

Institutionalisation of the Party's Leadership Nomination System: The "Path" to the Top in Communist China⁺

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Abstract

How are top leaders selected in Communist China? Following an in-depth literature review of Elite formation and selection inside the Chinese Communist Party, this paper posits the existence of a "path" leading to the top of the leadership structure. The latter is built around provincial experiences, specific positions in particular regions, age thresholds and other institutional constraints which regulate and organise access to the apex of the Party-State apparatus. Therefore, the objective of this research is to emphasise the more formal side of Chinese Elite politics and at the same time to provide "guidelines" as to where to look and what to look for when trying to identify "promotable" individuals for leadership turnover.

Keywords: *Chinese Elite politics, Elite formation in China, institutionalisation, leadership transition, Party-State apparatus*

1. Introduction

How are top leaders (i.e. members of the Politburo) selected in Communist China? Since the late 1970s, two main arguments have been developed regarding this specific inquiry. Influenced by the pre-reform political environment, the first one mainly exploits informal politics in order to explain leadership selection (e.g. Huang, 2000; Lam, 2006; Lam, 2007; Nathan, 1973; Tsou, 1976, to name just a few). However, there is an ongoing trend towards institutionalisation and formal politics that began during the reform era (Bo, 2007a, 2009; Zang, 2004, 2005; Zeng, 2013, 2014; Zhou, 1995; Miller, 2013)¹. It also reshaped Elite formation and appointment structure (e.g. norms and procedures) inside the Party-State apparatus. Leadership transitions have since become less violent, more institutionalised and informal politics have

become somewhat less important (Dittmer, 1990: 405). Others argue that there exists a functional differentiation amongst Elites leading to two distinct career paths (i.e. the Chinese Government system and the Chinese Communist Party hierarchy), each having their own specific criteria and logic for selection and appointment (Zang, 2005; Zeng, 2013).

I concur with Zang Xiaowei² (2004, 2005) and Zhou Xueguang's (1995, 2001) position regarding institutionalisation of Elite formation and frame this article in a similar perspective. Furthermore, I also agree with Bo Zhiyue's (2003, 2014) ideas concerning specific variables (e.g. provincial experience) and their importance for top Elite selection. As such, I believe there exists "active" rules of promotion (e.g. formal institutional constraints)³ that regulate the rise to top leadership. Thus, my argument resides in the existence of a "path" composed of an ordered set of positions, different regional experiences combined with a time threshold. In addition, age will determine whether an individual is later deemed "promotable" or "terminable" (i.e. the speed at which one can complete the requirements in order to be selected) (Yang, 2003; Zang, 2004).

First, I address current literature on leadership selection, more specifically, the factionalist approach and then proceed to examine other recurring elements such as seniority inside the Party and age (i.e. youth, rejuvenation). The latter two are framed under the notions of "active" and "passive" rules of promotion. Throughout this section, elements will not only be presented, but also their conclusions will be reassessed. Lastly, I will proceed to the demonstration. I present what I have identified as the "path" and address each of its components as to shed a new light on the Elite selection process in contemporary communist China. In turn, these elements could potentially help us identify "promotable" individuals for top leadership positions in the coming years.⁴

The contributions of this article to the field of Chinese Elite politics are both methodological and theoretical. First, contrary to the more widely used multivariate regression (Chen, 2014) and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (Zeng, 2013; Huang, 2013a) (frequentist view), this article is inspired by a method similar to the "Bayesian" approach (occurrence view). The "frequentist" view, which is considered a traditional approach, is based on a more "bottom-up" research design and often qualified as more rigid (Longford, 2007). That being said, I do not oppose the two nor do I reject the "frequentist" approaches.

On the other hand, the "Bayesian" approach with its "top-down" design allows us to assess the leadership selection problem from a diametrically opposite angle (i.e. starting from the problem and trying to find the causes). In turn, this provides different results regarding certain aspects presented in the literature.

Furthermore, this article brings new elements to the recent leadership selection literature as it develops and provides a detailed description of the “path” to top leadership and optimises it as to combine age, preferred position and regional experience. It also brings overlooked elements, such as the age threshold between levels of leadership, as a key element for individuals to reach top leadership positions in due time.

Lastly, the article provides a new take on the notion of “seniority” by establishing these thresholds and combining them with key positions. As such, this study sets up the “priors” (i.e. top leadership shared characteristics) in order to assess their validity for ulterior modelling, testing and analysis.

1.1 Limits and Scope

This paper does not claim to determine a definite set of rules, lay down a decisive predictive model nor to fully explain leadership selection. Furthermore, considering space constraints, the paper cannot address all the variables present in the current leadership selection literature. It also does not attempt to foretell who will be nominated to the Politburo during the 19th Party Congress in 2017. *In addition, this article does not seek to replace factionalism and should be seen as a modest add-on to a pre-existing set of assumptions regarding leadership selection in China.* Informal politics will remain important and continue to influence policy process though mediated by institutional constraints. As such, both approaches (i.e. institutionalisation and factionalism) should be seen as complementary for two reasons: (1) where rules fail to explain specific appointments, factionalism can often offer precious insights and (2) to be part of a faction is no longer sufficient to be promoted as other criteria are now required to ascend to top leadership positions.

In addition, this study mainly deals with the 2012 iteration. The 16th Congress does not offer viable data as rules for retirement/promotion changed in 2002. As for the 17th Party Congress, its major concern was to prepare the next generation of leadership transition in 2012. As such, I have decided, just as Zeng Jinghan (2013) before me, to focus on the 18th Party Congress in order to draw the outline of what could be the new or the continuous sets of rules for leadership promotion.

Lastly, all information used to build the database, categorisation, enumeration and to perform tests are all available public information.

2. Factionalism: A Synoptic Appraisal

Factionalism is possibly the oldest and the most common approach used to explain leadership change inside the Politburo. Over the years, several authors have used it and participated in its further elaboration. We can think

of Andrew J. Nathan (1973), Tsou Tang (1976), Li Cheng,⁵ Willy Lam (2006, 2007), Bo Zhiyue (2007a, 2009, 2012), Nan Lei (2009), Huang Jing (2000), Victor Shih *et al.* (2012) and Zeng Jinghan (2013) to name a few.

Factionalism posits factional relationships as the main explanatory variables concerning leadership change and nomination in communist China. The latter draws upon different key background elements, for instance, being an alumni of the same university (e.g. the Qinghua clique), sharing the same regional/provincial origin (Shanghai Gang),⁶ members of the same mass organisation (Communist Youth League), association with older leaders (e.g. being under the “wing” of Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, etc.), and working in the same bureau/government office (Miller, 2010; Wang, 2006), in order to link Cadres and leaders together as to form a “faction”. Some also acknowledge the existence of an Oil faction (Huang, 2000) and of a “returnees” faction (Li, 2006).

Earlier analysis tended to shift between the “winner-takes-all” approach (Tsou, 1976), wherein the objective is to destroy other contenders and to dominate the Party-State apparatus, and the “balancing” approach (Bo, 2007a, 2009; Nathan, 1973). The latter means that “a certain balance can be obtained amongst different players” (Bo, 2007a: 427). As such, the “balancing” approach is the direct opposite of the previously mentioned “winner-takes-all”. It also signifies that distribution of positions and power inside both the Party and State apparatuses are creating a form of check and balances amidst factions.

Those earlier versions emphasised conflict-based leadership transition and are rooted in the pre-reform institutional arrangements (i.e. weaker institutions vs. usage of charisma) (Zang, 2005). Since then, most studies have tilted toward the second approach, thus putting more emphasis on bargaining, reshuffling and equilibrium between factions at the Centre.

Further mathematical models (e.g. game theory [Huang, 2000]) and multivariable analysis have also been used to test several hypotheses regarding the rise and decline of faction supporters (Shih *et al.*, 2012). Other analysis are slowly moving away from factions’ overrepresentation in Chinese communist politics and are now paying attention to other variables, such as provincial experience (Bo, 2003), the importance of diplomas (Bo, 2012; Yang, 2003) and the age factor (Kou and Zang, 2014; Zheng, 2003).

Over the years, ambiguities, for lack of a better word, related to the factionalist approach⁷ have been underlined. Most of these difficulties are, in effect, methodological (Kou, 2010b: 2).

First, definitions of “faction”, “factional groups” and informal groups have not, since Nathan and Tsou, been reassessed by authors in light of the changing reality of Chinese politics.⁸

As such, categorisation remains problematic when using the notion of faction (e.g. placing a specific individual under the right factional etiquette).

When looking at different sources, it is sometimes difficult to place an individual in a faction (e.g. Liu Yandong and Li Yuanchao are both considered “Princelings”,⁹ associated to Shanghai¹⁰ and to the Communist Youth League¹¹ due to their background (Bo, 2010: 30-31). What should we make of individuals such as Wang Qishan, who is said to be CYCL (Committee of Young Chinese Leaders) yet is the step-son of Yao Yilin¹² (Bo, 2010: 31)? And what of Han Zheng?¹³ These are only a few of the “difficult” cases when it comes to making clear factional categorisation inside data sets. Zeng Jinghan also underlined this difficulty (i.e. identifying who belongs to which faction) (2013: 234) and suggested that other factors (e.g. the age factor, etc.) might be of greater importance when looking at leadership transition.

Lastly, using the notion of faction as an empirical indicator for analysis can also lead to certain issues. For instance, the “Princelings”, as a group, does not fit the minimal requirements to be considered a faction under the approach as it is currently defined. To a certain extent, “Princes” and “Princesses” have their own network. They are also not necessarily fond of each other. Thus the “Princelings” have yet to be proven to form a cohesive group.¹⁴

As for the *Tuanpai* (团派), or CYCL, one question regarding their affiliation and identification comes to mind: as of 2014, there were more than 89 million *Tuanpai* members in China (RMRB, 2014). Taking into account everyone who has performed duties in this mass organisation to form one single faction is clearly overstretching the original meaning. To take into account Provincial and Central CYCL positions would still be stretching it too far (Breslin, 2008; Bo, 2007b). Instead, key positions should be set as indicators in order to make more precise analysis (e.g. the position of Communist Youth League First Secretary of the Central Secretariat [*Gongqingtuan Zhongyang shuji chu diyi shuji*, 共青团中央书记处第一书记]).¹⁵ Accordingly, when looking at the Politburo (n=23), only 4 individuals¹⁶ do have a main Provincial *Tuanpai* position (*Gongqingtuan sheng shuji*, 共青团省委书记) and only 2 have the pivotal First Secretary position.¹⁷

To this effect, it is of no surprise that Bo uses the term “categorical group” to describe the *Tuanpai* (2007a: 240). Furthermore, according to Kou and Tsai, it is not shocking that more and more Cadres use the “CYCL” structure to ascend as it is a “career trajectory for aspiring leaders”, most of them not tied to Hu Jintao (2014: 159-162).

The Shanghai Gang also raises issues: to which specific “Shanghai Gang” are we referring to? A careful literature review makes it possible to encounter two different “Gangs”, both responding to distinct organisational logics. The first one, “Jiang-centric”, revolves around the direct association with Jiang Zemin (Wang, 2006: 125). The second one is based on the “East China Commanding System” ties (*Huadong xitong*, 华东系统). It answers to a lineage logic (*xuetong*, 血统),¹⁸ thus being closer to the “Princelings”

(Gao, 2001: 159). However, these details are sometimes not included in some analysis.

These are some of the difficulties encountered while looking at factionalism in terms of leadership appointment in Chinese politics. In other words, the main problems are its instability and its unpredictability (Zang 2005: 210; Zeng, 2013: 234). However, this approach should not be disregarded since “new” institutionalisation and formalisation explanations are emanating from it and still rely on it to provide further clarifications.

Factional ties, as a “required credential”, are often considered to be part of the “active” rules of promotion, or something that is needed to climb the ladder of the leadership structure. Furthermore, it can also be considered a “passive” rule (i.e. which regards dismissals/retirements), especially when the factional balance shifts towards a different faction (i.e. the new leader might want to “reshuffle” the personnel and bring in close supporters).

To a certain extent, proponents of factionalism tend to consider “faction” as an independent variable whose presence/absence explains the top leadership nomination. Far from discarding the latter, I however believe that “faction” – as a recurring element – is to be considered as an intermediate variable whose presence/absence affects an individual’s chances of completing, in due time (i.e. remain promotable) the institutional requirements that make up the “path”. Therefore, to be part of a “faction” helps to obtain qualifications and to get them faster. However, being a member of a “faction” does not guarantee reaching the top rather than to be more easily considered for a series of “mandatory” positions needed to reach the latter.

I also wish to stress, as Zeng (2013: 228) and Breslin (2008: 221) did before, that *the Party does not have a factional policy*. Consequently, one of the latent objective of this paper is to divert from the use of the factional variable as many other studies have already measured it before (Shih *et al.*, 2012; Zeng, 2013). Therefore, the factional variable’s inclusion would not enable us to expand nor further develop the current hypothesis and results regarding the “path” and it would go well beyond the scope of the current research’s limitation.

Accordingly, I wish to ponder other explanatory venues which emphasise formal rules and constraints. Therefore, this paper focuses on what Bo (2010) and Kou (2010b) call “Paths to the top” and is framed on the “formal side” of leadership selection and appointment.

3. Functional Differentiation and the Importance of Geographic/ Political Positions

There exists a division of labour between administrative and political positions inside the Party. The latter allows for the separation of top Elites in

two distinct groups: (1) deciders and (2) policy implementers. The first ones being the most important (Payette and Mascotto, 2011: 147). This functional differentiation system (*fenshuhua*, 分殊化)¹⁹ has been underlined by both Zang (2005, 2005) and Zhou (1995, 2001) in a similar fashion. The division is made amongst four specific groups (Zhou, 1995: 442):

1. Administrators (*xingzheng ganbu*, 行政干部);
2. Technocrats (*jishu ganbu*, 技术干部);
3. Managers (*guanli ganbu*, 管理干部);
4. Politicrats (*zhenggong ganbu*, 政工干部).

Both Zang and Zhou demonstrate the existence of a dual structure (politicians/administrators) which is a result of the reform process (Zang, 2004). Accordingly, there is an Elite stratification that leads to different (1) career paths, (2) mobility/promotion/recruitment structures, and (3) roles inside the Party-State apparatus.

For political positions, Party seniority and political loyalty²⁰ are favoured, and for the three other cases, education and expertise are privileged (Walder, 1991; Zang, 2005; Zhou, 1995). As such, both education and expertise will be more important for administrative positions than for Party positions (Zhou, 1995, 2001). Hence, the State administration and Party apparatus are targeting different individuals according to either political credentials or technical expertise.²¹

The Elite distinction I posit is slightly different from both Zang and Zhou as it uses the simple *Tiaotiao/Kuaikuai* (条条/块块) organising principle as the positioning system. Furthermore, using *Tiao/Kuai*, which is in of itself a binary structure, simplifies the dual track system by being able to encompass more positions and by drawing a simpler line between Politicians and Administrators. As such, *Tiao/Kuai* supposes a functional differentiation between the administrative and political structures and between administrators and politicians (Politicrats) [Table 1].²²

Contrary to Zang and Zhou, Governing – Political – positions encompass Governors, Vice-Governors as well as Provincial Party secretaries [Table 2].

Table 1 Division of Labour Inside the Party

<i>Position</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Nature</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Tiao (条)	Functional	Administrative	Minister, Bureau Director, Section Chief.
Kuai (块)	Geographic	Political	Provincial Party Secretary, Provincial Party Vice Secretary, Governor, Vice-Governor, City Party Secretary, Mayor.

Table 2 Hierarchical Structure

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Name (Chinese)</i>	<i>Name (English)</i>	<i>Position (Example)</i>
1	国家级正职 (<i>Guojiaji zhengzhi</i>)	National Main Position	Politburo Standing Committee, Prime Minister
2	国家级副职 (<i>Guojiaji fuzhi</i>)	National Vice-Main Position	Politburo Member, Vice-Prime Minister
3	省部级正职 (<i>Sheng Bu ji zhengzhi</i>)	Provincial/ Ministerial Main Position	Governor, Minister, Provincial Party Secretary; CYCL First Secretary of the Central Secretariat, State-Council Central Bureaus Director, etc.
4	省部级副职 (<i>Sheng Bu ji fuzhi</i>)	Provincial/ Ministerial Vice-Main Position	Vice-Governor, Vice-Minister, Sub-provincial District Mayor, Sub-provincial Autonomous Prefectures Governor, National Bureaus Director, State Council Central Bureaus Vice-Director, etc.
5	厅局级正职 (<i>Ting Ju ji zhengzhi</i>)	Office/Bureau Main Position	Bureau-Chief, Prefecture-level Cities Mayor, Prefecture-level Cities Party Secretary, Provincial-level Office Director, etc.
6	厅局级副职 (<i>Ting Ju ji fuzhi</i>)	Office/Bureau Vice-Main Position	Prefecture-level Cities Vice-Mayor, Sub-provincial Cities District Head, Prefecture-level Cities Bureau Director, etc.
7	县处级正职 (<i>Xian Chu ji zhengzhi</i>)	County/ Department Main Position	County-level Cities Mayor, Prefecture-level Cities District/ County Head, Prefecture-level Bureau Chief, etc.
8	县处级副职 (<i>Xian Chu ji fuzhi</i>)	County/ Department Vice-Main Position	County-level Cities Party Secretary, County-level Cities Mayoral Assistant, etc.
9	乡科级正职 (<i>Xiang Ke ji zhengzhi</i>)	Township/ Branch Main Position	Township Party Secretary, Town Mayor, County Level Bureaus Chief, etc.
10	乡科级正职 (<i>Xiang Ke ji fuzhi</i>)	Township/ branch Vice-Main Position	Township Vice-Party Secretary, Town Vice-Mayor, Working Unit Vice-Director, etc.
11	科员 (<i>Ke yuan</i>)	Branch Staff	
12	办事员 (<i>Banshi yuan</i>)	Working Unit Staff	

Note: This list contains public information.

As for the functional administrative positions – *Tiao*, they are administrators and managers. This includes Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Bureau Chiefs, Section Chiefs, etc. [Table 2]. I assume, as did Zang (2004), Zhou (1995), Bo (2003, 2014), and Chen and Chen (2007), that occupying political positions (e.g. a series of *Kuai* positions) leads to faster promotion inside the Party-State apparatus.

Individuals coming from the *Tiao* structure will, at times, be put on a *Kuai* path in order to be nominated to key Party positions. Therefore, switching from *Tiao* to *Kuai* is crucial for any Cadre seeking to improve his conditions. For example, we can think of a minister later on becoming a provincial governor/Party Secretary. Furthermore, as Zhou puts it, career paths are directly tied to resources allocation and life chances (1995: 444). On the other hand, individuals already vested on a *Kuai* path will rarely digress to later on become administrators/managers (*Tiao*). Such changes would be seen as demotions or as a failure to be promoted to a higher echelon.

This paper focuses on the *Kuai* – Politicrats – career path and ponders how and according to which criteria individuals are selected to higher political positions inside the Party-State. Accordingly, Diagram 1 [Annex B] clearly demonstrates the presence of strong links between higher Party position and enumerated *Kuai* positions [Table 2].

4. The Rules of Nomination

This section primarily deals with the next three most commonly found elements regarding Elite selection and promotion in the literature: (1) age; (2) education; (3) Party seniority. Furthermore, as it will become relevant in upcoming parts, this section first introduces the notions of “active” and “passive” rules of appointment/dismissal.

4.1 Notion of “Active” and “Passive” Rules

In order to understand the demonstration and the general inquiry into the Chinese leadership and Elite nomination system, it is crucial to explain and define what is meant by both “active” and “passive” rules of appointment/dismissal [Table 3].

Active rules are needed elements, without going so far as to say “necessary”, in order to both progress and possibly reach the top of the Party-State apparatus. Passive rules, on the other hand, are present at critical junctures and posit limitations to a certain position. As such, Party members are subjected, and somehow constrained, to these passive rules. Thus, if a Cadre’s required promotion criteria are not met, passive rules will either dictate resignation or to remain “stalled” at the same level.

Table 3 Active/Passive Rules

<i>Type</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Brief Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
Active	Concerns appointments/promotions	Elements needed in order to progress inside the Party-State apparatus	Specific credentials or experience required for a position; factional ties
Passive	Concerns dismissals/retirements	Critical points that, when reached, require dismissal/retirement	Age limit for a specific set of positions; investigation for wrongdoing; factional ties; ten-year tenure

In some cases, nominations can actually be informal demotions. For example, being nominated to either the Consultative Conference or the National's People Congress, despite having high constitutional value, is not considered to be a promotion but rather a dead-end or, depending on the individual's age, a way to "age actively" (*fahui yure*, 发挥余热) (Kou, 2010b: 12).

This notion of active/passive rules, is specific to this inquiry and analysis. As previously mentioned, the factionalist approach would fall on the "active" rules side as being, according to some, a defining element, if not the only one, explaining nominations to top leadership positions.

4.2 Age and Rejuvenation

4.2.1 Age Ceilings and Dismissal/Retirement

Since the 16th Party Congress, rules regarding rejuvenation and compulsory retirements inside the Party have been pushed to the forefront by the Central Leadership. These rules and rejuvenation mechanisms predate the 16th Party Congress. The Retirement System has been implemented since the early 1980s under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping (Yang, 2003: 113).

The best example of the latter is probably the "ceiling of 70 years old" (*qishi sui huaxian litui*, 七十岁划线离退),²³ the first formally institutionalised criterion (Kou, 2010a: 107).²⁴ This particular retirement rule is now applied at most levels and was imposed on both future Cadres as well as, in 2002, current ones (Kou, 2010b: 13).²⁵ This decision also provided guidelines for the selection of Cadres, such as trying to maintain the average age of the Politburo around 60 years old (Kou, 2010b).

Age limit regarding retirement below the Central leadership was also lowered. According to Kou, the new limit for the Politburo should be 68 (2005: 151-155). Furthermore, we know that Cadres of both vice-ministerial

and ministerial levels must retire (if not promoted) at 60 and 65 years old respectively (Huang, 2009: 167).²⁶ Provincially ranked Cadres must also leave at 65, sub-provincial at 60, and prefecture-level cities Cadres at 60.

Furthermore, the Central Organization Department has implemented the "2-5-8 requirement" (*er, wu, ba, nianling yaoqiu*, 二, 五, 八年龄要求) (Kou, 2010a: 194; Zheng, 2003). This implies that section chiefs (*kezhang*, 科长), department chiefs (*chuzhang*, 处长) and bureau chiefs (*sizhang*, 司长) must leave their forefront position – if not promoted – at 52, 55 and 58 years old respectively (Zheng, 2003: 175-190). Even if giving a complete overview of those retirement regulations is not possible, it is certain that Cadres from both the Party and the Government are now facing restrictions in terms of age (Huang, 2009: 84).²⁷ This idea of Party rejuvenation is also commonly found inside the leadership transition literature (Yang, 2003; Baum, 2011; Bo, 2012; Lam, 2007).²⁸ As previously stated, this idea, though not new, deserves attention as it lends a lot of importance to age, as a variable, accounting for Cadres' appointment.

As explained, there are now age limits to compel retirement at various levels inside the Party-State apparatus. These were made a priority by Deng Xiaoping after 1978 (Harding, 2011: 152). These "passive" rules are also used as a generational replacement mechanism (Wu, 2004: 70) and during the Central reshuffling (*huan jie*, 换届) process taking place during Party Congress meetings.

Table 4 Age of the Central Committee (CC), 2012

<i>Age Classes</i>	<i>CC (n2)</i>	<i>PB (n1)</i>	<i>[42 Military+ 6 Exclusions]</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
[40-42]	2	1	0	3	1.46
[43-45]	1	3	0	4	1.95
[46-48]	3	2	0	5	2.44
[49-51]	10	5	1	16	7.80
[52-54]	15	4	3	22	10.73
[55-57]	42	7	13	62	30.24
[58-60]	46	0	26	72	35.12
[61-63]	15	1	5	21	10.24
Total	134	23	48	205	100.00

Note: Some of the data in Table 4 (e.g. age composition of the Politburo (PB)) has been presented in Zeng (2014: 301) for the 18th Congress. The data sets for the 15th, 16th and 17th Congress can be found in Huang (2013: 27) and in Bo (2009: 37).²⁹

Further constraints also exist when it comes to promoting the Party's rejuvenation and avoiding too many "aged" officials/cadres from certain Party organs:

1. Under no circumstance must the age of members nominated to the Central Committee be above 64 years old³⁰ [Table 4];
2. Ministerial or Provincial level Cadres wanting to be nominated to the Central Committee must not be older than 62 years old;
3. Those of vice-ministerial rank [Table 4] wanting to be appointed to the Central Committee must be under 57 years of age (Kou, 2010a: 156-157).
4. Party leaders must also, when promoting Cadres to the Central Committee, select "excellent" members under 50 years old.

As such, age is now considered to be of utmost importance when selecting both the top leadership and other lower Party Cadres (Huang, 2010: 22-23; Kou, 2010a). Furthermore, these "passive" rules are acting as "active" rules for younger Cadres wanting to ascend to higher positions inside the Party-State apparatus.

Local Cadres (County Main position [*xian chu ji zhengzhi*, 县处级正职] and Township Main position [*xiang ke ji zhengzhi*, 乡科级正职]) [Table 2] also have specific appointment rules. County officials should not exceed 45 years of age when appointed, while they should be below 40 to be appointed to Townships main positions³¹ (Yang, 2003: 112). According to Yang, this makes political careers at these two levels very brief for Cadres: if one gets appointed at any of those levels between 35-45, their career is practically already over (Yang, 2003: 113).³²

The Party's age composition must reflect the contemporary Chinese population's characteristics, hence the establishment of the rejuvenation program during the 15th Party Congress in 1997 (Kou, 2010b: 8).

4.2.2 The Party "Rejuvenation" Hypothesis

During the 17th Party Congress (2007), newly appointed Politburo (PB) members (10) aged 59 years or less represented 60 per cent and those aged 60 and above, 40 per cent. However, in 2012, newly appointed members (15)³³ of 59 years of age or lower represented 46.67 per cent of the nominations, those 60 years of age and above, 53.33 per cent.

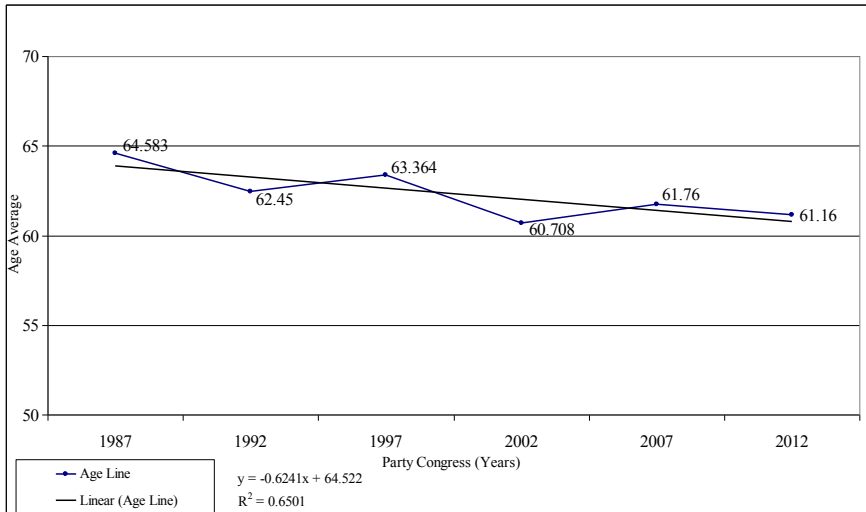
This observation begs the question of whether or not there is an actual rejuvenation of the top leadership structure and if youth, relatively speaking, is as decisive as some would argue. As previously described, some rules are now in effect to reduce the aging of the Politburo. However, after computing and testing the data, regardless of the slight fluctuation in the overall average from 1987 to 2012, age remains statistically non-significant.

Table 5 Politburo Data Sets

	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012
Age Average	64.583	62.45	63.364	60.708	61.76	61.16
Remaining Age Average	70.429	62.5	65.143	62	64	63
Appointed Age Average	56.4	62.429	60.25	60.067	58.4	59.933
Variance (VAR)	74.447	36.892	31.576	10.998	18.357	26.723
Remaining VAR	28.952	21.5	23.670	8.286	3.857	16
Appointed VAR	17.8	45.648	33.357	11.663	22.044	31.495
Standard Deviation (STDEV)	8.628	6.074	5.619	3.316	4.284	5.169
Remaining STDEV	5.381	4.637	4.865	2.878	1.964	4
Appointed STDEV	4.219	6.756	5.776	3.415	4.695	5.612
Number of Values	12	20	22	24	25	25
Coefficient of Variation	13.4%	9.7%	8.86%	5.46%	6.9%	8.45%

Note: The three first rows, have been presented under different forms by Zeng Jinghan (2013) and Li Cheng (2013: 3). Appointed and incumbent member's age and other calculations such as Standard Deviation can also be found in Huang (2013: 27).

Graphic 1 PB Average Age, 1987-2012



I first performed a trend analysis (1987-2012) to calculate the slope (b)³⁴ in order to effectively see the rejuvenation of the Politburo's members. The result of the equation³⁵ indeed shows a progressive average age decline. Linear regression showed a slight variation.³⁶ Also, the trend line [Graphic 1]

shows a correlation.³⁷ However, further explanations are necessary. As such, I decided to use the trend result because another methodology was needed to predict, and the trend allowed me to make this projection.

When looking at the trend result, we can see that 37.6 per cent of appointments cannot be explained using age as a primary variable. Furthermore, this explanation (i.e. Party rejuvenation) is rather implicit and also structural: it is required by the institution itself (Yang, 2003). Hence, the regression of around 1/12 of a year (1 month) per year, or less than 6 months per 5 years, does show a slow, yet steady rejuvenation. Nonetheless, I believe this result cannot be understood as a conclusive proof regarding primary rules of appointments.

I also performed *t*-tests between the age average of 1987 and 2012³⁸, 1997 and 2012,³⁹ 2002 and 2012,⁴⁰ and between 2007 and 2012.⁴¹ As their results indicate, all were statistically non-significant. I followed with several unilateral student *t*-tests (i.e. within all the newcomers) [Annex C]. All, except for one (i.e. 1997-2002), were statistically non-significant. This is explained by the implementation of the rejuvenation plan during the 15th Party Congress and its reinforcement during the 16th in 2002. Otherwise, this is the only time rejuvenation or youth can be seen as a statistically significant variable for top leadership promotion [Annex C].

Regardless of the impression of a more important rejuvenation when looking at the 3.42 years decrease between 1987 and 2012 [Table 7], it remains statistically non-significant with a relatively weak S_p^2 . Variance and Standard Deviation [SD] also show greater homogeneity in the Politburo's age composition.

The argument regarding rejuvenation seems to be focused on the 2002-2012 decade. When looking at the SD, which remains high, we can see a rising number of increasingly younger individuals entering the Politburo. To this effect, new members are effectively younger. However their impact on the overall average age remains limited considering the high degree of fluctuation noticed in the SD and the few "very young" individuals.

Thus, age, youth specifically, is not a statistically significant variable when it comes to leadership selection inside the Politburo. Furthermore, the trend equation result is mostly mediated by what I have called the "path", namely its length and the speed at which individuals can actually complete its requirements. This, in turn, has been shown by the *t*-tests. Hence, all these elements are pointing in the direction of the main hypothesis regarding the "path" (i.e. specific qualifications and experiences).

4.2.3 Seniority in the Party or the "Loyalty" Component

As previously mentioned, one of Zang and Zhou's⁴² hypotheses is concerned about Party seniority as a leading criterion for Politicrats' promotion.

Table 6 Party Seniority (2012)

<i>Entry Year</i>	<i>Duration (years)</i>	<i>n1</i>	<i>Group %</i>	<i>n2</i>	<i>Group %</i>	<i>n1+n2</i>	<i>Total %</i>
[1964-1968]	48-44	3	13	2	1	5	3
[1969-1973]	43-39	8	35	41	31	49	31
[1974-1978]	38-34	6	26	52	39	58	37
[1979-1983]	33-29	4	17	19	14	23	15
[1984-1988]	28-24	2	9	17	13	19	12
[1989-1993]	23-19	0	0	1	1	1	1
N/A		0	0	2	1	2 ⁴³	1
Average Duration	33.5						
Total		23		134		157	

Source: Author's own database.

When looking at Party Seniority (2012) [Table 6], we can see that duration composition is relatively similar between the Politburo (*n1*) and the Central Committee (*n2*). Furthermore, the largest class, which would be [1971-1976],⁴⁴ contains 87 individuals (55 per cent) of the Politburo and the Central Committee (*n*=157). Of those, 23 (26.4 per cent) are part of the Politburo. This leaves out 64 individuals (74.6 per cent), even when considering seniority as a crucial criterion.⁴⁵ Thus, there are other mechanics at work other than simply the time spent as a Party member. For example, some local-level Cadres can spend 30 plus years rotating around the same level without any vertical promotion.

Current literature on seniority (Miller, 2013; Shirk, 2012) focuses on a similar argument. Miller states that it is simple "arithmetic" and that seniority follows generations and predefined age limits. Shirk sees seniority as a way to manage competition inside the Party. However, as Table 6 clearly demonstrates, seniority itself is not sufficient to explain promotion. To this effect, I am more inclined to agree with Zeng Jinghan and Kou Jianwen, who actually saw that seniority was accompanied by "step-by-step promotions" [Zeng, 2013: 228; Kou and Tsai, 2014].

4.2.4 Diplomas or the Issue of Educational Differentiation

Educational requirements have been mandatory in order to reach higher rankings inside the Party apparatus since the late 1970s (Yang, 2003: 127) and were actually part of the Cadre's "4 transformations"⁴⁶ advocated by Deng

Xiaoping (Yang, 2003: 127). According to Yang, the educational requirements' main objective was to encourage the rise of the new technocratic Elite during the early 1980s while at the same time preventing the rise of "lesser elements". That being said, Yang acknowledges the fact that some of the diplomas (e.g. those delivered by the Central Party School) are more than questionable (2003: 110).

As for the 18th Party Congress, members of the Politburo all have post-secondary education [Table 7]: 26.09 per cent obtained a Bachelor's degree, 47.83 per cent a Master's degree, and 21.74 per cent a PhD.⁴⁷ For the second group ($n_2=134$), 13.4 per cent have a Bachelor's degree, 59 per cent a Master's degree, and 26.9 per cent reached the doctoral level.

Table 7 Education (Politburo and Central Committee)

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>B.A</i>	% on group	<i>M.A</i>	% on group	<i>PhD</i>	% on group	<i>Other</i>	% on group
PB (n_1)	23	6	26.09	11	47.83	5	21.74	1	4
CC (n_2)	134	18	13.40	79	59.00	36	26.90	1	1
(n_1+n_2)	157	24	15	90	57	41	26	1	1

Note: Data has been presented in Sun and Han (2012) and Jun Zheng (2012). Bo Zhiyue also presented the educational background of Provincial Leaders (2007-2012) (2014: 68) and the of the 17th Central Committee members (2009: 54).

Table 8 Education (Ministers)

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>B.A</i>	% on group	<i>M.A</i>	% on group	<i>PhD</i>	% on group	<i>Other</i>	% on group
Ministerial Group (2008-2013)	24	1	4.2	12	50.0	10	41.7	1	4.2
Central Bureaus (2008-2013)	9	1	11.1	3	33.3	5	55.6	0	0.0
Total	33	2	6.1	15	45.5	15	45.5	1	3.0

Source: Author's own database.⁴⁸

Table 8 presents education background of both the State Council's Ministerial components (*Guowuyuan zucheng bumen*, 国务院组成部门) and Ministerial-level agencies directly under the State-Council (*Zhenbuji Guowuyuan zhishu jigou*, 正部级国务院直属机构). Despite mostly overlapping with the Central Committee, these two groups, as administrators/

managers or *Tiao*, help us understand and further exemplifies the dual track system, its specific criteria and logic for selections and appointments.⁴⁹

In turn, this points out to Zang and Zhou's conclusion regarding the higher importance of diplomas for administrators rather than Politicrats. Through comparing their backgrounds with that of the Politburo members, we can see, when looking at cumulative frequencies of graduate and post-graduate diplomas, a difference averaging 20 per cent in favour of the Ministerial components (22.13 per cent) and Ministerial-level agencies (19.33 per cent). This goes to prove, to a certain extent, that education is of more importance for administrators than for Politburo members (i.e. top Politicrats).

Lastly, more ample analysis have been done elsewhere regarding the importance of education (i.e. undergraduate and graduate diplomas) and its consolidation as a basic requirement for Cadres' appointments since the Deng era (Chen, Chen and Chen, 2012; Li, 2013).

4.2.5 Cadres' Performance and "Being investigated"

The reader will note, I did not address the meritocratic argument in this section. Several studies exist on meritocracy as an important criterion for Cadre's promotion/demotion. In lots of cases, economic performance has been seen as a factor linked to promotion (Choi, 2012; Guo, 2007; Li and Zhou, 2005). However, the opposite has been argued as well (Shih *et al.*, 2012; Landry, 2003). Therefore, there is no clear consensus on this matter.

This debate also raises issues regarding the measurement of performances: is economic growth attributable to the Cadre's agency or to the existing economic structures? Also, we must be careful in using performance criteria since a small increase in an economically weak province would result in a higher percentage increase. Nonetheless, considering the goal (i.e. the path) and the space constraints, it was not possible to add this variable into the current analysis.

Lastly, being investigated for wrongdoing is also considered to be a passive rule as it represents a form of critical juncture for any individual. Being under investigation will drastically alter the chances of promotion for any Cadres and officials regardless of their current rank (e.g. former public security vice-minister Li Dongsheng (李东生), former Chongqing Party secretary Bo Xilai,⁵⁰ former National Development and Reform Commission vice-chairman Liu Tienan (刘铁男), to name just a few).

4.2.6 Remarks

Professional experience also forms a prerequisite for nomination. Bo Zhiyue already saw the recruitment potential of Provincial nomenclatures (2003)

and underlined the importance of this specific ranking level. He was later followed by Chen and Chen (2007: 57-85) who went one step further by saying that Cadres working in rich East-Coast Provinces had more chances to be nominated at the top. This meant that not only were Provincial positions important, but the province itself could be of significance for nominations. These elements will be a focal point in the upcoming demonstration.

Hence, in order to be promoted to the highest institution of the Party (i.e. the Politburo), one needs, all other things being equal or held constant, to satisfy an ever-growing list of prerequisites. Going over a position's limitation is no longer seen as possible since Hu Jintao broke the previous "Mentor politics" (Wu, 2004) path laid by both Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin (i.e. keeping the Central Military Commission [CMC] Presidency for an additional 2 years). Direct nominations (e.g. the decision of Deng Xiaoping to choose Hu Jintao to succeed Jiang Zemin) are no longer possible and should be seen as exceptions jeopardising the internal stability of the Party (Kou, 2010b: 10).

5. Demonstration: the "Path to the Top"

The demonstration proceeds from Robert Putnam's assumption regarding Elites: "individuals toward the bottom of the political stratification lack nearly all the prerequisites for exercising political power, whereas those toward the top have these characteristics in abundance" (1976: 26-27). Thus, prevalent characteristics have been selected as possible prerequisites.

Furthermore, I believe the Politburo is indicative of a certain set of rules when it comes to leadership selection. As such, by observing this group, some patterns emerged and some specific sequences (in terms of position) were identified. The elements I will focus on during the demonstration are siding with what we have previously labelled the "active" rules of promotion.

First, I will go back to the age factor in order to look at it from a different angle. Age itself has been proven to be more or less significant in terms of promotion. However, the latter plays a crucial role when understood in terms of thresholds between leadership levels. Second, I will assess a recent more commonly found element in the literature – Provincial experience. However, I will go one step further than current analysis by postulating that not only does the latter matter, but certain regions are favoured for the "path". Third, there are key positions "needed" in order to be deemed "promotable". These are *Kuai* ones – geographic/political. The fourth point overlaps both the Provincial experience and the *Kuai* position argument: not only are these two criteria of crucial importance, but certain positions are also favoured in specific regions making the completion of the "path" more arduous. Moreover, I briefly review some non-conclusive criteria that I previously tried to *operationalise* while building the data sets.

Finally, all of the identified criteria constitute what I previously called the "priors". As such, this demonstration acts as an exploratory research hoping to validate and *operationalise* promotion criteria for further model-building.

5.1 The Age Threshold within Levels or the Path's Time Factor

I previously engaged the argument regarding Party seniority as being of crucial importance to the rise to top Party positions. However, as demonstrated [Table 6], seniority alone is not sufficient to explain the selection and nomination processes inside the Party apparatus.

Furthermore, age, or rather, youth, alone is not sufficient to explain the top leadership selection process. Starting from Kou's idea regarding "sprinting with small steps" (2014), I have identified age thresholds within every level in order to demonstrate how the age factor matters. Each level's centre was identified and within level standard deviation was added to the centre afterwards as to form the cut-off threshold [Table 9].

These values were then used as a possible selection criteria considering that 81.73 per cent of the time (94 on 115 possible observations),⁵¹ Politburo members, as a group, did indeed respect these thresholds on average 4 out of 5 times (i.e. from level 0 – entry – to Central Committee). If we were to push the analysis to encompass level 2, 78.26 per cent (108 out of 138 possible observations) of the Politburo members would still meet 5 out of 6 thresholds. More precisely, 5 out of 7 individuals in the Standing Committee respected this "4/5 rule"; 10 out of 16 non-standing members also did for a total of 15 on 23 (n=23) or 65.21 per cent.

As such age thresholds within a specific level become especially important for promotion. As we examine for the most part "sprinters" – individuals who completed all requirements and remained "promotable" until top national positions – the thresholds they set become, to a certain extent, a

Table 9 Age Threshold Data (n1)

	Level 1	Level 2	CC	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 0
Age entry (scope Min.Max)	52-67	49-66	42-62	38-59	30-47	28-46	18-35
Centre	59.5	57.5	52	48.5	38.5	36	26.5
Threshold (Centre + SD Average)	64.5	62.5	57.0	53.5	43.5	41	31.5
Standard Deviation	5.793	4.99	5.097	5.154	5.014	4.756	4.43
SD Average				5.0339			
Variance	33.55	24.9	25.98	26.56	25.146	22.617	19.652

“standard” to which others are held to. They express this idea that age matters but in relation to a specific leadership level: being off threshold too often could prevent an individual from ascending to the top of the Party apparatus as the latter became “terminable” (i.e. too old) while on the “path”.

This also shows that it is not seniority, but rather the speed at which each level is completed prior to potentially failing to be promoted and being forced into retirement that matters. This implies, as previously mentioned, that age and the time spent inside the Party are not sufficient to explain promotion patterns. One needs to be promoted to a succession of positions (i.e. the step-by-step [Zeng, 2013; Kou and Tsai, 2014]) in a timely manner in order to achieve seniority at higher hierarchical levels, thus having chances to ascend to top leadership positions.

Lastly, this notion of “sprinting”, or rather the speed at which an individual must clear certain hierarchical levels while remaining “promotable” for further ascension, ties in with the previous discussion surrounding the role of factions as an intermediate variable. Accordingly, I posit that factions are what allows for an individual to complete the multiple levels in due time; it provides a “temporal” edge, or an early start for some Cadres and Officials. To this effect, factions are more of an enabling variable, or a “facilitator”, rather than an independent variable in the leadership selection/nomination equation.

5.2 Provincial Experience: Where Does it Matter?

Provincial experience as a significant variable to take into account is not a novelty (Bo, 2014: 90), nor is the assumption that the East-Coast provinces are a recruitment ground for top leadership positions (Bo, 2007b; 2014). The demonstration I propose goes one step further than these “classical” analysis. First, I do concur with the importance of Provincial experience and also with the East-Coast region’s relative influence in this matter. However, I will statistically demonstrate how much each region weighs in terms of relevance for selection within both the Standing Committee and the Politburo.

First, Provincial/Autonomous region/MDUCG experiences in the Politburo ($n1$) have been counted from level 5.⁵² Disaggregated data (i.e. observation per province/autonomous region/MDUCG) have been reorganised following the four economic regions determined by the Central Government (Lien, 2012: 373):

1. Region 1 (Eastern) includes: Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan and Shanghai;
2. Region 2 (Central) includes: Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan and Shanxi;
3. Region 3 (North-eastern) includes: Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning;

4. Region 4 (Western) includes: Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Yunnan, Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang.

Chi square tests⁵³ between both regions and specific positions have been used in order to prove whether or not the regions (i.e. 1 through 4) actually do matter when it comes to Elite selection and nomination. The original argument

Table 10 Regional Experience of Politburo Members, 2012

<i>n</i> 1 (Politburo)	Name	Number of experiences	Region			
			1	2	3	4
1	Xi Jinping	3	3	0	0	0
2	Li Keqiang	2	0	1	1	0
3	Zhang Dejiang	4	2	0	1	1
4	Yu Zhengsheng	3	2	1	0	0
5	Liu Yunshan	1	0	0	0	1
6	Wang Qishan	3	3	0	0	0
7	Zhang Gaoli	3	3	0	0	0
Subtotal (Standing Committee)		19	13	2	2	2
8	Ma Kai	0	0	0	0	0
9	Wang Huning	0	0	0	0	0
10	Liu Yandong	0	0	0	0	0
11	Liu Qibao	3	0	1	0	2
12	Sun Chunlan	3	2	0	1	0
13	Sun Zhengcai	2	0	0	1	1
14	Li Jianguo	3	2	0	0	1
15	Li Yuanchao	1	1	0	0	0
16	Wang Yang	3	1	1	0	1
17	Zhang Chunxian	2	0	1	0	1
18	Meng Jianzhu	2	1	1	0	0
19	Zhao Leji	2	0	0	0	2
20	Hu Chunhua	3	1	0	0	2
21	Li Zhanshu	4	1	0	1	2
22	Guo Jinlong	4	1	1	0	2
23	Han Zheng	1	1	0	0	0
Subtotal (Politburo without Standing Committee)		33	11	5	3	14
Total (n=23)		52	24	7	5	16

Note: Miller provided a textual list of the Politburo members' provincial experiences (Miller, 2013). Bo Zhiyue also presented a detailed account of Provincial experiences of Provincial leaders (2007-2012) (2014: 78-83).⁵⁴

(Bo, 2007b; 2014) states that provinces are a training ground for ascending Elites. However, all provinces are not equal in this process, nor are the regions in which they are located [Table 10].

The first impression shows that region 1 is significantly represented amongst the Standing Committee members as 5 out of 7 (71.43 per cent) individuals have experience in the latter. Of all those who have Provincial experience in the Politburo ($n=20$), 14 out of 20 individuals (70 per cent) have previously been assigned to region 1.

Furthermore, as Table 10 demonstrates, a single experience would not be sufficient for promotion and nomination. On average, members of the Standing Committee have 2.7 Provincial experiences and non-standing members, 2.53. This brings the overall average – for those who had such backgrounds – to 2.6 Provincial experiences. Moreover, 85 per cent of members who have such experiences had at least 2 of them ($n=20$) or 73.9 per cent if we take into account all members ($n=23$).

I also further tested the relative importance of regions 1 and 4 with regards to regions 2 and 3 due to the former's observed importance in terms of occurrence in contrast to the latter.

In order to statistically determine the importance of each region, I performed an adjusted Chi Square test.⁵⁵ The result⁵⁶ of the testing allows us to posit the existence of distinction between the 4 regions in terms of importance for Elite selection. As such, region 1 contributes to 52.6 per cent of the Chi Square result's composition, compared to 46.2 per cent of the observed frequencies. Accordingly, "passing through" region 1 is an important dimension of top Elite formation. For example, almost 50 per cent of the individuals who have regional experiences had it in region 1 and 87.5 per cent of them have 3 or more experiences in the latter.

I provisionally posit that experience in region 1 aims at acquainting Cadres, Officials and higher leaders with China's main economic development engine: the East-Coast. It is important for future leaders to possess a

Table 11 Experiences Threshold (Politburo)

<i>Number of Provincial Experience</i>	<i>Regions</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	
1	2	0	0	1	3
2	1	3	2	4	10
3	17	3	1	6	27
4	4	1	2	5	12
Total	24	7	5	16	52

strong sense of both Chinese economic and urban development. Furthermore, it is important for them to understand the significance of region 1's rising issues (e.g. real-estate bubble, economic slowdown and its consequences, etc.). On the other hand, experience in region 4 possibly addresses the Party awareness of very urgent remaining and ongoing problems in the Western region (e.g. poverty, underdevelopment, lack of public goods' provision, ethnic tensions, etc.) all potentially leading to social unrest. To a certain extent, this explanation is based on Zhao Suisheng's reflection regarding Elites' backgrounds during the 15th and 16th Party Congress's turnover (2004: 58).

5.3 Provincial-Autonomous Region-Municipalities Party Secretary or the Key Position

The selection of the Provincial Party Secretary position is not specific to this article. Other authors have put forward the importance of this specific position (Bo, 2003, 2014; Huang, 2012).⁵⁷

As Table 11 illustrates, not only are Provincial experiences relevant, but certain types of positions are favoured at the expense of others. As such, Vice-Party Secretary and Provincial Party Secretary type positions [Annex A: List 1] (i.e. Party positions) are preferred to Government positions of the same hierarchical level (i.e. in this case level 4 and level 3).

This observation reinforces previously made assumptions regarding the Provincial Party Secretary position's importance by calculating its occurrence amongst the Politburo members. In the case of the Standing Committee, 7 out of 7 individuals have occupied the Provincial Vice-Party Secretary type position and 6 out of 7 [except: Liu Yunshan] occupied the Provincial level

Table 12 Modal Occupations (Politburo)

<i>Group</i>	<i>Vice-Governor type position</i>	<i>Provincial Vice-Party Secretary type position</i>	<i>Provincial Governor type position</i>	<i>Provincial Party Secretary position type</i>
Standing Committee (<i>n</i> =7)	43%	100%	57%	86%
Politburo Members (without the Standing Committee [<i>n</i> =16])	38%	69%	31%	81%
Politburo (<i>n</i> =23)	39%	78%	39%	83%

Source: The author's database.

Party Secretary position type. To this effect, percentages do not accurately reflect the importance of the latter for the Politburo Standing Committee.

When looking at the Politburo non-standing members ($n=16$), we can see that 11 out of 16 have occupied the Provincial Vice-Party Secretary type position and 13 out of 16, the Provincial Party Secretary type position [Table 12]. Overall, 18 out of 23 have occupied the former, and 19 out of 23 the latter, making these positions the two greatest common occurrence in terms of occupation inside the Politburo ($n=23$). On the other hand, only 9 out of 23 individuals have occupied both Vice-Governor and Provincial Governor type positions, thus underlining their more “unnecessary” nature.

That being said, having these specific positions in of itself is insufficient for promotion/selection to top leadership positions. Where these positions were occupied also greatly matters [Table 13].

Table 13 highlights the clear importance of both (1) position types and (2) regions in which these positions are required.

Accordingly, position 6 (Provincial Party Secretary position type) in region 1 (East Coast) is the most commonly observed occurrence, closely followed by position 6 in region 4 (West China).

When looking at the Standing Committee, 50 per cent of the Party Secretary type positions were held in region 1 and when observing the Politburo ($n=23$), this slowly drops to 41 per cent. However, when compared to other regions’ position 6 inside the Politburo ($n=23$) (i.e. region 2 with 19 per cent, region 3 with 9 per cent and region 4 with 31 per cent), it remains the preponderant region.

If we were to combine both positions 4 (Provincial Vice-Party Secretary type position) and 6, percentages would remain very similar: 52.9 per cent for the Standing Committee and 44.23 per cent for all of the Politburo.

Table 13 Positions per Regions

Position#	Region 1					Region 2					Region 3					Region 4								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Group Standing Committee ($n=7$)	2	2	3	4	3	5	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1
Non-standing members ($n=16$)	2	3	2	6	3	8	2	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	2	2	5	1	9
Total ($n=23$)	4	5	5	10	6	13	2	0	1	2	1	6	0	1	1	3	1	3	0	3	2	6	1	10

Source: Author’s database.

In terms of individuals, 5 out of 7 Standing Committee members had a Party Secretary type position in region 1 (71.4 per cent) and overall, 13 out of 23 Politburo members (56.52 per cent).

Lastly, Table 13 shows something more interesting regarding regions 2 and 3. Simply in terms of mere importance, both regions combined only makes for 24.41 per cent of all the positions (21 out of 86 observations). On the other hand, region 1 makes for 50 per cent of all positions while region 4, 22 per cent. This underlines, to a certain extent, the "insignificant" or inconsequential nature of both regions for the "path" leading to top leadership positions: regions 2 and 3 are not training nor recruiting grounds for Politburo membership.

5.4 Non-conclusive Factors: Testing for Relevance

During the database's constitution and assembly,⁵⁸ I included and tested several more variables in regards to their possible relevance for leadership selection. Of all the tested ones, we shall retain four.

5.4.1 h_1 : Business Experience (above General Manager [zong jingli, 总经理]) is of Relevance for Leadership Promotion

Despite being interesting in of itself, the "business" argument, which refers to the diversification of higher Elites' composition, does not stand under scrutiny. I decided to start counting from the General Manager position as it indicates seniority and does, depending on the enterprise's level (*danwei jibie*, 单位级别) (e.g. a Centrally Owned Enterprise [中央企业], a National Group [Zhongguo jituan gongsi, 中国集团公司], etc.) equated to a formal mid-range position in the hierarchical structure [Annex A: List 1] (*zhengxing jibie*, 政行级别).

Out of all the Politburo members ($n=23$), only 1 had risen high enough in an enterprise to actually be considered as coming from the "business sector". This individual is Zhang Chunxian.

5.4.2 h_2 : Experience in One of the 4 Central Party Departments (i.e. Organisation [Zhongyang zuzhi bu buzhang, 中央组织部部长], Propaganda [Zhongyang xuan bu buzhang, 中央宣部部长], United Front [Zhongyang tongzhang bu buzhang, 中央统战部部长] and Central Party School [Zhongyang dangxiao xiaozhang, 中央党校校长]) is of Importance for Leadership Promotion

These positions were selected because of their importance as high profile Party positions (正部级) and only the head of departments counted as

simply “being part of” a department/ministry has sometimes little relevance for an individual’s pedigree. Furthermore, including all positions of these departments would be too encompassing, thus not saying much on the specific positions themselves rather than the whole departmental section.

As observed, the Organisation Department, the Propaganda Department and the United Front Department are all represented amongst Politburo members ($n=23$). However, they form respectively 9 per cent each – 2 individuals out of 23. When adding the Central Deputy-Head into the count, results slightly tilt up to 3 individuals for the Propaganda Department and 3 for the United Front (13 per cent).

Even when pushing further by including the departments’ Provincial-level Directors in the calculations, results still remain non-significant with the Propaganda Department “rising” to 4 individuals out of 23 or 17 per cent.

5.4.3 h_3 : Experience as Head Mishu (*Mishu zhang*, 秘书长) for Either the City-level or Provincial-level Government Matters for Leadership Promotion

Provincial Head Mishu (*Sheng wei mishu zhang*, 省委秘书长) or Secretary position is sometimes seen as an “expedient”⁵⁹ position from level 5 positions to either level 4 or sometimes level 3 (e.g. Governor, etc.) as it allows a shortcut of having to occupy a more “formal” level 5 position (e.g. Prefecture-level city Mayor, etc.). However when looking at the Politburo, none had this experience. Same goes for the Prefecture-level head Mishu.

5.4.4 h_4 : Provenance of Leaders, in Terms of Region, is of Importance for Leadership Promotion

Although not assessed as a variable in terms of promotion *per se*, regional or sometimes provincial provenance is often part of top leadership presentation work.⁶⁰

When closely looking at top elites’ regional provenance, 56.5 per cent of the Politburo members are from region 1 with region 2 following at 30 per cent. More specifically, the 4 direct neighbouring provinces of Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang form 43 per cent (10 out of 23 individuals) of the Politburo.

Even if we were to combined region 2, 3 and 4, we arrive at 43.4 per cent. The least represented region is the number 3 with only 1 individual coming from Liaoning.

This shows the advantage individuals born in region 1 possess over others. However, I do not believe this qualifies as a promotion criteria rather being again an “enabling” factor: east coasters have access to better

universities and more opportunities to either enter the Party or enter local public function.

5.5 Remarks

Despite these variables being arbitrary, they have been tested as to see their possible impact on leadership selection. However as explained, they have either very little or no explanatory value regarding an individual's chances of being selected to the Politburo.

The objective of this short section was to underline the limited influence of some possibly "interesting" variables that might appeal to some when it comes to explaining Elite formation and top leadership selection in China.

6. Finding the Successors: Knowing Where and What to Look For

The following summarises the results of the previously made analysis. These criteria concur with Putnam's assumption regarding the idea of a set of common occupation shared amongst the top Elites. As such, this exhaustive list brings in all the most recurring criteria within the Politburo ($n=23$) and the Standing Committee members ($n=7$). Some results were previously calculated and presented on $n=20$ (e.g. when sometimes excluding individuals with no regional experiences). However, I decided to keep a more conservative stance and present this final account based on $n=23$ for the sake of statistical accuracy.

For the Politburo ($n=23$):

1. Being part of the Central Committee (100 per cent [23/23]);
2. Having occupied a Provincial Party Secretary type position (82.6 per cent [19/23]);
3. Having had at least 2 provincial experiences (73.9 per cent [17/23]);
4. Completed 4 out of the 5 thresholds age level as to remain promotable (65.21 per cent [15/23]);
5. Having been positioned in region 1 at least once (60 per cent [14/23]);
6. Having occupied a Provincial Party Secretary type position in region 1 (56.52 per cent [13/23]).

For the Standing Committee ($n=7$), rules, although the same, are more concentrated:

1. Being part of the Central Committee (100 per cent [7/7]);
2. Having occupied a Provincial Party Secretary type position (85.7 per cent [6/7]);
3. Having had at least 2 provincial experiences (85.7 per cent [6/7]);

4. Having been positioned in region 1 at least once (71.4 per cent [5/7])
5. Having occupied a Provincial Party Secretary type position in region 1 (71.4 per cent [5/7]);
6. Completed 4 out of 5 thresholds age level (71.4 per cent [5/7]).

These criteria do represent a growing trend for political Elite formation at the top of the Party-State apparatus. We can clearly see the importance of a specific type of experience, of a certain number of regional experiences and a clear preferences for the region 1.

Although not complete, this list can help us “refine” and guide our search for individuals that are to be promoted to the Politburo. Yet, these criteria are not infallible.

As the second elements suggest, the Provincial Party Secretary type position mainly matters to individuals who followed the “*Kuai*” (Politocrats) path. Accordingly, the 2nd path, which does not include the previously mentioned position type still accounts for 17.39 per cent of the appointments [4/23]. To this effect, this “second group of leaders” answers to a different promotion/selection pattern.

7. Conclusion

How are top leaders selected in communist China? By emphasising several key variables and performing multiple tests and calculations, I demonstrated that (1) patterns regarding Elite selection inside the Party exist; (2) the main pattern is a specific mix of Party positions (e.g. PSP), minimal regional experiences (e.g. regions 1 and 4) combined with an age threshold in order to achieve seniority at a precise moment to remain “promotable” within the Party-State apparatus.⁶¹ Furthermore, I have identified and described what is presumed to be the optimal “path to the top”. However, other “paths” exist and answer to different selection and nomination logics.

To begin with, I briefly discussed the factionalist approach as it is still widely used in the current literature regarding Elite formation, recruitment and leadership change. Despite certain underlined shortcomings, factions will play a role in leadership selection for the foreseeable future, and as such, discussion regarding institutionalisation should be seen as completing or being completed by factionalism.

Furthermore, I engaged in leadership institutionalisation research in order to verify some of their claims regarding key variables explaining career patterns, Elite recruitment and nomination. As shown, Party seniority and education backgrounds are no longer distinctive elements parting Politocrats from Administrators. Instead, seniority is important when measured throughout the “path”: one needs to be a specific age at a specific rank/position in order to

remain “promotable”⁶². Time in the Party itself is insufficient and political loyalty is empirically very difficult to measure.

As I have tried to demonstrate, the institutionalisation of and within the Party-State apparatus has over time created rules regarding Elite selection, nomination and promotion which we are now attempting to understand in order to better grasp the complexity of Chinese politics. This enterprise identifying the rules is mainly what I have tentatively tried to do.

However rigorous the observation and methods used to process information and deliver these results may be, I am not and cannot claim to have provided a fully satisfactory answer to the initial research question for two reasons: (1) the “path” we tried to unfold concerns Politicrats or “*Kuai*”, again leaving out 17.39 per cent of the Elite selection, which is by our standards still considered to be a high error margin; (2) however interesting the arguments may be, it focuses solely on the formal side of Chinese politics leaving out informal manoeuvres (i.e. factions) and already-made arrangements (e.g. bargaining and consensus).

This study provided modest insights regarding leadership selection in China. By way of its non-traditional argumentative structure, it challenged certain elements (e.g. seniority, Party rejuvenation), corroborated and clarified some others (e.g. Provincial experience in terms of location – region – and position) and laid down new ones (e.g. age threshold) in order to better understand leadership selection in the People’s Republic.

Notwithstanding this demonstration, it is unclear to what extent these rules will continue to develop in contrast with informal politics.⁶³ Just like Zang Xiaowei and Zhou Xueguang, I have tried to depict the existence of the “routinisation” of institutional constraints on Elite formation inside the Party-State. As such, claims regarding the unchanging nature of the CCP seem implausible considering the importance vested in rules, career patterns and regulation of personnel appointment in the People’s Republic.

Annex A: Data Sets, Specifics and Categorisation

1. Data Sets

The selected population has been stratified into three groups: (1) the Politburo [PB]; (2) the members of the Central Committee [CC], and (3) individuals who have a membership in the Central Committee [CC] and occupy a Provincial Party Secretary position [PSP].

The first group is composed of 25 members of which two individuals from the military structure were removed ($n1=23$). The Military was not taken into account for two reasons: (1) their ranking structure is completely different

Table A Population Specifics

	<i>Original</i>	<i>Excluded Military</i>	<i>Excluded Incomplete Information</i>	<i>Excluded Overlap</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Acronym</i>
Politburo	25	2	0	0	23	<i>n1</i>
Central Committee	205	40	6	25	134	<i>n2</i>

from that of the Party, and (2) they are not the ones “governing” China. Their exclusion, however, does not undermine the validity of the current study. The Military members are important political actors in China yet they are subordinated to the Party and State structure.

The second group (*n2*) is comprised of the 205 members of the Central Committee. Just like the first group, Military positions were removed (40/205). Furthermore, the 25 members of the Politburo overlapping with the Central Committee have been sided with the former. Wang Xinxian (王新宪) and Song Dahan (宋大涵) had to be removed as dates for both level 3 and 4 positions [List 1] were not found. These are the only cases I could not insert into the database. Wang is the vice-chairman of China’s Disabled Persons Federation and Song was Peng Zhen’s, one of the “Eight Immortals of the Party”, secretary.

Time of entry in the Party of Lin Jun (林军), Geng Huicheng (耿惠昌) and Jia Ting’an (贾廷安) as well as the level 5 positions [List 1] of both Wang Anshun and Lin Jun were also missing. These removals bring the second group’s total population down to 134 (*n2*=134). Central Committee’s alternate members were not taken into account because they have not been promoted to full Central Committee membership, a requirement to be considered “promotable” to higher positions.

1.1 Specifics of Each Group

For the first group, all the members of the Politburo were selected with the exception of the two Military members. This selection method is widely used in the literature in order to analyse China’s top leadership (Bo, 2007a, 2009; Lam, 2006, 2007; Miller, 2011; Wang, 2006). It is important to note that most of the authors do not exclusively focus on the Politburo and its Standing Committee. Nonetheless, these two groups remain at the forefront of political Elite analysis in the field of Chinese politics.

The second group has been selected following the ranking structure of the State/Party apparatus in China. The levels of leadership position

(*lingdaozihiwu cengci fenwei*, 领导职务层次分为), or the ranking structure, is an official detailed list that can easily be obtained through various sources (Gao and Luo, 2005: 53). As such, Central Committee members were selected because their position is the modal occupation (100 percent), or the greatest common occurrence (GCO) amongst Politburo (*n1*) members.

List 1 Position Listing

<i>Number</i>	<i>Examples</i>
1	Prefecture-level City Mayor Sub provincial-level City-Vice-Mayor Central Municipalities District Head Sub provincial-level District deputy-head Sub provincial-level autonomous area deputy-governor
2	Prefecture-level city Party Secretary Sub provincial-level City Party deputy Secretary Central Municipalities District Party Secretary Sub provincial-level District Party deputy Secretary Sub provincial-level autonomous area deputy-Party Secretary
3	Provincial Vice-Governor Autonomous Region Vice-Chairman Central Municipalities Vice-Mayor Provincial/Central Municipality/Autonomous region standing committee Sub provincial-level cities Mayor Sub national-level district head Sub national-autonomous region Governor
4	Provincial Vice-Party Secretary Autonomous Region Vice-Party Secretary Central Municipalities Vice-Party Secretary Sub provincial-level cities Party Secretary Sub provincial-level district Party Secretary Sub national-autonomous region Party Secretary
5	Provincial Governor Autonomous region Chairman Central Municipalities Mayor
6	Provincial Party Secretary Autonomous region Party Secretary Central Municipalities Party Secretary

1.2 Categorisation

In order to find and fill in all the required names for our first and second groups ($n_1 + n_2 = 157$), official name lists of both the Politburo and Central Committee were used. These lists are official information and public records.

The respective backgrounds of Party members were organised according to their previously occupied positions and were structured in compliance with the official ranking list. This allowed for the reconstruction of their career history. Provincial experiences [List 1] down to the level 5, the Office/Bureau principal position [Table 2] were also assessed. I chose to stop at level 5 as there were no more GCD past this point. As depicted by Diagram 1, path shaping starts either at this point or possibly after (e.g. level 4). Finally, the age at which individuals were nominated to a specific position until level 5 was also considered as a primary variable.

Categorisation has been independently done by the author and one outside reviewer. We obtained an inter-annotator agreement of $\kappa=0.93$. Furthermore, the number of total observations vary since some individuals have occupied more than one position at one given level while others may have skipped an entire level. Two other individuals (i.e. retired Cadres who used to take part in personnel evaluation) were later asked to evaluate the data only to confirm its congruence with the *kappa*.

The data used to create occupation lists came from three sources: (1) China Party and Government Leaders database (*CPC News*, 2014); (2) *China Vitae* (2014) and (3), although sometimes regarded as unreliable, *Baike Baidu*. The latter had up-to-date and detailed account of every individual's background and has previously been used by scholars such as Bo Zhiyue (2014).

1.3 Remarks

The data being used, last verified in March 2015, does not take into account current/future arrangements made behind closed doors of the top leadership structure regarding the 2017 reshuffling. Furthermore, there exists a certain inequality in terms of relative importance of certain provinces as opposed to some others (e.g. Guangdong's PSP will informally rank higher than the PSP from Jilin). However, to my knowledge, there is no formal list outlining provincial hierarchy in China. Accordingly, this specific variation is not included in the analysis. Factional ties and the informal importance of a position, in contrast to its formal "weight" inside the official ranking structure, were also not taken into account. Attempting to measure the informal "pull" of every position would be impractical and almost unfeasible. Lastly, much of these limitations have already been underlined by Shih *et al.* (2012).

Annex C: Tests

Test: Unilateral *t*-tests [Appointed Individuals to the Politburo, 1987-2012]

<i>Period</i>	<i>Signification</i>
1987-1992	P< .231 (n.s)
1992-1997	P< .308 (n.s)
1997-2002	P< .031 (s)
2002-2007	P< .362 (n.s)
2007-2012	P< .231 (n.s)
1987-1997	P< .332 (n.s)
1992-2002	P< .130 (n.s)
1997-2007	P< .141 (n.s)
2002-2012	P< .358 (n.s)

Notes

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1. On the other hand, some scholars, like Fewsmith (2013), Shirk (2002) and Zheng and Lye (2003) have argued that transitions have become less institutionalised. Shirk and Zheng and Lye's articles, however, could not stand the test of time as their analysis relied on Jiang Zemin not stepping down.
 2. I use the *pinyin* system and simplified characters according to current standards in Mainland China. Furthermore, to avoid confusion, I have decided to keep the customary rendering of Chinese names (i.e. family name, first name).
 3. The term "institution" refers to "formal institution" as the latter can also be informal (e.g. patronage, customs, etc.). This clarification is of the utmost importance for the understanding of this article.
 4. The structure I lay here does not follow the traditional one (i.e. theory, hypothesis, data, model, and discussion). However, considering the "unorthodox" way by which data is analysed and interpreted, I believe the usage of a different structure is appropriate.

5. Li Cheng, maybe one of the most productive authors on factions through the *Chinese Leadership Monitor*, has too many publications on the subject matter for us to cite them all.
6. This specific faction is, at times, region-centred, leader-centred or lineage-centred.
7. Zeng Jinghan also underlines these difficulties, especially identifying who belongs to which faction (2013: 234) and actually proves that other factors (e.g. the age factor) are of greater importance when looking at leadership transition.
8. Zeng Jinghan (2013) has been critical of this notion and argues for the usage of the terms “patronage” or “patron-client ties”.
9. They both come from high-ranked communist families.
10. They both lived in Shanghai while their families worked there. However, Liu is said to have stronger ties to Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong than Li.
11. They both served in the CYCL structure in the early 1980s to early 1990s under Hu Jintao.
12. Yao Yilin (1917-1994) is a former First Vice Premier (1988-1993) and member of the Politburo.
13. Mayor of Shanghai, close to Jiang Zemin, Han is also said to be close to Hu Jintao (Lam, 2007: 42).
14. Shih *et al.* (2012) already demonstrated this point using a cohesive index. Bo (2010: 136) also discusses the cohesion index for the Shanghai Gang.
15. This ranked as Provincial/Ministerial Main Position [Table 2].
16. Liu Qibao, Hu Chunhua, Li Zhanshu and Han Zheng.
17. Li Keqiang and Hu Chunhua.
18. This in part explains the friction between the members of the two Shanghai Gangs coexisting under Jiang Zemin (e.g. between Zeng Qinghong [part of the Shanghai Lineage] and Chen Liangyu [brought by Jiang]).
19. Defined as the formal distribution of capabilities (e.g. domains of governance) amongst actors in the political system (Waltz, 1979: 82), it is seen by Zang as part of the self-regulation/adaptive mechanism of the Party-State (2004: 14).
20. This notion is not clearly defined by either Zhou and Zang (e.g. “activism in class struggle”).
21. Zang concurs that career advancement in the Party follows almost the same criteria as those of the 1980s (2004: 90). I disagree with Zang’s statement since, as Zhou (1995) puts it, rules and norms of recruitment are subject to change according to the needs of the Party-State. “Ideological sophistication in Marxism”, seniority, loyalty and family background are now insufficient to explain Politicrats recruitment logic.
22. *Tiao/Kuai* is being used to describe the dual leadership relationship between regional units, *Kuai* (e.g. provincial government, city government, etc.) and functional administrative units, *Tiao* (e.g. a ministry, bureau, office, etc.). For a more detailed view of how *Tiao/Kuai* works see Payette and Mascotto (2011).
23. This criterion has been a formal rule since 2002. See Chapter 11, article 55 of the Party Cadres selection guide (CCP, 2002: 29).
24. Nonetheless, the system’s capability to pressure top leaders into retirement is still very limited.

25. As for the Presidency of the Central Military Commission, this rule did not seem to apply until Hu Jintao, in 2012, handed over both the CCP's Presidency and the Central Military Commission to Xi Jinping.
26. These retirement rules regarding civil servants (*gongwuyuan*, 公务员) have been in place since 1982 (Fan, 2012).
27. According to the 1982 regulations (still unchanged), all other Cadres must leave at 60 (male) or at 55 (female). Also, all the listed cut-off ages for promotion were confirmed by Kou and Tsai (2014: 157).
28. To name a just a few.
29. Table 4 differs as it does a precise stratification of the Central Committee and the Politburo in order to discuss the seniority element.
30. This rule still holds for all the current Central Committee members ($n=205$). The average age of nomination for the 205 members (including military members [42], n_1 [23] and other previously excluded members [6]) is 56.307 years old, with a variance of 17.537 and standard deviation of 4.1877. If using Table 5 to replicate the findings, the overall average, by using class centres, is 56.2048 years old.
31. If they reach a position's age limit without having reached retirement age, Cadres will be pushed to semi-retirement positions (e.g. County National People's Congress [NPC] or Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference [CPPCC]) (Yang, 2003: 113).
32. When looking at the Politburo (n_1), we are more able to understand Yang's point. The Politburo's members had an average age of 37.3478 years old at level 5 [Table 2], which is two steps above the County level.
33. For precision purposes, we have included members of the military structure in these calculations.
34. $y_i = a + b(x)$
35. $y_i = 62.33755 + -0.62406(3.5)$
36. $y = -0.6241x + 64.522$
37. $r = 0.8063P < .05$
38. $t_{\alpha/2}(35)1.5n.s(0.10)$
39. $t_{\alpha/2}(35)1.509ns(0.10)$
40. $t_{\alpha/2}(47)-0.362n.s.(0.10)$
41. $t_{\alpha/2}(48)0.4468n.s(0.10)$
42. Zhou uses three data sets of which two are not major Party reshuffling time (1965 – 1978). Zang's second dataset (1994) is taken two years after the 1992 Party Congress. Party Congresses are major turnover events during which the aspect of the Central Committee and of the Politburo can be altered. This in turn explains why I have focused on the 18th Party Congress.
43. The two missing values are those of Wang Guangya and Liu He.
44. When re-segmenting according to disaggregated data.
45. Cumulative frequency of [1964-1978] shows that 74 per cent of the observations of n_1 and 71 per cent of n_2 fall within this category with an average difference of 1.75 years of seniority ($n_1 = 40.12 / n_2 = 38.37$).
46. The four components are, in respect to Cadres appointments, (1) more revolutionary (e.g. purge of people associated with the Gang of Four and the

- Cultural Revolution); (2) intellectualisation; (3) more professional, and (4) rejuvenation.
47. The data used to compute these percentages are public records. Furthermore, the percentages take into account diplomas delivered by the Central Party School.
 48. The data used to compute these percentages are public records.
 49. Regardless of the division of labour between "Politocrats" and administrators, it would be interesting to investigate the path followed by the latter as to see if this division is as prevalent as we think. Considering the increasing use of "sponsored mobility" by the Party (Walder, 2004; Walder and Li, 2001), we could tentatively posit that both ministers and central bureau directors, or "higher administrators", could be progressively converging toward a more "political" path (i.e. cumulating more "Kuai" positions) as to tie the gap between the local policy environment and the central policymaking process.
 50. Bo's dismissal was not only tied to formal investigation procedures.
 51. 5 levels of leadership multiplied by 23 individuals or 115 possible observations.
 52. Provincial/Autonomous region/MDUCG standing committee's position have also been counted as such.
 53. Chi square adjustment test.
 54. The presentation of Provincial experiences differs from my counterparts as it enumerates and categorises (according to defined regions) Provincial experiences from all members of the Politburo (2012) starting at level 5 [Table 2] in order to examine the relative importance of each region.
 55. Very useful for smaller samples, Adjusted Chi Square tests allows us to accept the Null hypothesis and assume, from the get going, that there are no statistical difference between regions.
 56. $\chi^2(3)17.68P < .001$
 57. The Provincial Party Secretary and its role in the current state of Chinese authoritarianism ought to be examined in more detail as the latter, considering the "one government, two courts" principle (*yi fu, liang yuan*), is self-supervised (i.e. overlap between the People's Congress director and Party Secretary) and also responsible for sub-national policy implementation. As such, the Party Secretary is a "strategic position" in the authoritarian structure because the Centre relies on them and cannot really afford to supervise them, giving the latter significant leverage and bargaining capabilities. Lastly, this inquiry might shed more light into the future of Central-Local relations.
 58. All the results have been obtained through public records and information allowing for easy replicability.
 59. Although the main argument revolves around personal Mishu (Li, 2001), Mishu positions – in the formal civilian structure – has been known to bridge certain information gaps inside the Party-State apparatus (Li, 1994).
 60. We can think of works made by Bo Zhiyue, Li Cheng and Alice Miller, to name just a few.
 61. These identified criteria will constitute what I earlier called the "priors" for further modelling and iteration of which I am currently working on.
 62. This is maybe why, according to Huang (2013b) the Party starts selecting "promising" Cadres early on.

63. Uncertain regarding the future applicability of these rules, the latter, both when counting the overlap and not, work when tested on both the 16th and 17th Politburo members. However, considering space constraints, presentation of the data and results are not possible in this article.

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