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China's Communist Party-State: The Structure and Dynamics of Power

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Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been the country's only ruling party. With the exception of a few tumultuous years during the early phases of the Cultural Revolution, the ultimate source of political power in China has always been the Communist Party. Indeed, for the past seven decades, power struggles within the CCP leadership have been the only serious instances of political contention in the country. With around 90 million members, the CCP is currently the world's largest ruling political party, and only the Korean Workers' Party of North Korea has held on to power for longer.

The CCP has made it clear that it is not willing to give up its monopoly on political power to experiment with multiparty democracy, nor do Party leaders appear interested in moving toward a Western-style system based on a separation of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This does not mean, however, that the CCP is a stagnant institution that has been completely resistant to political change. On the contrary, during the reform era the CCP has experienced a number of profound transformations in terms of the recruitment of party elites, institutional reforms, and ideological changes (see chap. 5 for a discussion of the latter). Furthermore, the CCP leadership today is by no means a monolithic group whose members all share the same ideology, political background, and policy preferences.

China's search for an effective mechanism of governance suited to meet the dynamism of its economy and growing pluralism of its society in the reform era has not been a smooth and linear process but rather painstakingly difficult. Under the

leadership of Xi Jinping since 2012, the return of strongman politics has been widely seen—in both China and abroad—as a move backwards in the country's political institutionalization. In early 2018, Xi and the Chinese political establishment made a decision to remove an important clause from the country's constitution—added during the Deng Xiaoping era—which limits both the presidency and vice presidency to two five-year terms (see chap. 3). Undoing this restriction essentially lines Xi up to be "president for life." As a result, Xi has squandered a precious opportunity to follow the institutionalized practice of predictable transfer of power in the PRC, undermining the example set by two former presidents, Jiang Zemin in 2002 and Hu Jintao in 2012.

This constitutional amendment appears to serve not only as a coronation for Xi's long-term rule but also fundamentally weakens the collective leadership initiated by Deng. Collective leadership functions according to commonly accepted rules and norms such as bureaucratic and regional representation and intraparty elections. A central component of collective leadership involves factional checks and balances in the supreme decision-making bodies such as the CCP Politburo and its **Standing Committee** in which the top leader is supposed to be only the "first among equals."

For those who previously held more optimistic prognoses for China when Xi first came to power, this disappointing turn reveals the enduring tensions and reversibility of political trends with regard to individual rule versus institutional constraints. But it also makes students of Chinese politics appreciate or recognize—in a somewhat ironic way—the great significance of the institutional reforms, most notably political succession norms and collective leadership, initiated by Deng and experimented with during the Jiang and Hu eras. With the abolishment of term limits for the presidency, rule by a dominant strong leader has undoubtedly gained tremendous momentum, and it will not be easily replaced. Yet, intense criticism of Xi's "imperial ambition" and serious reservations about the absence of any mechanisms for political succession from Chinese liberal intellectuals and other like-minded people could constitute a major challenge to Xi.

Also paradoxically, Xi's drastic ongoing efforts to consolidate his personal power, exemplified by his holding of as many as fourteen leadership titles and positions, is not necessarily a sign of strength; rather, it can be reasonably interpreted as just the opposite. It would also be an oversimplification to define the present-day Chinese political system as one-man rule autocracy, or to assert there is a complete absence of checks and balances in the Chinese political system, at least within the party leadership itself. Even if he is inclined to do so, Xi and his team cannot replace all of the institutional regulations, rules, and norms developed during the reform era. In fact, at the 19th Central Committee held in October 2017, most of the institutional rules and norms in elite selection, including the mandatory retirement age and regional and bureaucratic representation, remained largely intact.

A fact-based critical and comprehensive assessment of the structure, organization, elite formation, and main players in Chinese politics is essential. This chapter aims to highlight both the sources of continuity in China's long-standing party-state system and some of the more recent and intriguing twists and turns in the PRC's political landscape. Using the biographical data drawn from the party and government leadership bodies formed in the 19th Party Congress in October 2017 and the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018, this chapter explores new channels for

elite advancement and emerging players in leadership politics in the Xi Jinping era. An analysis of these crucial aspects of Chinese leadership politics, especially their dynamics and tensions, will not only reveal how the country is governed but will also provide an assessment of both the resilience and vulnerability of the Chinese political system as well as the future political trajectory of this emerging world power.

THE STRUCTURE OF CHINA'S COMMUNIST PARTY-STATE

The CCP describes the history of its leadership in terms of political generations. Mao Zedong is portrayed as the core of the first generation of PRC leaders, Deng Xiaoping as the core of the second, and Jiang Zemin as the core of the third. Although he was not explicitly designated as its core, instead often identified as its "monitor" or "team leader," Hu Jintao was the head of the fourth generation of CCP leaders. The current general secretary, Xi Jinping, was dubbed the core of the fifth generation in 2016, even before he began his second term as general secretary of the CCP the following year. Despite the dramatic changes in ideology and policy over the course of these generations, the CCP has always clearly maintained that it plays a "leading role" in the state and society and therefore has the right to command the government, media, legal system, and military in the interest of preserving China's socialist system.

By design, the top leaders of the CCP have concurrently held the most important positions in the state (or government) since the establishment of the People's Republic. These top state positions include president of the PRC, premier (or prime minister) of the State Council (the government cabinet), the chair of the National People's Congress (the legislature of the PRC), and chair of the Central Military Commission (CMC). Leading party officials at various levels of the state—provincial, municipal, county, and town—often concurrently serve as officials in local government organizations. The head of the party organization (the party secretary) at any level of administration is the real "boss" in local political and policy matters. For example, the city of Shanghai has both a party secretary and a mayor, but the party secretary is the one with the greater authority, although the mayor is also a high-ranking party member.

In a very real sense, the institutions of party and state are intimately intertwined. This is why political systems such as the PRC (and previously, the Soviet Union) are referred to as communist party-states (see chap. 1). The preamble to the PRC's constitution makes several references to the communist party leadership, and Article 1 describes the PRC as "a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants." It then says "The socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China. The leadership of the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics." The last sentence was added when the constitution was revised in 2018, the same time that presidential term limits were abolished. Prior to this, the document had been rather ambiguous about where supreme political power in the PRC truly lies. The new sentence made it clear that, in practice, the communist party is unequivocally in charge at all levels, and the state operates merely as the executor of decisions made by the party.

Although high-ranking Chinese leaders have sporadically called for a greater separation between the party and the state, the overwhelming trend of the last three decades, especially under the leadership of Xi Jinping, has been to consolidate party rule and revitalize the party rather than fundamentally change the communist party-state system. Two important observations can be made regarding the party-state structure in present-day China. First, the party has the power to make all of the state's most important personnel and policy decisions. Second, notwithstanding the party's leading decision-making role, many important policy discussions, as well as most activities relating to policy implementation, take place in or through *government* institutions, not CCP organizations. In order to understand the complex relationship existing between the CCP and the PRC government, it is essential to grasp the basic structure of both the party and the state.

Organization of the CCP

As indicated in Figure 6.1, party organizations exist at all administrative levels from the center in Beijing down to the 4.5 million primary, or "grassroots" units, which, according the CCP's constitution, "are formed in enterprises, rural areas, government organs, schools, research institutes, communities, social organizations, companies of the People's Liberation Army and other basic units, where there are at least three full Party members." The party's reach extends throughout the country, but power is highly concentrated at the center, particularly in the twenty-five-member Politburo (or Political Bureau) and the seven members who concurrently sit on its Standing Committee (see Table 6.1).

The Politburo and the Standing Committee are formally elected by the **National Congress of the Communist Party of China** (or National Party Congress), which convenes for about a week in the fall once every five years and is the most important political convention in the country. All delegates must, of course, be members of the communist party. There were two types of delegates to the most recent party congress, which met in October 2017: regular (2,280) and invited (74). The delegates included representatives from China's thirty-one provincial-level administrations (which includes twenty-two provinces, five administrative regions, and four large cities directly under central administration). There was also a delegation of ethnic Taiwanese who are citizens of the PRC and members of the CCP, as well as delegations from the central departments of the party, the ministries and commissions of the central government, major state-owned enterprises, China's largest banks and other financial institutions, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and the **People's Armed Police**. Invited delegates, who are also eligible to vote, were mostly retired party elders and can be considered China's equivalent of the "superdelegates" to the Democratic Party Convention in the United States.

The Party Congress elects the **Central Committee** (currently 204 full and 172 alternate members) and the **Central Commission for Discipline Inspection** (133 members). In theory, the Central Committee then elects the party's most powerful organizations: the Politburo, the Standing Committee, and the Central Military Commission (7 members). It also elects the general secretary, which is the top position

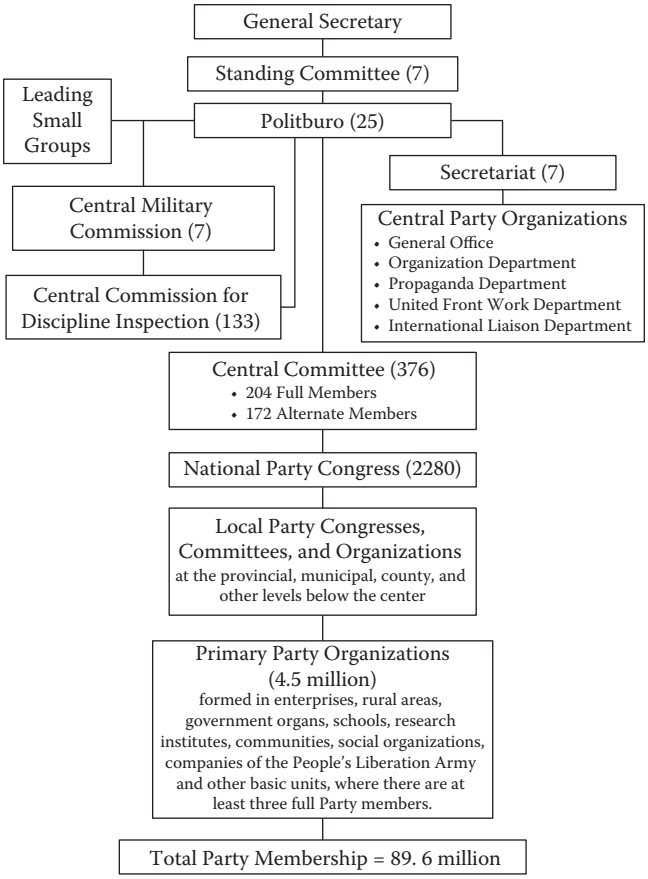

FIGURE 6.1 Organization of the Chinese Communist Party
(Number of members in parentheses is as of the 19th Party Congress, October 2017)

in the CCP. In practice, however, the process is top-down rather than bottom-up: the leading organizations of the party closely guide the selection of members of the Central Committee, and then present to the Central Committee a slate of candidates for the incoming Politburo and its Standing Committee for the Central Committee's "approval."

Although the CCP Constitution does not define term limits for the general secretary, the party regulations specify that party leaders undertake "no more than two full five-year terms in the same position, and three five-year terms at the same level of leadership." Based on this regulation, the general secretary of the party can serve two full terms and a leadership transition is to take place every decade. For example, Hu Jintao took over as general secretary in 2002 from Jiang Zemin, who served a full first term in that position starting 1992 and was reelected in 1997. Common practice, or the succession norms, established in the first two decades of the post-Deng era indicated that the heir apparent as party leader was to be anointed at the halfway point of the serving general secretary's term by being promoted to a number of preparatory positions, including a seat on the CCP Politburo Standing Committee, vice president

TABLE 6.1 CCP Politburo Standing Committee (elected October 2017)

Name	Other Key Positions	Year Born	Factional Affiliations	Education	Previous Provincial-Level Leadership & Other Major Experience
Xi Jinping	• CCP General Secretary • PRC President • Chair, Central Military Commission	1953	Xi Faction Elitist	• BA, Chemical Engineering, Tsinghua University (1975–1979) • PhD in Politics and Marxist Theory, Tsinghua University (via part-time studies, 1998–2002)	• PRC Vice President • Party Secretary, Zhejiang; Shanghai • Governor, Fujian; Zhejiang
Li Keqiang	• Premier, PRC State Council	1955	Tuanpai Populist	• B.A. Law (1982), Peking University • Ph.D. Economics (via part-time studies), Peking University	• Executive Vice Premier • Party Secretary. Henan; Liaoning • Governor, Henan
Li Zhanshu	• Chair, National People's Congress	1950	Xi Faction Elitist	• Received an undergraduate education in politics from Hebei Normal University in Shijiazhuang City (via part-time studies and night school, 1980–1983) • Attended the graduate program in business economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS, via part-time studies, 1996–1998) • Executive Management of Business Administration from the Harbin Institute of Technology (via part-time studies, 2005–2006)	• Director, General Office of the CCP Central Committee • Party Secretary, Guizhou • Governor, Heilongjiang
Wang Yang	• Vice Premier, State Council • Chair, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	1955	Tuanpai Populist	• BA in public administration from the Central Party School (via correspondence courses, 1989–1992) • MA in management science from the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei City (via part-time studies, 1993–1995).	• Party Secretary, Guangdong; Chongqing,

Wang Huning	• Executive Secretary of the CCP Secretariat	1955	Jiang Faction Elitist	• Studied French language at Shanghai Normal University in Shanghai (1972–1977) • MA in law and international politics at Fudan University (1978–1981) • Visiting scholar at the U. of Iowa, the U. of Michigan, and the U. of California at Berkeley (1988–1989).	• Director, Central Policy Research Office of the CCP Central Committee • Dean, Fudan University Law School
Zhao Leji	• Chair, Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	1957	Xi Faction Elitist	• Received an undergraduate degree in philosophy from Peking University (1977–1980) • Attended the graduate program in currency and banking at the CASS (via part-time studies, 1996–1998) • Attended the graduate program in politics at the Central Party School (via part-time studies, 2002–2005)	• Director, CCP Organization Department • Party Secretary, Shaanxi; Qinghai • Governor, Qinghai
Han Zheng	• Executive Vice Premier, PRC State Council	1954	Jiang Faction Elitist	• Attended a two-year college program at Fudan University (1983–1985) • BA in politics at East China Normal University in Shanghai (via part-time studies, 1985–1987) • MA in international political economy at East China Normal U. (via part-time studies, 1994–1996)	• Party Secretary, Shanghai • Mayor, Shanghai

of the PRC, and vice chair of the CMC. With the abolishment of the term limits on the presidency in the PRC constitution in 2017, Xi Jinping will most likely change these party regulations at a party meeting during his second term (2017–2022) in order to stay in the top CCP position indefinitely.

The Central Committee convenes at least once per year in meetings called plenums or plenary sessions. Generally, all full members and alternate members attend these sessions. Top officials in CCP central organs, government ministries, provincial administrations, and the military who are not members of the Central Committee are also invited to attend the plenary sessions as nonvoting participants. Plenary sessions provide an opportunity for the announcement of new policy initiatives and major personnel appointments. For example, the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee held in December 1978 adopted Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening proposals, and this landmark meeting is often considered the turning point in CCP history from the Cultural Revolution's focus on ideology and politics to an emphasis on economic reform.

As suggested earlier, to call the process of choosing the Politburo and the Standing Committee by the Central Committee an election is something of a misnomer. These top bodies are actually selected by the outgoing Standing Committee, with considerable influence exercised by retired or retiring senior leaders. For example, Deng Xiaoping personally chose Jiang Zemin to take over the position of CCP general secretary in 1989, and Jiang Zemin played a major role in the shaping of the Standing Committee chosen in 2012.

There is intraparty competition for Central Committee seats. Since the 1982 National Congress of the CCP, the party has followed the method of "more candidates than available seats" (*cha'e xuanju*) for Central Committee elections. The 19th Party Congress* in 2017 chose 204 full members from 222 candidates on the ballot (8.8 percent were eliminated). In the election for alternate members of the Central Committee, they elected 172 leaders from a candidate pool of 189 (9.9 percent were eliminated).

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (133 members), while less important than the Central Committee, plays a crucial role in monitoring and punishing abuses of power, corruption, and other wrongdoings committed by party officials. The Commission's most serious sanction is to purge senior level officials and expel them from the party; in cases where it is determined that a crime may have been committed, the matter is handed over to the state judicial system. Lower-level party organizations, including provincial, municipal, and county-level bodies, also have discipline inspection commissions that report directly to the commission one level above them. The chiefs of the local discipline inspection commissions are usually not selected from the localities that they serve but are transferred in from elsewhere to lessen the likelihood of favoritism.

The **Secretariat** (7 members) is an important leadership body that handles the party's routine business and administrative matters. Secretariat members meet

* National Party Congresses are numbered in sequence beginning with the 1st Party Congress in 1921 that marked the founding of the CCP. Seven congresses were held between then and the founding of the PRC in 1949. The 8th Party Congress in 1956 was the first held after the CCP came to power. Because of political turmoil during the Maoist era, party congresses were convened irregularly. (Thirteen years elapsed between the 8th and 9th Party Congress, which was held in 1969.) Since 1982, party congresses have been held every five years.

daily and are responsible for coordinating the country's major events and meetings, drafting important documents, and arranging top leaders' foreign and domestic travel. By comparison, the more powerful organizations, the Politburo and Standing Committee, meet only once a month and once a week, respectively. Members of the Secretariat, like members of the Standing Committee, all live in Beijing. Some Politburo members reside in other cities, where they serve concurrently as provincial or municipal party chiefs. Of the seven members of the current Secretariat, six also serve as members of the Politburo, with one of those six (the Executive Secretary) serving on the Standing Committee.

The Secretariat supervises the work of the General Office of the CCP (its administrative coordinating body) as well as the party's four most important central departments—the **Organization Department**, the Propaganda (or Publicity) Department, the United Front Work Department, and the International Liaison Department. The current directors of the General Office, the Organization Department, and the Propaganda Department also serve on both the Politburo and the Secretariat. The Organization Department determines the personnel appointments of several thousand high-ranking leadership (or cadre) positions in the party, government, and military, as well as in large business firms, key universities, and other important institutions. These positions are part of the ***nomenklatura*** ("name list") system that was adopted from the Soviet communist party. Control of the cadre appointment process is one of the CCP's most important sources of power. The Propaganda Department is primarily responsible for spreading the party's message and controlling the media. The United Front Work Department deals with noncommunist organizations, including the country's eight "**democratic parties**,"† ethnic and religious policy, and with issues concerning Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. The mission of the International Liaison Department is to establish contacts with foreign political parties; it was more important and active when there were more communist parties in the world.

Among the twenty-five members of the current Politburo, eight primarily represent party organizations, nine come from government organizations, two from the military, and six from province-level administrative units. Table 6.1 lists some key information about the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the most powerful leadership body in China. These individuals hold, concurrently with their positions on the Politburo Standing Committee, some of the most important offices in the party-state, including the presidency and premiership of the PRC, and the chair of China's legislature (the National People's Congress). Party General Secretary Xi Jinping serves simultaneously as president of the PRC and chair of the CMC, which has been the practice for China's top leader since the Jiang Zemin era.

In addition to these formal leadership institutions, the CCP also has a number of informal interagency executive decision-making bodies called **leading small groups** (*lingdao xiaozu*) that are focused on major functional issue areas. One estimate in late

† China's constitution says the PRC has "a system of cooperation and political consultation led by the Communist Party of China." In fact, China does have eight political parties other than the CCP, which are officially referred to as the "democratic parties." These parties are made up mostly of academics, scientists, writers, artists, professionals, and entrepreneurs and have a total membership of about seven-hundred thousand, must swear allegiance to the CCP, and do not compete with or challenge the CCP in any meaningful way.

2017 counted twenty-six party leading small groups.[1] Some of these are more or less permanent, while others are temporary task forces convened to deal with an immediate issue. Among the permanent leading small groups are those that cover foreign policy; national security; politics and law; finance and the economy; ideology and propaganda; party affairs; internet security and information technology; Taiwan; and Hong Kong and Macao.[2]

The main purpose of these leading small groups is to coordinate the implementation of policies across top decision-making bodies such as the Politburo, the State Council, and the CMC. Leading small groups report directly to the Politburo and its Standing Committee, and a member of the Standing Committee normally heads the most important ones. For example, Xi Jinping heads the leading groups on economics and finance, foreign affairs, national security, military reforms, internet security and information technology, comprehensively deepening reform, and Taiwan affairs.

The State Structure

The structure of PRC government is presented in Figure 6.2. China's constitution declares, "All power in the PRC belongs to the people. The organs through which the people exercise state power are the National People's Congress and the local people's congresses at different levels." People's congresses operate at every administrative level in the PRC from the national at the top to rural towns and urban districts and are the legislative branch of the government. But, like other state organizations, the congresses operate under strict party scrutiny and exercise power only as allowed by the CCP.

In rural areas, deputies to county and town people's congresses are *directly* elected by all eligible citizens in that locale, as are deputies to people congresses at the lowest level of formal urban administration, the district. Elections at all higher levels are *indirect*, meaning.deputies are elected by the people's congress at the next lowest level. For example, deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) are elected by the people's congresses at the provincial level. (China's 560,000 villages are not considered to be a formal level of administration and have a different form of governance, which involves direct elections, as discussed in chap. 9.)

Elections for the NPC are held every five years. The current NPC, formed in 2018, has 2,980 deputies. They are not full-time lawmakers, and when the NPC is not in session, they return to their regular locations and jobs.

Deputies to the NPC are allocated according to the population of a given province. The NPC recently equalized the representation of urban and rural areas. Prior to this reform, every 960,000 rural residents and every 240,000 urban residents were represented by one NPC deputy, which gave China's cities much more clout in the legislature. The province with the smallest population is guaranteed at least fifteen deputies. Special administrative regions such as Hong Kong and Macau have a set quota of delegates, as does the PLA.

Just as the National Congress of the CCP elects party leaders every five years at its fall meeting, the NPC elects a new state leadership at a meeting in the spring following the Party Congress, although those to be elected have been predetermined

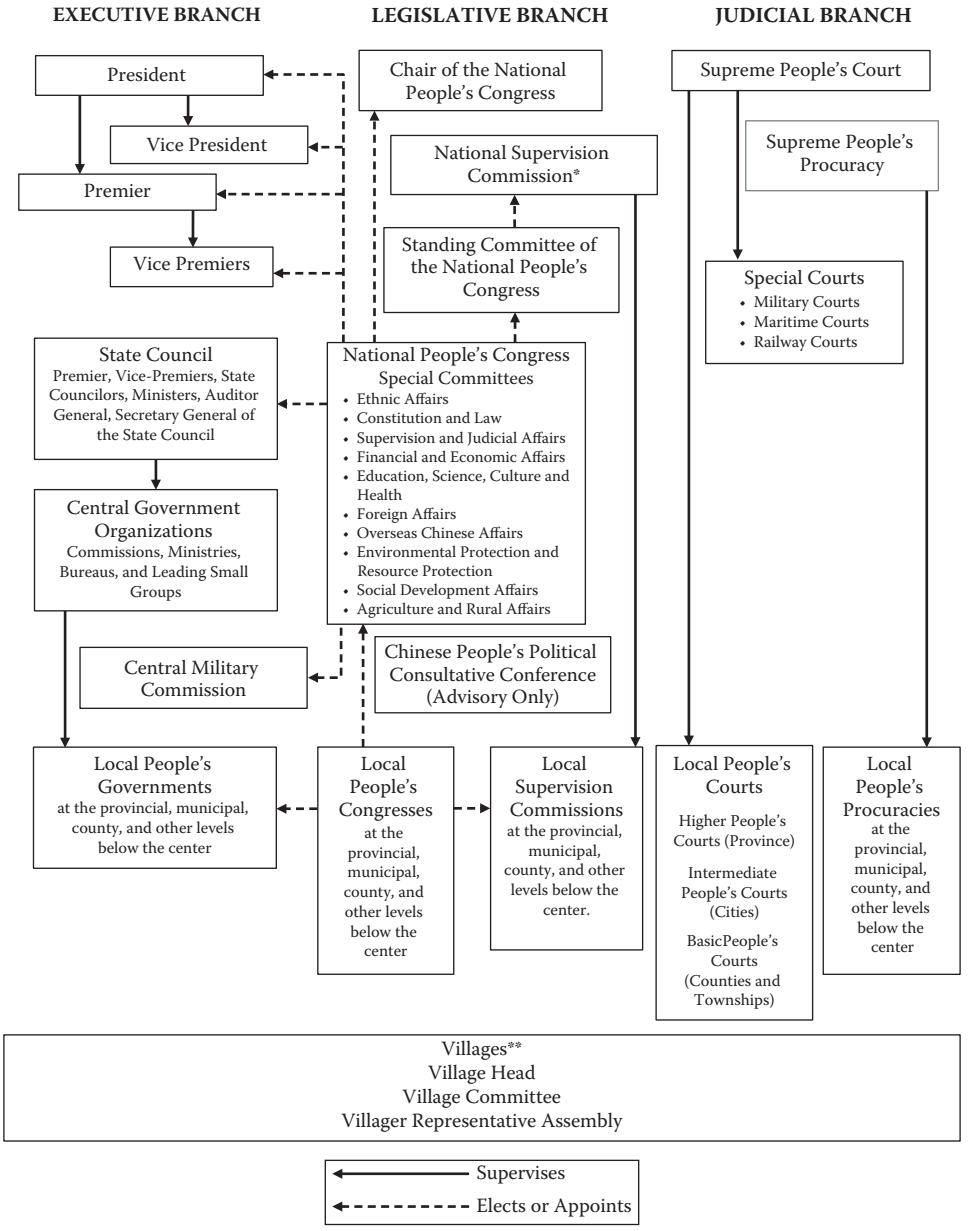

FIGURE 6.2 Organization of the People's Republic of China

*The National Supervision Commission is on the same level of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuracy

** Village are technically self-governing but in fact are under the authority of party and state organizations at the town or township level..

by the party. But unlike deputies of the Party Congress, which only meets every five years, the NPC convenes in its entirety every March for a two-week session, during which deputies discuss the reports by the premier and other government leaders and approve laws and legislative regulations. The NPC has increasingly served as a venue for policy debates, although politically sensitive or controversial topics are off limits. The work of the NPC has become more substantive in terms of drafting laws and regulations and providing a venue for policy discourse, but it still basically acts as a rubber stamp for decisions made by the party leadership.

When the NPC is not in session, the **Standing Committee of the National People's Congress** (not to be confused with the much more powerful CCP Politburo Standing Committee) takes responsibility for any issues that require congressional consideration. The Standing Committee of the NPC, which generally convenes every two months for about a week at a time, is headed by a chair, who is also a member of the party Politburo Standing Committee. The NPC also appoints ten special committees to draft legislation in various areas such as economics, education, energy, and the environment.

In theory, NPC delegates are not only supposed to elect the members of the Standing Committee of the NPC but are also constitutionally entitled to elect the president and vice president of the PRC, the chair of the state Central Military Commission, the chief justice of the **Supreme People's Court**, the chief of the **Supreme People's Procuracy** (the PRC's top law enforcement official, roughly equivalent to the attorney general of the United States), and the director of the **National Supervision Commission**. The National Supervision Commission, which was first established at the National People's Congress meeting in March 2018, is the highest state anticorruption agency of the PRC, with the same administrative ranking as the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuracy. The National Supervision Commission's operations are integrated with the CCP's Central Discipline Inspection Commission. The director of the National Supervision Commission, Yang Xiaodu, also serves as the deputy secretary of the CCDI and is a member of the Politburo. As a state organization, it has a legal basis for investigating corruption that the CCDI lacks, and its jurisdiction to investigate corruption extends to nonparty officials (see chap. 7).

The NPC is also empowered to approve the premier, who is appointed by the president, as well as the other members of the State Council and CMC. In reality, however, all of the candidates for these positions are chosen by the top party leadership. This formal process is hardly competitive. When Xi Jinping was first elected PRC president in 2013, for example, the vote was 2,952 for, 1 against, and 3 abstentions. The election for vice president was more contested: the tally was 2,839 for, 80 against, and 37 abstentions. In Xi's reelection as PRC president in 2018, he received unanimous support with 2,970 votes. One deputy voted against the candidate for vice president, Wang Qishan.

This lack of competitiveness notwithstanding, it is an interesting and fairly recent phenomenon that NPC delegates sometimes vote against some nominees for important positions in the confirmation process. For example, the nominee to head the government's environmental protection ministry in 2013 won "only" two-thirds of the vote, which probably reflected widespread public unhappiness with air pollution and other ecological problems.

The State Council is headed by the premier, and its Executive Committee consists of the premier; four vice premiers; and five state councilors, who are senior government leaders with broad responsibilities (one of the state councilors also concurrently serves as secretary-general of the State Council). The State Council currently consists of more than two dozen members, including ministers and commissioners who head functional departments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Health Commission, the central bank governor, and the auditor-general (who oversees the government's budget). All these minister-level leaders are members of the CCP, all except two are members of the party Central Committee, and for all their first loyalty is to the party. Like the CCP, the central government of the PRC has leading small groups and similarly-tasked committees focused primarily on economic and social issues to coordinate policy making and implementation across the vast state bureaucracy.[3]

As discussed in more detail in chapter 7, the judiciary is not a separate independent branch of government in the PRC. The CCP uses the nomenklatura system and other means of control to maintain tight oversight on all aspects of China's legal system. Some Chinese intellectuals who believe that the PRC should move toward a true rule of law system have spoken out against party interference. One such intellectual is the law professor He Weifang. In 2006, he bluntly criticized Zhou Yongkang, Minister of Public Security (who was also a member of the CCP Politburo), for his heavy-handed "oversight" of the Supreme People's Court. To Professor He, Zhou's actions exemplified the lack of a genuinely independent judicial system in the country. "There is no other country in the world," Professor He said, "in which the chief justice reports to the chief of police."[4]

The Party and the Army

The party's control over the military has been an important principle throughout the history of the CCP. In 1938, Mao Zedong declared, "Every Communist must grasp the truth, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party."[5] On a few occasions, however, the PLA has intervened in Chinese politics. Examples include the 1971 "Lin Biao incident," when Minister of Defense Lin Biao pursued a failed military coup to overthrow Chairman Mao (see chap. 3), and the two years immediately following the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, when the generals of the so-called "Yang family clique"—Yang Baibing and Yang Shangkun—gained enormous power, only to be outmaneuvered by Deng Xiaoping.

Over the past decade, China's military has steadily moved away from active involvement in domestic politics. The probability that a military figure might serve as a kingmaker has become increasingly remote. In each of the last five Politburos (1997–2017) there were only two representatives of the military, and none served on the Politburo Standing Committee. Furthermore, no member of the military elite serves on the current Secretariat, which signals the further retreat of the PLA from domestic affairs and foreign policy toward a more narrow focus on military affairs.

The most important organizations for deciding military policy are the CCP Central Military Commission and the PRC Central Military Commission. Although technically the former is a party organization and the latter is part of the state structure, they are in fact different names for the same institution with identical membership. This arrangement reflects the CCP's desire to exercise its power and authority, at least formally, through the PRC's constitutional framework. In reality, however, the Central Military Commission reports to the Politburo and its Standing Committee. In other words, China's armed forces are under the command of the CCP, not the government of the PRC. Moreover, as the former general secretary, Hu Jintao, declared in 2004, the primary mission of the Chinese military is "to provide an important guarantee of strength for the party to consolidate its ruling position"[6] and new recruits in the PLA swear an oath that includes a promise "To obey the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party."[7]

The current CMC has seven members. CCP General Secretary and PRC President Xi Jinping is the chair, which effectively makes him commander in chief of China's armed forces. The two military leaders who sit on the Politburo serve as CMC vice chairmen. Other members include the minister of defense (responsible for the PLA's foreign interactions), the chief of the CMC Joint Staff Department (responsible for military operations), the director of the CMC Political Department (responsible for ideological indoctrination and personnel appointments), and the secretary of the CMC Commission for Discipline Inspection (responsible for anticorruption efforts in the PLA). Since 1992, only three civilians, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping have served on the CMC. Nevertheless, the norm of a civilian party leader being in charge of military affairs seems to be well-accepted by the PLA.

Both Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin delayed turning over the position of CMC chair to a relatively untested successor, holding onto the seat for a few years after they had already stepped down from their party and government posts. This created a rather strange situation in which the civilian commander in chief of China's armed forces did not hold any other position in the party or the government. In the run-up to the 18th Party Congress in 2012, there was considerable speculation that retiring general secretary, Hu Jintao, might similarly try to stay on as head of the CMC for a transition period. But Xi Jinping took over as CMC chair at the same time he was elevated to the top party position. By surrendering power to Xi, Hu set an example for a more institutionalized and complete political succession and strengthened the relationship among the party, the state, and the army.

DYNAMICS IN THE CHINESE POLITICAL SYSTEM

While the Chinese party-state institutional structure has remained more or less the same over the past seven decades, the CCP leadership in the post-Mao China recognized the need to keep abreast of the times and make necessary changes in order to stay in power. A truly durable political system should be open to new blood, new skills, and new ladders to leadership. In so doing, it is more able to evolve institutionally and politically and avoid becoming insolated and stagnant. CCP rule has been a constant over the past seven decades, but the composition of the party membership,

the routes for elite advancement, and professional backgrounds of leaders have seen continual change, especially during the reform era.

The Changing Composition of the CCP

As a matter of fact, the occupational and educational backgrounds of the CCP's membership and the party's leaders have changed profoundly. The CCP has been transformed from a revolutionary party consisting primarily of peasants, soldiers, and urban workers to a ruling party with an increasing number of members from diverse areas of society.

Over the past half century, the size of the CCP has increased enormously. As shown in Figure 6.3, CCP membership has increased from about 4.5 million in 1949, when the party came to power, to 89.6 million as of mid-2018. Note that nearly half this growth has occurred since the end of the Maoist era in 1976. However, the party's total membership still constitutes a very small proportion (about 8.5 percent) of the total age-eligible (over eighteen) population. The party get about 20 million applications for new member each year. But since Xi Jinping came to power, there has been a significant slowdown in the number admitted. In 2012, there were 3.23 million new members; the next year that dropped to 2.41 million—the first decrease in a decade. In 2017, 1.9 million people joined the CCP. This reflects Xi's emphasis on improving

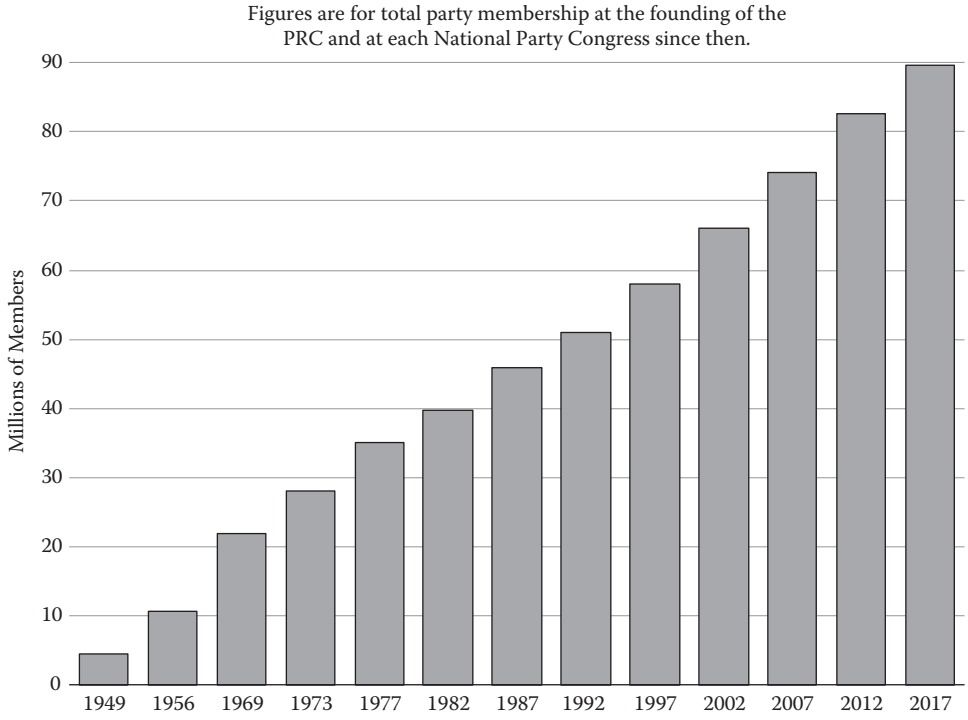

FIGURE 6.3 CCP Membership (1949–2017)

the quality of party members in terms of educational levels and fealty to communist principles.[8]

Not only has the CCP grown enormously in size, but its occupational composition has also changed in dramatic ways over the past three decades. At the start of the reform era in 1981, farmers and workers—the traditional base of the communist party—made up 63.4 percent of the CCP.[9] As Figure 6.4 shows, those two groups accounted for just 36.9 percent of CCP members in 2016. Although farmers continue to constitute the largest single segment of the CCP, the current occupational composition of the party reflects the impact of modernization and the ideological reorientation of the party. For the last decade or so, the CCP has actively sought to recruit members from groups that came into existence only with the market reforms, the so-called new social strata, which includes, among others, private entrepreneurs (**Red Capitalists**), technical personnel and managers in private firms and foreign-funded enterprises, independent professionals, and the self-employed. (See the figures for a discussion of the role of private entrepreneurs in the CCP.)

In the three decades after the establishment of the PRC, elite recruitment—bringing in new leaders—was mostly based on family background (the preferred categories being peasant or worker), ideological loyalty, and political activism, rather than on educational credentials and/or managerial skills. This politicized pattern of recruitment was expressed by the idea that it was better to be "red" than "expert" during the Mao years. "Reds" were cadres who advanced their careers on the strength of their revolutionary pedigree and ideological purity, while "experts" were members of the

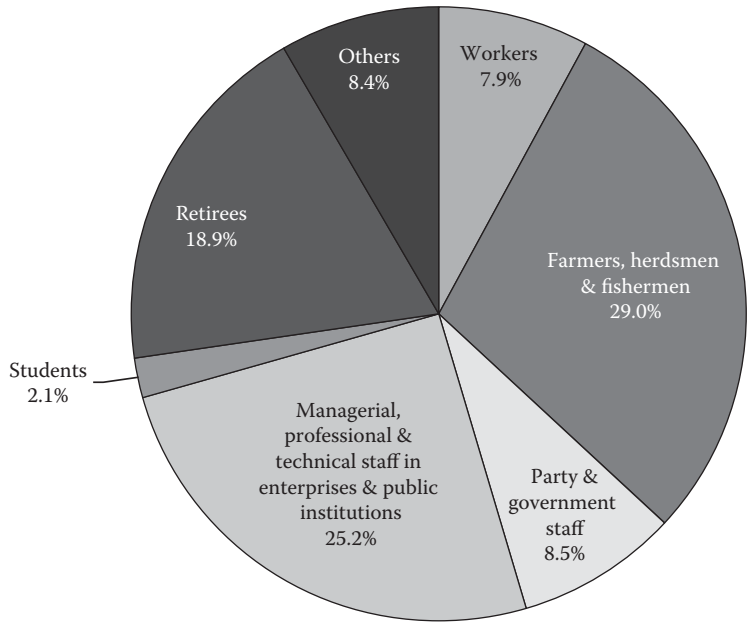

FIGURE 6.4 Occupations of CCP Members (2016)

Source: "2016 Zhongguo gongchandang dangnei tongji gongbao" [The 2016 Chinese Communist Party Public Report of Internal Statistics]. *Gongchandangyuan wang* [Website of the Members of the Communist Party], June 30, 2017, http://news.12371.cn/2017/06/30/ARTI1498810325807955.shtml

party elite who distinguished themselves by their educational credentials and technical skills.

When it came to elite recruitment and promotion, reds have traditionally almost always prevailed over experts. Thus, from 1949 through the early 1980s, the educational attainment of party cadres and members was extremely low. In 1955, for example, only 5 percent of national leaders had a junior high school education or above.[10] Even in 1985, only 4 percent of CCP members were educated beyond the high school level, and a majority (52.2 percent) had received only a primary school education or were illiterate.[11] These numbers reflect both the low value placed on educational accomplishments and technical know-how within the CCP and the relatively underdeveloped system of higher education before the reform era.

Since the reform era, the educational level of CCP members has increased significantly in the past three decades, now that "expertise" is much more valued than "redness" in the recruitment process. Still in 1998, among the 61 million CCP members, only 11 million were college graduates (17.8 percent); by 2017, 43.3 million CCP members held, at minimum, a two-year college degree, constituting 48.3 percent of the total membership.[12]

The growth in the percentage of national-level party leaders with higher education has been particularly dramatic. For example, in 1982, no member of the Politburo had completed a university education; in 2017, all except one member of the Politburo have college-level degrees, eighteen from universities, one from a military academy, and five from the Central Party School, where the training is largely political, ideological, and managerial. Twenty-two Politburo members have advanced degrees, including five PhD degree holders, for example, General Secretary-President Xi Jinping (PhD in law and political science) and Premier Li Keqiang (PhD in economics). The percentage of college-educated individuals at senior levels of leadership has significantly increased. For example, the number of college-educated top provincial leaders (party secretaries, governors, and their deputies) increased from 20 percent in 1982 to 100 percent in 2010, two-thirds had postgraduate education, usually through part-time programs, and many held PhD degrees. Their fields of graduate education were diverse, including economics, management, politics, and law, as well as engineering.[13]

The 1980s–1990s was a time of "technocratic turnover" within China's party-state leadership. In 1982, technocrats—cadres with a university-level technical or science education and work experience as an engineer or scientist—constituted just 2 percent of the Central Committee, but by 1987 they made up 25 percent of the Central Committee, and by 1997 they made up over half. All nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee elected in 1997 were engineers, including the three top leaders, General Secretary Jiang Zemin (electrical engineer), Chair of the NPC Li Peng (hydroelectric engineer), and Premier Zhu Rongji (electrical engineer). This was also true of the top three leaders elected in 2002: General Secretary Hu Jintao (hydraulic engineer), NPC Chair, Wu Bangguo (electrical engineer), and Premier Wen Jiabao (geological engineer). The representation of technocrats also rose dramatically in other high-level leadership categories; for example, in 1982, no provincial party secretaries or governors had higher-level technical education; by 2002, 74 percent of provincial party secretaries and 77 percent of governors were technocrats.[14]

Beginning with the 17th Party Congress that met in 2007, the dominance of technocrats in the Chinese leadership began to decline and the percentage of leaders with nontechnical educations started to rise sharply. The Politburo elected that year had thirteen technocrats (including eleven engineers) out of twenty-five members (52 percent), down from eighteen out of twenty-four (75 percent) in the 2002 Politburo. In the twenty-five-member Politburo formed in 2017, in terms of highest degree obtained, only two (8 percent) are technocrats. None of the Politburo Standing Committee members is a technocrat. Most of them majored in economics, political science, law, and humanities. Although Xi Jinping's undergraduate degree is in chemical engineering, he never practiced as an engineer. Late in his career, Xi received a doctoral degree in law and political science through a part-time study program.[15] Having leaders who are educated in a broader range of fields may well bring more diverse perspectives to policy making and problem-solving.

The rise of technocrats and others with higher-education degrees to dominance in the Chinese leadership over the recent decades is particularly striking considering the following three facts. First, in 2010, only 7 percent of China's labor force had a college education.[16] Second, although China was traditionally a meritocratic society in which status was largely determined by success in the imperial exams, scientific knowledge and technical competence were always subordinate to literary and cultural achievements in the Confucian worldview. Third, China's meritocratic tradition underwent an extreme reversal during the Mao era, especially during the Cultural Revolution, when professionals or "experts" were repeatedly targeted as enemies of the people.

Women are significantly underrepresented at all levels of the CCP. In 2017, women made up only 25.7 percent of total party membership, a modest improvement from 16.6 percent in 2002.[17] They are even less well-represented in the top leadership organizations and positions. There are thirty women among the 376 full and alternate members of the Central Committee (8.0 percent), but only ten of the 204 full members (4.9 percent) are women. Only one woman serves on the current 25-member Politburo, and no woman has ever served on the Politburo Standing Committee. In 2018, among the 31 provincial-level administrative units of the PRC, there was not a single woman serving as party secretary and there were only three women governors (in Inner Mongolia, Guizhou, and Ningxia).

The Main Route to the Top is through the Provinces

An analysis of the composition of the party's top bodies reveals a significant increase in the number of leaders who have advanced their careers through experience in provincial leadership posts. Since the reform era began in 1978, the most important political credential for a top leadership position has been experience as a provincial-level party secretary. Former party leader Jiang Zemin was promoted to general secretary of the CCP in 1989 from the post of party secretary of Shanghai (where he had been credited with the "successful" handling of pro-democracy demonstrations). Hu Jintao had served as party secretary in both Guizhou and Tibet before being promoted to the Standing Committee in 1992. Xi Jinping has served as governor of both Fujian and

Zhejiang province and as party secretary of both Zhejiang and Shanghai. Six of the seven members of the current Standing Committee had served as provincial party secretaries prior to their ascent to the supreme decision-making body.

The increase in the percentage of Politburo members with experience as provincial leaders since 1992 is shown in Figure 6.5. From the 14th Party Congress in 1992 to the 19th Party Congress in 2017, on average, about 65 percent of Politburo members had served as provincial/municipal party secretary and/or governor/mayor. Since two members of the Politburos hailed from the military and some members served as deputy party secretaries or vice governors, the percentage of civilians with major provincial experience was even higher.

The large representation of leaders with provincial experience in the Politburo and its Standing Committee reflects the growing power and influence of the politicians who run the country's thirty-one province-level administrative units. In addition, the central authorities try to prevent the emergence of local power bases by promoting provincial leaders to positions in Beijing and frequent reshuffling of provincial leaders.

Top CCP officials seem to be seriously concerned with ensuring regional balance in the national leadership. The party secretaries of four major cities directly under central government control (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing) routinely serve in the Politburo. The Politburo that was elected in 2017 has at least one current member who was born and/or worked extensively in each of China's major geographic regions—the northeast, north, northwest, east, south central, and southwest. In addition, at the time of the Party Congress, there are usually six new Politburo members

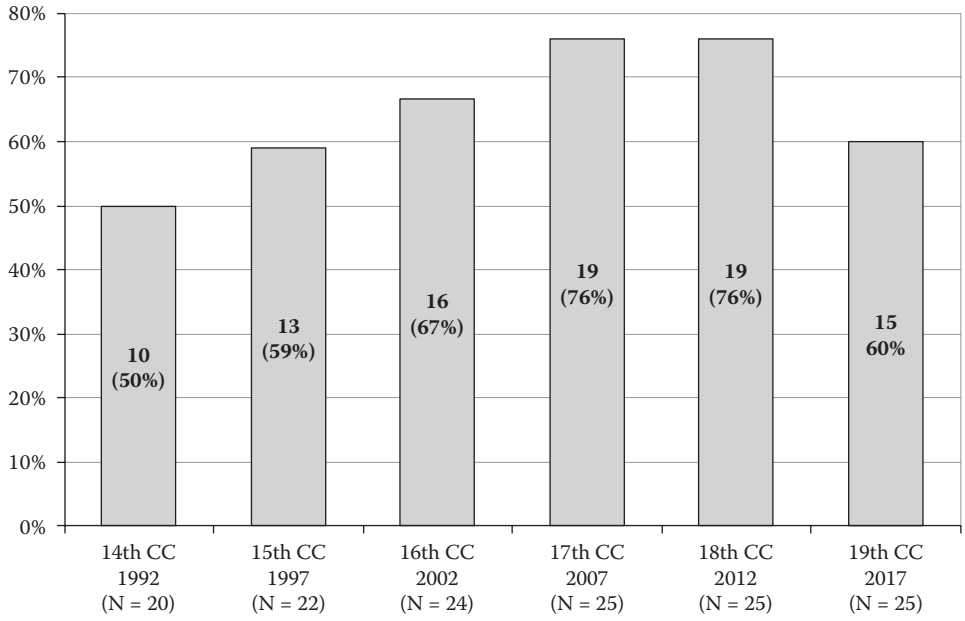

FIGURE 6.5 Politburo Members with Provincial Experience

Source: Cheng Li, "A Biographical and Factional Analysis of the Post-2012 Politburo," China Leadership Monitor, No. 41 (June 6, 2013), http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor/article/148836. Updated by Cheng Li.

who have recently advanced their careers or who concurrently serve as province-level party secretaries in recently formed Politburos.

This concern for equal regional representation in the CCP's leadership organizations is even more evident in the distribution of full membership seats on the Central Committee. A strong political norm in Chinese elite recruitment since the 1997 Central Committee has been that almost every province-level administration has two full membership seats on the Central Committee, usually occupied by the party secretary and governor. Although provincial leaders are sometimes later promoted to the central government or transferred to other provinces, this distributional norm has been strictly applied at the time of Central Committee elections. Local demands for an even distribution of membership seats across provinces and regions in both the Central Committee and the Politburo have been increasingly accommodated and institutionalized by the party leadership.[18]

At the same time, top national leaders still need to accumulate political capital through close ties with some of the country's most important regions. Because of the emphasis top party elites place on leadership experience gained through serving as a party secretary in major provinces and cities, these posts are pivotal stepping stones for aspiring entrants into the top national leadership. This further enhances the political weight of local power in present-day China. But the fact that provincial leaders' career prospects depend on their superiors in Beijing speaks unambiguously to the enormous power the central party-state has over local administrations in China's still highly hierarchical, authoritarian system.

Another experience at the local level shared by many of the China's newest generation of leaders is that of having been "sent-down youth" during the Cultural Revolution. Five of the seven members of the current Politburo Standing Committee (Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu, Zhao Leji, and Han Zheng) and nine other Politburo members were among the more than 20 million students who were sent to the rural areas to do manual labor in the late 1960s and early 1970s after Mao disbanded the Red Guard movement (see chap. 3). Xi Jinping spent 1969–1975 working in an agricultural commune in a very poor area of Shaanxi province and began his university education only after returning from the countryside. Some observers think this experience may give the leaders a deeper understanding of the difficult conditions many of China's hundreds of millions farmers still face.

New Channels for the Membership in the Politburo

The slight decline in Politburo members with experience as a provincial chief in the Politburo formed at the 19th Party Congress in 2017 (as shown in Figure 6.5), can probably be attributed to the fact that Xi Jinping has moved to broaden the fields from which elites are recruited to include think tanks, universities, and foreign affairs experts. Xi Jinping is the first leader in the PRC who has publicly endorsed the role of think tanks in enhancing the country's soft power and has promoted the building of the "Chinese new type of think tanks" as part of the country's strategic mission.[19] Xi has declared on a number of occasions in the past few years the strategic goal of

developing new think tanks with Chinese characteristics. In April 2016, in an important speech delivered at the Internet and Information Security Work Conference, Xi proclaimed that China should adopt a mechanism common in many foreign countries, whereby think tanks serve as a "revolving door" (*xuanzhuanmen*) for political and intellectual elites to move between the government, enterprises, and think tanks themselves.[20]

Profiles of four key leaders who emerged at the 19th Party Congress in 2017 illustrate the new channels in the route to the top in the Xi Jinping era.

For the first time in the PRC history, someone who advanced his career entirely through universities and think tanks has become a member of the Politburo Standing Committee and is now in charge of party propaganda. Wang Huning, one of the first group of Chinese students to major in law and international politics in the post-Cultural Revolution period, taught these subjects at Fudan University for more than a decade. He served as dean of the Fudan Law School in the early 1990s before moving to Beijing, where he has worked as division head, deputy director, and then director of the Central Policy Research Center of the CCP Central Committee, a prominent party think tank, for more than two decades. He served as a key advisor to three general secretaries of the CCP—Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping—before becoming one of the seven members of the supreme decision-making body at the 2017 Party Congress. Wang played a crucial role in developing the trademark contributions to Chinese communist ideology for each of those three leaders, most recently Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era (see chap. 5). His elevation reflects the increased importance hat Xi attached to ideological matters both within the party and the country more broadly.[21]

The leader currently in charge of China's financial affairs, Liu He, a new Politburo member and vice premier, has also advanced his career primarily through think tank work. An economist by training, in the 1990s Liu founded the Chinese Economists 50 Forum, a prestigious think tank that consists of the country's most influential economists and financial technocrats (including the former and current governors of the People's Bank, Zhou Xiaochuan and Yi Gang). Liu is the author of six books and over 200 articles. His work covers five broad research areas: the relationship between economic development and the change in industrial structure in China; macroeconomic theories; corporate governance and property rights; the new economy and the information industry; and the reform of Chinese SOEs (state-owned enterprises). These are all critical issues as the PRC adjusts its economic model from the export-led, investment-heavy approach that generating the high levels of growth in the first decades of the reform era to one based on domestic consumption, technology, and innovation (see chap. 8).

While serving as a researcher and administrator at various government think tanks such as the Research Office of the Industrial Policy and Long-term Planning Department in the State Planning Commission, the State Information Center, and the Development Research Center of the State Council, Liu He was one of the principal drafters of communiqués for key CCP leadership meetings from 2003 to 2013.[22] Partly because of his expertise in economics and finance and partly because of his strong

personal ties with Xi Jinping, Liu He has now moved from serving as a think tank advisor to a government policymaker.

Xi Jinping's college classmate and roommate at Tsinghua University, Chen Xi, also entered the new Politburo at the 19th Party Congress and concurrently serves as director of the Central Organization Department—which oversees the *nomenklatura* system—and president of the **Central Party School**, the top training academy for CCP officials. After receiving a master's degree in chemical engineering from Tsinghua, Chen Xi advanced his career mainly through his academic and party/administrative work at Tsinghua, where he served as a leader in charge of student affairs; deputy party secretary of the Department of Chemical Engineering; and deputy party secretary, executive deputy party secretary, and then party secretary of the Tsinghua Party Committee.

With Xi's strong backing, Chen promoted a few of his close associates at Tsinghua and administrators of other universities to important leadership posts. The most notable examples from Tsinghua are Chen Jining, former president of Tsinghua University, who was appointed minister of Environmental Protection in 2015 and mayor of Beijing in 2017, and Hu Heping, former party secretary of Tsinghua University, who was first appointed director of the Organization Department of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee, then deputy party secretary of Shaanxi Province in 2015, governor of Shaanxi in 2016, and party secretary of Shaanxi in 2017. Chen Jining and Hu Heping, born in 1964 and 1962, respectively, are seen as rising stars among the next generation of leaders. With his new responsibility as Xi's chief personnel officer and president of the Central Party School, Chen Xi has a major role in shaping the elite recruitment channel and thus Xi's power base.

The elevation of Yang Jiechi, a career diplomat and the chief representative from the foreign affairs bureaucracy, to be a member of the Politburo at the 19th Party Congress reflects the growing importance of international relations to the CCP leadership in the Xi era. No representatives from China's foreign affairs apparatus had served on the Politburo in the fifteen years prior to Yang's appointment. Further, Yang is the first former ambassador to the United States to serve on this important leadership body. As a diplomat, Yang worked in the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC twice for a total of twelve years.

It is notable that all four of these prominent leaders studied in the West early in their career. Wang Huning was a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan, the University of Iowa, and the University of California, Berkeley, in the late 1980s. Wang's elevation to the Politburo Standing Committee marks the first time in PRC history that a Western-educated **returnee** has served on this supreme leadership body. Vice premier Liu He received two master's degrees from American universities: an MBA from at Seton Hall University and an MPA from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where he was a Mason fellow. Chen Xi served as a visiting scholar at Stanford University in the early 1990s. Yang Jiechi studied at the University of Bath and the London School of Economics and Political Science in the early 1970s. On the 370-plus-member central committee, the percentage of foreign educated "returnees" has gradually increased from 6.2 percent in 2002, 10.5 percent in 2007, and 14.6 percent in 2012 to 20.5 percent in 2017. Most of these leaders studied in the West, especially in the United States.

Emerging Players in the CCP: Entrepreneurs and Lawyers

In terms of the occupational backgrounds of the CCP elites, two distinct groups—entrepreneurs and lawyers—have recently emerged as new and important players in the politics and socioeconomic life of the country. Like the ascendency of well-educated technocrats in the Chinese communist party-state in the 1980s, the growing influence of these groups represents another major shift in the landscape of Chinese politics.

The upward social mobility and political role of entrepreneurs—owners and managers of private businesses—is particularly momentous. Traditional Chinese society, which was dominated by the scholar-gentry class, tended to devalue merchants because they lived by making profits off others rather than through "honest" mental or manual labor. Anticapitalist bias reached its peak during the first few decades of the PRC. The 4 million private firms and stores that had existed in China prior to 1949 had all but disappeared by the mid-1950s as part of the transition to socialism. During the Cultural Revolution, anything to do with capitalism was branded poisonous, and top leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were purged for allegedly taking China down "the capitalist road." Small-scale private business and self-employment was not possible until the end of the Mao era, and private enterprises that could employ a large number of laborers did not exist in China until the late 1980s.

Several factors have contributed to the reemergence of entrepreneurs in the PRC. Among them are the lifting of ideological taboos against privately owned businesses; rural-to-urban migration, which created a large number of very small-scale entrepreneurs in China's cities; joint ventures between foreign and Chinese private companies; the establishment of stock and real estate markets; and the technological revolution, which has given birth to a whole new private industry. At the start of the reform era in the late 1970s, there were literally no private businesses in China. In 1989, there were 3.6 million private enterprises (with more than eight employees) and 14.5 million individually owned businesses (with fewer than eight employees) in China, employing 26.6 million people. By 2012, that number had grown to 10.9 million private enterprises and 40.6 million individual businesses with a total of nearly 200 million employees. The Chinese leadership's call for innovation and entrepreneurship in Chinese society has led to a rapid increase in the number of privately firms in recent years. At the end of 2017, China had a total of 27.3 million private firms and 65.8 million small-scale individually owned firms employing 340 million people. The private sector accounts for more than 60 percent of the PRC's GDP and 90 percent of new job creation.[23]

The rise of private entrepreneurs in terms of political influence can be traced to July 2001, when then-CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin gave an important speech on the eightieth anniversary of the party's founding. In his speech, Jiang claimed that the party should be representative of three components of society: the advanced social productive forces, advanced culture, and the interests of the overwhelming majority. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, Jiang's so-called "Theory of the Three Represents" was an ideological justification for the priority given to the private sector in China's economic development and for allowing entrepreneurs to be members of the communist party (the CCP still shies away from calling them "capitalists"). A 2004 official

study found that 34 percent of the owners of private enterprises were members of the CCP, up from just 13 percent in 1993. Of that 34 percent, only 9.4 percent had joined *after* Jiang's 2001 speech,[24] which reflects the fact that Jiang's ideological embrace was mostly just formal acknowledgment that a large number of party members were already engaged in private business. More recent studies suggest that the proportion of private entrepreneurs who are CCP members remains at about one-third, but, interestingly, the larger the scale of the private enterprise, the more likely it is that the owner(s) are party members.[25]

Entrepreneurs and, especially, their executive counterparts in state-owned industries have just begun to acquire positions in national and local-level political leadership. A small, but increasing percent of the delegates to the national party congress are from the corporate world. At the 19th Party Congress in 2017, 148 of the 2,280 delegates (6 percent) were from the corporate sector, but, of those, just 27 were from the private sector.[26]

The entrepreneurs and executives of SOEs, especially China's flagship companies, have gradually increased their representation in the national leadership, including on the Politburo and the State Council. For example, Guo Shengkun, currently a member of both the Politburo and the Secretariat and concurrently State Councilor of the State Council, responsible for political and legal affairs, advanced his early career in the mining industry and previously served as CEO of the Aluminum Corporation of China (also known as CHALCO), the world's second-largest aluminum producer. Wang Yong, the State Councilor responsible for SOE development, advanced his early career from the aerospace industry, where he worked for twenty-three years. Wang served as vice president of the China Aerospace Electrical Group before joining the CCP Central Organization Department in 2000.

The 2017 Party Congress witnessed an interesting phenomenon: a significant number of leaders with work experience in the aerospace industry have entered the Central Committee as full or alternate members. A new term, "the cosmos club" (*yuzhoubang*), has been coined to refer to national and provincial leaders who have advanced their careers through China's aerospace industry.[27] In addition to Wang Yong, the State Councilor mentioned above, the 19th Central Committee includes seven other full members and thirteen alternates who belong to the "cosmos club," most of whom are concurrently serving in key provincial posts as governor or party secretary. Many of them are relatively young (under the age of sixty) and, given their solid political and business experience, they are well positioned for further promotion. Some of them are strong candidates for the next Politburo, which will be chosen in 2022.

For Xi Jinping, bringing the business executives of SOEs (especially those in the important industry of aerospace) into top leadership posts could serve four objectives. First, nurturing a new set of protégés hailing from China's SOEs allows Xi to diversify the composition of his power base, thereby broadening his support within the party leadership. Second, leaders from SOE and technical backgrounds are seen as "less tainted by the political bureaucracy's interests and undesirable customs."[28] Bringing in provincial leaders who are "outsiders"—with respect to both a locality and its provincial bureaucracy—allows Xi to undermine forces of localism and potential factionalism that might otherwise constrain his power. Third, former CEOs possess substantial and multifaceted business experience. Xi expects these individuals

to improve the financial administration of their respective provinces and implement policies to stimulate their local economies. And fourth, Xi Jinping has long been advocating for prioritizing China's space program and the aerospace industry on both the military and civilian fronts, which he views as the best testimony to China's national strength and status on the world stage.

Wealthy private entrepreneurs have also become more visible, albeit in the less-powerful state institutions, such as the National People's Congress and its advisory body, the **Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference** (CPPCC).‡ The net worth of the 153 deputies to the 2018 meeting of these two bodies who are listed among China's "super rich" was estimated at US$650 billion.[29] The list includes 102 billionaires, one of whom is Pony Ma, CEO of Tencent, one of the world's largest internet and technology companies. One of the "just barely" billionaires in the CPPCC was Neil Shen, a graduate of Yale University, who was named in 2018 by *Forbes* magazine as the World's Top Venture Capital Investor. By way of comparison, there were 207 millionaires, but no billionaires, in the U.S. Congress that same year. The total wealth of all the members of the House of Representatives and Senate was US$2.4 billion.[30]

Clearly, although private entrepreneurs play a much more significant role in the PRC than they did just a decade ago, there is still a long way to go before their political clout comes anywhere near matching their economic power. It is worth noting that the children of many of the top Chinese leaders are now pursuing careers in the business sector, with most working in foreign joint ventures such as investment banks in Hong Kong, rather than climbing the ladder of the CCP political hierarchy as their technocrat fathers did. If, as is likely, some of them aspire to political careers, it would represent a very different path to power, with important implications for the future of the Chinese communist party-state.

Along with the economic and political rise of entrepreneurs, there has also been an increase in the power and prevalence of lawyers in China (see chap. 7). The Maoist system was hostile to both the legal profession and the legal system. At the start of the reform era in the early 1980s, there were only three thousand lawyers in a country of over one billion people.[31] Since then, the number of registered lawyers and law school students has increased significantly. In early 2017, China had a total of 300,000 registered lawyers in about 25,000 registered law firms.[32] The legal profession remains a tiny one (especially on a per capita basis) when compared to the more than one million lawyers in the United States. But the number of lawyers in China has increased dramatically in recent years (an average of 9.5 percent annual increase over the past eight years) and will likely become even more so in the years to come. There are now more than 630 law schools and law departments in China, graduating about 100,000 students each year.[33]

‡ The CPPCC consists of more than two thousand members who represent a wide range of constituencies, including the CCP, China's noncommunist "democratic parties," official mass organizations (such as the All-China Women's Federation), various occupational circles (such as artists and writers, educators, medical personnel, and farmers), ethnic minorities, and religions. Although the majority of members of the CPPCC are noncommunists, the organization is bound by its charter to accept the leadership of the CCP, and it has always been headed by a high-ranking party leader. The Conference meets each year for about two weeks, concurrent with the annual session of the National People's Congress, but its function is only to advise the government; it has no legislative power of its own.

Some of China's lawyers work outside the political establishment to challenge abuses of power, including rampant official corruption, and seek to promote the rule of law and civil society at the grassroots level. While activist lawyers are an emerging factor in Chinese politics, they are still subject to regulation and persecution by the party-state. All lawyers must be licensed by the government, and the authorities often refuse to renew licenses if the lawyer in question is regarded as a "troublemaker." Under Xi Jinping there has been extensive suppression of so-call "rights lawyers" who advocate for greater legal protection for China's citizens against the arbitrary of state power and sometime take action in defense of those rights.[34]

Other lawyers work within the political or intellectual establishment and some become political leaders. The rapid rise of leaders with legal training is an important trend in Chinese politics. The percentage of full members of the CCP central committee trained in law increased from 1.7 percent in the 14th Central Committee in 1997 to 18.6 percent in the 19th Central Committee in 2017.[35] Four members of the current Politburo, including two Standing Committee members, have some training in legal studies. For example, Premier Li Keqiang received undergraduate training in law at Peking University, and Wang Huning served as dean of the law school at Fudan University. Presently, Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court Zhou Qiang, Chief of the Supreme People's Procuracy Zhang Jun, Director of the National Supervision Commission Yang Xiaodu, and Auditor General of the State Council Hu Zhejun all hold law degrees.

An important theoretical proposition in Western studies of political elites is that the occupational identity of the leaders in a given country correlates with—and sometimes has a determining effect on—the nature of the political system. Political elites often want to leave their leadership legacy in the area in which they have a personal or professional interest. Technocrats, for example, are often particularly interested in economic growth and technological development due to their own backgrounds in these subjects. It will be interesting to watch whether the growing presence of lawyers and social scientists in the current generation of leaders will give greater attention to meaningful political and legal reform than did the preceding generations of communist ideologues, revolutionary veterans, and engineer technocrats.

INDIVIDUAL RULE VS. INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

China's party-state has been vigorous in responding to the changing environment and potential challenges facing the CCP and the country over the past few decades. The constant efforts to recruit new blood for party membership and to broaden the channels for elite advancement help explain the remarkable survival and durability of the CCP, especially in light of the collapse of many communist regimes in the recent past. What has further differentiated reform era China from other authoritarian political systems, according to some scholars, is that the CCP has developed effective institutional mechanisms to make the party-state "more accountable, responsive, and law-bound."[36] Two of the most important institutional developments have been the establishment of (1) term limits on various levels of leadership, especially those that define the succession norms for the top leader; and (2) collective leadership, which

emphasizes the power-sharing among competing factions or coalitions and their deal-making based on accepted rules, norms, and procedures.[37]

During the 19th Party Congress and the 13th National People's Congress, Xi Jinping completed the remarkable task of consolidating his power on multiple fronts—constitutional, ideological, institutional, political, and personnel (see chaps. 4 and 5). Xi's decision to abolish term limits for the PRC presidency has reversed succession norms. Many observers have concluded that politics in China has returned to strongman rule, with collective leadership having come to an end. In line with this perspective, the nature of Chinese elite politics can be characterized, once again, by old-fashioned zero-sum games and winner-takes-all competition instead of by the recent experimentation in factional negotiation and compromise. Do these perceived changes in Xi Jinping's "new era" reflect a temporary phenomenon or a broader, long-term trend in Chinese politics? Does the line-up of the current CCP leadership validate this analysis? What challenges will Xi face?

Political Succession: Lessons from the Past and Challenges for the Future

Mao Zedong wielded enormous, almost unchallengeable, personal power for most of the first three decades following the founding of the PRC in 1949 (see chap. 3). He treated succession as if it were his own private matter; discussion of any power transition for post-Mao leadership was taboo, and he eliminated two of his expected successors who had displeased him, Liu Shaoqi in 1966 and Lin Biao in 1971. The omnipresent slogan "Long Live Chairman Mao!" reinforced the illusion of Mao's "immortality." The Chairman literally held on to power until he exhaled his dying breath in September 1976. The result was a cataclysmic succession struggle that led, ironically, to Deng Xiaoping's rise to power and the reversal of most of the policies that characterized Maoist China.

During the Deng era, political succession and generational change in the Chinese leadership became a matter of public concern (see chap. 4). Yet, because of his legendary political career, no leader seriously challenged Deng's ultimate authority. Even when he did not hold any important leadership positions following the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, Deng was still regarded as China's "paramount leader." For many years during the 1990s, speculation by people in China and China Watchers abroad about when the elderly and ailing Deng would die often caused stock markets in Hong Kong and China to fluctuate wildly. Like Mao, Deng thought that who would take over after him was a decision for him alone to determine. In fact, also like Mao (though more gently), he twice removed leaders he had tapped to succeed him, Hu Yaobang in 1986 and Zhao Ziyang in 1989, because he considered both of them as being too soft on democracy protesters. But unlike Mao, Deng effectively handed over the reins of power to Jiang well before he died in 1997. In particular, with Deng's strong input, the PRC Constitution amended in 1982 established the two five-year term limits for the presidency and vice presidency, abolishing the lifetime tenure of top Chinese leaders.

Jiang Zemin had neither the charisma nor the revolutionary experience possessed by Mao or Deng. To a large extent, Jiang exercised power primarily through

coalition-building and political compromise. Hu Jintao's generation of leaders relied even more on power-sharing and consensus-finding. Willingly or not, Hu often characterized his top leadership role as being "first among equals" in his generation of leaders. Under Jiang and Hu, the CCP adopted more regulations on term limits for party and government leaders at various levels. According to these regulations, an individual leader cannot hold the same position for more than two terms, and no leader can remain at the same level of leadership for more than fifteen years. Although the CCP Constitution does not specify term limits for the general secretary of the party, party regulations establish that two-term limits apply to all party leaders. In light of the recent PRC Constitution amendment to abolish term limits for the presidency, one can expect that the CCP will similarly change the party regulations to allow the general secretary of the CCP to stay in that position longer than two terms. A change of party regulations is, or course, much easier than a constitutional amendment.

Post-Deng succession norms have also included the practice of "successor-in-training." Under that norm, after the general secretary's first five-year term, he and the CCP leadership would select one or two younger leaders to be promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee (one of whom would be the successor to general secretary when the latter completes his second term). This was precisely what happened to Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, both of whom served as an "heir apparent."

Another informal arrangement for political succession in the post-Deng era has been the phenomenon called "grandpa-designated successor" (*gedai zhiding jiebanren*), which refers to the practice of the current general secretary selecting the leader of two generations below him. Deng (second generation) not only designated Jiang (third generation) to succeed him but also Hu Jintao (fourth generation) to be the top leader to follow Jiang. Jiang similarly chose Xi Jinping (fifth generation) to take over from Hu, and Hu picked his protégé, Hu Chunhua (sixth generation), the youngest member of the current Politburo and the youngest vice premier on the State Council, to rule after Xi. The "heir apparent" is therefore by design a protégé of a proceeding top leader, not of the incumbent general secretary. To a great extent, in both the Jiang and Hu eras, the power of top leaders was constrained by other members of the Politburo Standing Committee, especially by those who represented the rival faction or coalition.

These succession norms, especially term limits for the general secretary of the party, have served as an institutional mechanism for the orderly and peaceful transition of power. This was true of the transition of Jiang to Hu in 2002 and then Hu to Xi in 2012. This kind of mechanism has multiple positive effects: for instance, consolidating the unity and solidarity of the leadership, regulating the jockeying among political elites, and providing consolation to the rival (both individual and faction) in anticipation of a future rotation to the driver's seat in the leadership. This rotation also presents the possibility that policy changes can be pursued under the next top leader, forming a "safety valve for potential popular discontent."[38]

Nevertheless, these institutional constraints on the general secretary were not without problem or deficiencies. The so-called "team of rivals" often led to factional infighting, political fragmentation, and policy deadlock. Each Politburo Standing Committee member tended to control one functional area, and thus there was poor coordination in policy implementation. The General Secretary of the party did

not have enough power to counter rampant official corruption and other serious challenges. The norms for identifying a "successor-in-training" likely undermined the power and authority of the general secretary and made him become a lame duck during the entire second five-year term.

All of these deficiencies—real or perceived—in CCP political succession norms have become reasons Xi and his followers have used to justify his rapid consolidation of power and his radical change of post-Mao succession norms. The political capital that Xi gained during his first five-year term through his bold anticorruption campaign, sweeping military reforms, a popular policy agenda in environmental protection and poverty alleviation, and nationalistic and proactive foreign policy moves such as the Belt and Road Initiative (see chap. 8) apparently enabled him to abolish the term limits for the presidency and consolidate his personal power in other ways without major opposition from other party leaders.

Xi's ambition to be a Mao-like figure was evident in a number of important maneuvers on his part prior to that. During his first term, in addition to holding the top posts in the party, government, and military, Xi also chaired the newly established National Security Committee, the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms, and several central leading groups in important functional areas, including foreign affairs, finance and the economy, internet security and information technology, and military reform—for a total of fourteen top leadership positions. The Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms, as some scholars have observed, has become more powerful than the State Council in socioeconomic decision making.[39] Xi's dominant power; the glorification of the Cultural Revolution-style personality cult; the purge of Sun Zhengcai, a rising star in the Politburo, on corruption charges; the decision to not select a successor-in-training at the 19th Party Congress; and the appointment of heavyweight political ally Wang Qishan (who does not even serve on the current Central Committee) to be PRC vice president; all undermine the institutional power of the Politburo Standing Committee, thereby allowing Xi to stay in power indefinitely.

The dire consequences, as critics argue, may likely include the absence of a succession principle or mechanism, greater centralization of decision making, a lack of incentives for innovative work by other leaders, and most importantly, a return to an era of vicious power struggles—a zero-sum game in which power contenders will ruthlessly engage over the years to come. One-man rule is surely not sustainable for the governance of the world's most populous country in the twenty-first century, but the real issue is what, if anything, will bring an end of this trend towards autocracy.

Institutional Rules and Factional Politics Remain

The institutional mechanisms that have been developed over the past three decades will not disappear overnight. Rules and norms, such as the regional and bureaucratic representation of seats on the Central Committee discussed earlier, the mandatory retirement age for various levels of leadership, and innerparty "more candidates than seats election," were all applied at the 19th Party Congress. The rate of change of CCP Central Committee membership has been remarkably high over the past thirty-five

years (1982–2017). Newcomers have constituted an average of 64 percent at each of the five Party Congresses held during that period. The 2017 CCP Congress, which had a Central Committee turnover rate of 75 percent, also saw large membership turnovers in the other leading bodies of the CCP (see Figure 6.6). The infusion of new blood into the leadership cannot but help the party-state adapt to changing circumstances and new challenges. This could either strengthen Xi's hand or give rise to younger leaders who have concerns about the return to strongman rule in Chinese politics.

The equal regional distribution of full membership seats on the CCP Central Committee has a profound effect the relationship between the central party-state and local authorities. This shift has been hastened by the emergence of local interests politically and economically empowered by the decentralization stemming from China's market reforms. Understandably, local leaders (mainly provincial and municipal leaders) tend to side with the top national leaders who will protect or advance their interests. Politicians in areas that have benefited from the reforms want to keep the policy orientation that favors their interests, while those in disadvantaged regions favor members of the central leadership who represent a change in direction. Whichever "side" they are on, local leaders in China have a much bigger stake in—and a bigger opportunity to influence—elite politics than ever before in the history of the People's Republic.

Strongman politics also cannot eliminate factional competition. Xi's rapid consolidation of power for him and his faction within the CCP leadership is uncontroversial, but it has not yet become a winner-take-all game. Other factions who make up a rival coalition, though noticeably weakened, still occupy a significant number of seats in the most important leadership bodies.

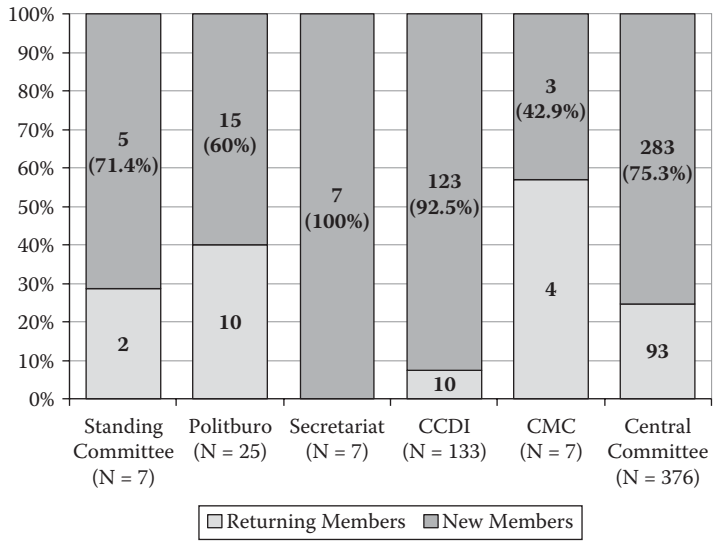

FIGURE 6.6 Membership Turnover of Top CCP Organizations 19th Party Congress (October 2017)

Note: CDIC = Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; CMC = Central Military Commission. Cheng Li's research.

In the Jiang and Hu eras, the CCP leadership was structured by an unofficial system of checks and balances between two informal political coalitions that still influences Chinese elite politics. This is not the kind of constitutional system of checks and balances that operates with the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the U.S. government, an essential element of a truly democratic system that limits the power of any individual, party, or government institution. It is more of an intra-elite tacit agreement to share power and accommodate different interests in the policy-making process.

The two groups can be labeled the **elitist coalition,** which was born in the Jiang Zemin era and is currently led by Xi Jinping, who was a protégé of Jiang Zemin, and the **populist coalition,** previously led by former General Secretary-President Hu Jintao and now led by Premier Li Keqiang. The elitist coalition represents business interests, including state-owned enterprises, and China's more prosperous coastal regions. The populist coalition places greater emphasis on addressing economic inequalities, affordable housing, and social welfare.

Upon his ascension to the post of general secretary of the party in 2002, Hu Jintao quickly sensed that his mandate was to fix the economic disparities associated with Jiang's leadership. As a result, Hu, in partnership with Premier Wen Jiabao, used his time at the helm to promote a populist strategy under new catchphrases such as "scientific development" and "harmonious society" (see chap. 5). While some refer to the Hu–Wen years as the "lost decade" because of lack of significant progress in economic, political, and legal reform, there were, in addition to continuing high growth rates (10.5 percent per year), important gains in areas of central concerns to the populists. These included significantly expanding health-care insurance: by 2010 more than 90 percent of both the urban and rural population had at least minimal coverage.[40]

Neither the elitist nor the populist coalition is capable of-—nor really wants to—completely defeat the other. Each coalition has its own strengths, including different constituencies, which the other does not possess. When it comes to policy making, their relationship is one of both competition and cooperation. This situation is sometimes referred to as the "one-party, two-coalitions" political mechanism.[41]

These leaders of the two coalitions have distinct personal backgrounds, career trajectories, and political associations. Many of the top leaders in the elitist coalition are children of revolutionary heroes or high-ranking officials. This group of so-called **princelings** includes Xi Jinping, whose father was a close associate of Mao's and who fell afoul of the Chairman's ideological wrath in the early 1960s and later emerged as a strong proponent of economic reform, and his vice president Wang Qishan, whose father-in-law was vice premier and a Politburo Standing Committee member. The elitists have advanced their political careers primarily in Shanghai (and are sometimes referred to as the "Shanghai Gang") or other major cities or coastal provinces.

By contrast, most of the leading figures in the populist coalition, for example, Hu Jintao, Li Keqiang, and a Standing Committee newcomer, Wang Yang, come from more humble or less-privileged families. They usually had substantial leadership experience in less-developed inland provinces. For example, Hu spent most of his working life in some of the least developed provinces of China's inland region, including fourteen years in Gansu, three years in Guizhou, and four years in Tibet.

Similarly, Li served as a provincial chief in Henan, a large inland agricultural province, for many years, and Wang worked in his native Anhui province, one of the poorest in China, for almost twenty years before starting his climb toward the center of power.

Many of the prominent populist leaders also advanced their political careers through the ranks of the **Chinese Communist Youth League** (**CCYL**) and have therefore garnered the label ***tuanpai***, literally, "league faction" (see Box 6.1). The princelings and *tuanpai* served as the core groups in the larger competing political coalitions—elitists and populists, respectively.

It is very important to note that both camps share fundamental goals: to ensure China's political and social stability, promote continued economic growth, enhance China's status as a major international player, and, most importantly, the survival of CCP rule. These common goals push the two factions to compromise and cooperate with each other more often than not. To a degree, leaders of the elitist coalition also recognize the need to allocate more resources to inland regions and help vulnerable social groups, just as the populists understand the importance of maintaining rapid economic growth to meet the rising expectations of China's entrepreneurs and urban middle class. Through popular policy initiatives and a more informal personal style—such as eating at an ordinary dumpling restaurant in Beijing[42]—Xi Jinping has been particularly effective in presenting himself as a leader of the people instead of as a princeling who cares more for the rich and powerful.

Furthermore, because the leaders of the factions differ in expertise, credentials, and experiences, they understand that they need to find common ground to coexist

BOX 6.1 THE YOUNG PIONEERS AND THE CCYL

The CCP has two organizations that bring together young people to learn about party ideology and policies and to engage in service projects and other activities that support party goals: the Young Pioneers and the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL).

Almost all students in the PRC between the ages of seven and fourteen belong to the Young Pioneers, whose official purpose is "to promote 'indoctrination of children by cultivating [positive] feelings of the Party and the socialist motherland.' " New members make the following pledge: "We take our oath under the flag of Young Pioneers: I promise to follow the lead and teachings of the CCP, to study well, to work well, to labor well—to prepare myself and sacrifice all my energy for Communism."[§]

The CCYL is an organization for people aged fourteen to twenty-eight. Its main function is to identify and foster new communist party members. At the time of its national congress in June 2018, the CCYL had 81 million members. The CCYL's mission statement refers to the organization as the "reserve army" for the Party. In addition to providing ideological training, the league runs a variety of social service programs and operates several prominent media outlets, notably the *China Youth Daily* newspaper. Membership in the CCYL does not guarantee party membership, nor is participation in the youth organization required to join the CCP. Nonetheless, being active in the CCYL can certainly facilitate becoming a full party member.

[§]Hunter Hunt, "Joining the Party: Youth Recruitment in the Chinese Communist Party," *US-China Today*, Nov. 7, 2011, http://uschina.usc.edu/article@usct?joining_the_party_youth_recruitment_in_the_chinese_communist_party_17639.aspx

and govern effectively. The *tuanpai* excel in terms of organization and propaganda and have often had experience in rural administration, especially in poor inland regions. However, they generally lack experience and credentials in some of the most important administrative areas and in relation to the handling of foreign trade, foreign investment, banking, and other crucial aspects of economic policy making. Therefore, they have to cooperate with the elitist coalition, who have strong backgrounds in economic and financial administration and have spent most of their careers in the developed coastal cities. This bipartisan collective leadership can contribute, as was the case in the Jiang and Hu eras, to a more pluralistic decision-making process through which political leaders can represent various social and geographic constituencies.

But, overall, the Xi camp and the princelings have clearly gained the upper hand in most key civilian and military organizations in the past few years.[43] Five of the seven members of Standing Committee are part of the elitist coalition, with only two from the populist *tuanpai* (see Table 6.1). Xi's protégés hold thirteen out of twenty-five seats on the Politburo, and the Xi camp now makes up the majority of the 376-member Central Committee.

The dominance of the elitist faction in the current leadership bodies, however, does not necessarily mean a return to "winner takes all" in Chinese politics at the top. It should be noted that the populist camp and *tuanpai* are still well represented in various important leadership bodies. *Tuanpai* leaders currently constitute 29 percent of the Politburo Standing Committee membership, 12 percent of the Politburo, 22 percent of the State Council, and 11 percent of the Central Committee. These numbers do not include other leaders who are inclined toward the populist coalition's policy preferences.

CONCLUSION

At a time when China confronts many tough choices, the CCP leadership may find it increasingly difficult to reach a consensus on how to manage crucial issues. Such issues include the regional redistribution of resources, an inadequate public-health system, inadequate environmental protection, ethnic tensions in Tibet and Xinjiang, relations with Taiwan, banking system reform, denuclearization and stability of the Korean peninsula, trade disputes with the United States, and territorial disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea. This could lead to challenges to Xi's hold on power and concerns about the absence of succession mechanisms. Political paralysis over key issues could not only impede effective policy making and leadership unity, but could also dissolve into ruthless factional power struggles, perhaps even involving the military. Such a scenario could undermine the legitimacy of the political system and threaten the stability of the country at large.

China is at a crossroads in the development of a system of governance for an increasingly modern, prosperous, and globalized country. Political institutionalization, including institutionalized succession rules, some kind of checks and balances that constrain individual leaders, and a means for the representation of different interests are important parts of this. There is a tension between the need for such

institutionalization and Xi Jinping's consolidation of personal power that will shape the dynamics of Chinese politics in the years ahead.

But, at bottom, this tension between individual rule and institutional constraints reflects major deficiencies in China's authoritarian political structure that are unlikely to be mitigated through a strongman's centralized power or policy adjustments. Rather, addressing these will require systematic political changes that may stretch the CCP's remarkable record of adaptability and resilience that have been critical to its survival by pointing in the direction of greater political institutionalization and democratic governance.

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