. This reminds us of what recently happened to the ex-rising “star” Su Shulin [苏树林].
25. All things being equal, when considering the age factor and the speed requirements, Fu (b.1975) is currently one of the sole contestants for the role of *jieban* [接班人] in 2032. Others would have us believe that Shi Guanghui [时光辉] (b.1970), protégé of Xi, would top the successor’s list for the 22nd Party Congress. That said, the latter, deputy-mayor of Beijing, would be 62 in 2032 and thus incapable of holding two tenures as a “core” leader of the 7th generation.
26. In order: b.1975 [41]; b.1972 [44]; b.1969 [47]; b.1967 [49].

27. In order: b.1968 [48]; b.1967 [49].
28. In order: b.1968 [48]; b.1970 [46].
29. That is not to say that there is no corruption inside the tuanpai structure. That said, Xi Jinping used the anti-graft campaign as an excuse to launch a “deeper” inquiry on issues related to the CCYL.
30. Some observers might see this gesture as an assault on the current “balancing” approach which is used to describe the state of factionalism since the late 1980s. The latter states that instead of trying to “destroy” one another – winner-takes-all (Tsou 1976) – factions tend to balance themselves inside the Party-State through various institutions (Nathan 1973). As such, the anti-graft campaign was seen as an attempt by Xi to clear out both Jiang Zemin allies (e.g. Zeng Qinghong, Zhou Yongkang, etc.) and Hu Jintao’s supporters in order to consolidate his own Jiangsu gang at the Centre. This is by no means different than Hu Jintao’s attack on Huang Ju and Chen Liangyu right after Jiang Zemin stepped down or the removal of Hua Guofeng’s supporters during the transition period under Deng Xiaoping. As such, there is nothing “special” about Xi Jinping’s current “reshuffling” as most paramount leaders did bring their own support network to the Centre in order to consolidate their position. Balancing, insofar as it does not call for a true equilibrium, is more often than not translated in a form of “division of labour” between factions: Hu (tuanpai)/Wen (Zhu Rongji/Jiang Zemin), Xi (Prince)/Li (tuanpai).
31. The numbers and information used here are from a preliminary survey made for *Asia Forum* [IRIS] to be published only in 2017. As such, the data used here are by no means complete nor final for the time being.
32. The mentioned study refers to 1.28 years as being significant in light of age thresholds.
33. I have applied the 2012 threshold values since the 2012’s newcomers values will have to be applied from 2017 on.
34. We also have to consider that tuanpai individuals are less likely to miss all three thresholds (i.e. falling behind in terms of promotability) than their counterparts are. As such, only nine tuanpai missed all three in contrast to 16 for the non-tuanpai group.
35. This case is often cited as a revealing issue in factional categorisation (Bo, 2007b: 11).
36. That said, and while trying to avoid an oversimplification, the sponsored mobility effect in contrast to evolving solely in Shanghai or Eastern China is bound to have some form of effect on one’s political inclination. As such, we expect Hu Chunhua [胡春华] to be much closer to Hu Jintao’s ideal of social harmony and redistribution than Xi Jinping or any of his lieutenants. However, even if sometimes tuanpai do have more liberal/progressive ideals does not mean they are above tightening social control (e.g. Hu Jintao’s several crackdown in Tibet, etc.). The same goes for Shanghai/Prince-centred factions. We would expect, based on the Jiang-Zhu administration, that the Xi-Li administration would be socially more conservative and more in-touch with economic growth than the Hu-Wen era. Yet, China is currently undergoing economic turmoil with no real

solution on how to deal with real-estate, domestic market, currency control, etc. As such, we are unable to truly measure the differences between the “tuanpai administration” and the Shanghai or even Prince administrations as none of them have been in power more than once so far. Therefore establishing a clear “policy profile” – which in turn would lay expectations for different types of administrations – would be unwise at this point in time.

37. This point has previously been discussed by Dittmer (2003) when discussing the lack of policy or ideological split between factions during the Jiang era.

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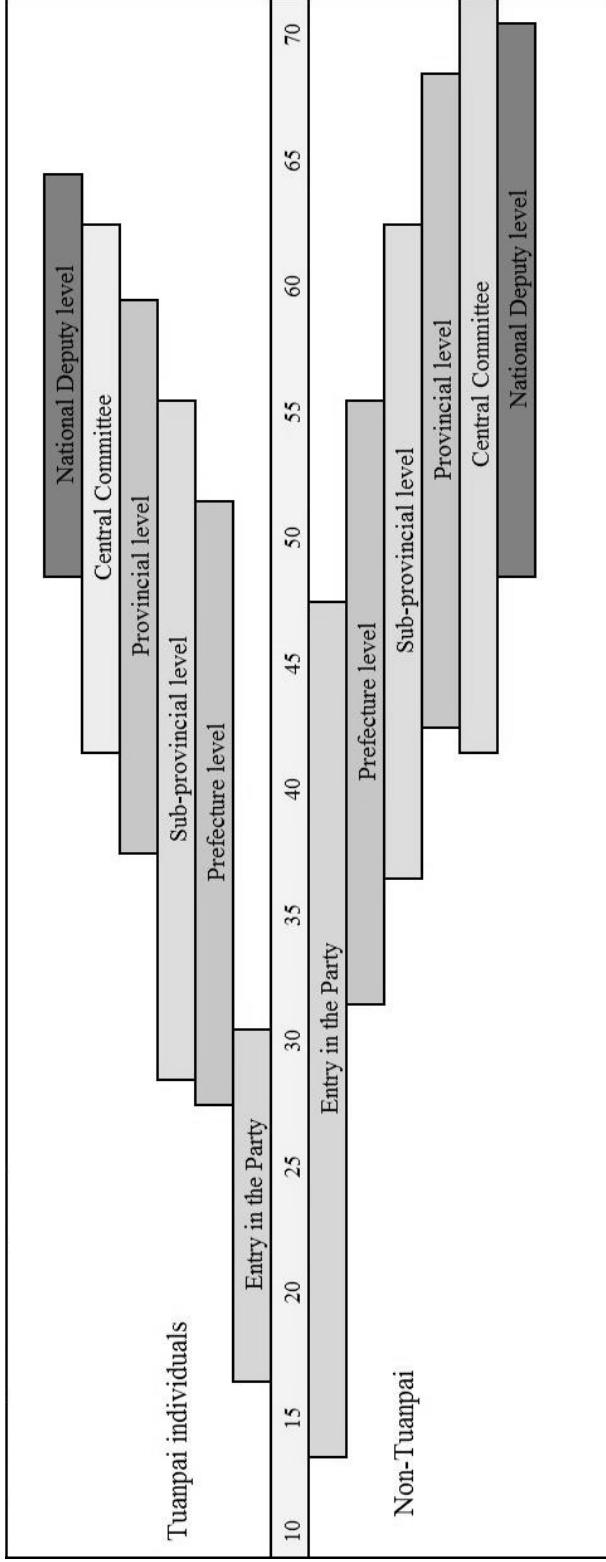
Annex 1: Position Type Listing	
Number	Positions
1	Prefecture-level City Mayor
	Sub provincial-level (SPL) City Vice-Mayor
	Central Municipalities (MDUCG) District Head
	SPL District deputy-head
	SPL autonomous area deputy-governor
2	Prefecture-level city Party Secretary
	SPL City Party deputy Secretary
	MDUCG District Party Secretary
	SPL District Party deputy Secretary
	SPL autonomous area deputy-Party Secretary
3	Provincial Vice-Governor
	Autonomous Region (AR) Vice-Chairman
	MDUCG Vice-Mayor
	Provincial/Central Municipality/Autonomous region standing committee
	SPL cities Mayor
	SPL district head
	SPL autonomous region head
4	Provincial Vice-Party Secretary
	AR Vice-Party Secretary
	MDUCG Vice-Party Secretary
	SPL cities Party Secretary
	SPL district Party Secretary
	SPL autonomous region Party Secretary
5	Provincial Governor
	AR Chairman
	MDUCG Mayor
6	Provincial Party Secretary
	AR Party Secretary
	MDUCG Party Secretary
7	Department Chief for any Ministry [any]
	Prefecture-level Department Chief [any]
8	Provincial Prefecture-level office chief [any]
	Provincial prefecture-level bureau chief [any]
9	National bureau vice-director [any]
10	National bureau director [any]
11	Central bureau vice-director [any]
12	Central bureau director [any]
13	Vice-Minister [any]
14	Minister [any]

Annex 2: Thresholds Values and Thresholds Completion						
Groups	Central Committee	Level 3[1]	Level 4	Level 5	Entry	Average Completion
Non-tuanpai individuals (n=57) 1992	58.82	56.89	51.96	48.59	21.98	2.68
Tuanpai (n=1) 1992	59	N	55	51	19	1
Threshold values	58.81	59.31	53.81	49.81	26.31	
Non-tuanpai individuals (n=81) 1997	56.78	55.44	48.41	44.75	26.28	3.64
Tuanpai individuals (n=2) 1997	47.5	46	34.5	33	24.5	4
Threshold values	59.69	56.19	53.19	52.19	26.19	
Non-tuanpai individuals (n=80) 2002	56.64	55.31	47.44	43.18	26.24	2.16
Tuanpai individuals (n=6) 2002	53	50.33	40.83	38.20	23	3.67
Threshold values	51.63	54.13	47.63	45.63	26.13	
Non-tuanpai individuals (n=64) 2007	57.14	55.51	47.88	43.35	25.27	2.91
Tuanpai individuals (n=17) 2007	55.35	53.35	39.53	34.44	22.65	3.29
Threshold values	53.91	52.41	51.41	47.41	33.41	
Non-tuanpai individuals (n=78) 2012	57.59	55.94	46.59	41.3	22.64	2.13
Tuanpai individuals (n=12) 2012	57.83	54.50	42.58	34.83	22.42	3.08
Threshold values	56.35	52.85	45.85	40.85	32.35	
<i>Threshold values (level 2)</i>						
Turnover	1992	2007	2002	2007	2012	
Value	65.81	63.19	57.63	57.91	62.35	

Annex 3: Age Variation [t-tests Table]

Groups	Sub-provincial	Prefecture
Central Committee New members 1997	$t_{a/2}$ (81)4.3206 P.0001	$t_{a/2}$ (81)3.9536 P.0002
Central Committee New members 2002	$t_{a/2}$ (84)3.4178 P.001	$t_{a/2}$ (84)2.8004 P.0063
Central Committee New members 2007	$t_{a/2}$ (79)6.8838 P.0001	$t_{a/2}$ (79)8.0649 P.0001
Central Committee New members 2012	$t_{a/2}$ (88)3.6604 P.0004	$t_{a/2}$ (88)5.8425 P.0001
<i>Compressed results</i>		
Central Committee New members 1992-2012 [n=399]	$t_{a/2}$ (397)9.5095 P.0001	$t_{a/2}$ (397)10.9977 P.0001
<i>Complete Career assessment [including post-Central Committee positions]</i>		
Groups	Provincial level	
Central Committee New members 1997	$t_{a/2}$ (78)3.3494 P.0012	
Central Committee New members 2002	$t_{a/2}$ (82)2.8931 P.0049	
Central Committee New members 2007	$t_{a/2}$ (73)2.0088 P.0483	
Central Committee New members 2012	$t_{a/2}$ (76)1.1414 ns	

Graphic 1: Age Variation (Strata)



Annex 4: Age Variation Per Level and as Composed Indicator

Variables Tested: being 5 years below each level's age average; 10 years below; having been 5 years below level 5, 4, and 3's age average; having been 10 years below level 5, 4, and 3's age average; having been 5 years below level 5,4, 3, CC's age average; having been 10 years below level 4, 3, CC's age average.

<i>Groups [Single path]</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [n=38])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture]	3.249	.401	.000
5 years below age average [sub-provincial]	2.758	.380	.000
10 years below age average [prefecture]	3.868	.813	.000
10 years below age average [sub-provincial]	4.020	.805	.000
10 years below age average [provincial]	2.351	.730	.001
10 years below age average [Central Committee]	2.125	.694	.002
<i>Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [n=28])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture]	3.210	.455	.000
5 years below age average [sub-provincial]	1.915	.413	.000
10 years below age average [prefecture]	2.767	.668	.000
10 years below age average [sub-provincial]	1.695	.708	.017
<i>Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [n=14])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture]	2.964	.613	.000
10 years below age average [prefecture]	3.229	.721	.000
10 years below age average [sub-provincial]	5.134	.792	.000
10 years below age average [provincial]	3.031	.792	.000
10 years below age average [Central Committee]	2.846	.770	.000
<i>Groups [Composed path]</i>			
<i>Tuanpai individuals (Provincial/Central Secretariat/First Secretariat 1992-2012 [n=38])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture and sub-provincial]	2.927	.420	.000
5 years below age average [prefecture, sub-provincial and provincial]	1.786	.540	.001
10 years below age average [prefecture and sub-provincial]	3.999	1.110	.000
<i>Tuanpai individuals (Provincial Secretaries 1992-2012 [n=28])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture and sub-provincial]	2.378	.447	.000
10 years below age average [prefecture and sub-provincial]	1.954	.889	.028
<i>Tuanpai individuals (Central Secretariat [n=14])</i>			
5 years below age average [prefecture and sub-provincial]	3.720	.631	.000
5 years below age average [prefecture, sub-provincial and provincial]	1.978	.706	.005
10 years below age average [prefecture and sub-provincial]	4.339	.923	.000
10 years below age average [prefecture, sub-provincial, provincial]	4.159	1.259	.001