

The Central Committee Past and Present: A Method of Quantifying Elite Biographies¹

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Abstract

What are the social characteristics and career trajectories of the Chinese political elite? Scholars of Chinese politics have provided many answers to this question for various periods in the CCP's history. However, few have traced the evolving characteristics of the CCP elite through time. Using official biographies of Central Committee (CC) members, the authors constructed a quantitative database of every CC members since the First Party Congress which traces the bulk of their careers in so far as details are publicly available. After describing the logic, mechanisms, and drawbacks of the database, this paper provides analysis of several demographic trends of CC members from the inception of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 to 2006, including their age and education level. This paper further analyses the representation of People's Liberation Army officers in the Central Committee since 1949 and the relative influence of Hu Yaobang and Hua Guofeng in the CC between 1970 and 1990.

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The political elite was an early focus of Western analysis of the People's Republic of China, partly because information about the elite was relatively available in the opaque political system. As China opened up, information about all aspects of Chinese politics became increasingly available, thus decreasing the relative importance of elite studies in China. In this paper, we first argue that elite studies continue to be important and necessary for understanding authoritarian regimes like China. Further, we introduce a data-set of Central Committee (CC) members that combines traditional elite studies with new coding and statistical methodologies. The data are used to trace several basic characteristics of the CC through the entire history of the CCP and to measure the relative influence of Hu Yaobang and Hua Guofeng in the CC. We further discuss the potential of this data set for providing more systematic evidence of how elite characteristics and elite conflict affect policy and political outcomes in China.

Elite Studies in Authoritarian Regimes

At a time when China was sealed off from the rest of the world, Western scholars of China relied mainly on the official press and in some cases military sources from Taiwan to make scholarly inferences. As the heroic deeds and--at times--the "errors" of senior leaders were often the foci of official press coverage, Western scholars naturally made extensive use of this relatively abundant source of information, thus giving rise to a heavy emphasis on the elite. Today, China scholars have a wide range of sources available to them, ranging from internal government documents to interviews to survey instruments. The proliferation of new sources has given rise to the study of grassroots level political phenomena in China and a decline in the relative importance of elite

studies. However, the authoritarian nature of the Chinese regime provides compelling reason to continue elite studies.

Perhaps the most important reason to focus on the elite in authoritarian governments is that power in these regimes tends to be concentrated in the hands of one or a few leaders, whose preference, beliefs, and actions can have a profound influence on political and economic outcomes. In a rigorous study using leaders' natural deaths as an exogenous variable, economists Jones and Olken (2005) find that autocrats have a much more pronounced impact on a county's growth than their counterparts in democracies because they can directly influence fiscal and monetary policies as well as adjust political institutions. Even in non-democratic institutions within democracies, such as the central bank, scholars have found that the background of the elite plays a significant role in shaping monetary outcomes (Adolph 2003, Boylan 2001, Chappell, Havrilesky, & McGregor 1993, Schamis 1999). Being familiar with the disastrous outcomes of the Great Leap and of the Cultural Revolution, scholars of China hardly need convincing of the importance of individual leaders (Dittmer 2001, MacFarquhar 1997, Schram 1989, Schwartz 1966). This approach of elite studies leads scholars to examine the writings and biographical background of key leaders in order to uncover the "thoughts" and experience that guide their action (Schram 1989, Schwartz 1966). Alternatively, with the help of in-depth historical analysis, scholars puzzle out how preference or "thoughts" guide leaders through complex political situations to achieve a set of objectives (Fewsmith 1994, MacFarquhar & Schoenhals 2006). Following earlier works on the elite in Western democracies (Aberbach, Putnam, & Rockman 1981), China scholars are also

beginning to uncover the preference of the political elite via survey instruments (Dickson 2003).

Another reason for elite study in authoritarian regimes is that the selectorate, i.e. those with the power to directly affect leadership selection, is a much smaller share of the total population than in the typical democracy (Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Silverson, & Morrow 2003). Thus, even if authoritarian leaders have some proclivity to provide public goods, they have strong reasons to direct policies toward fulfilling the interests of supporters in the narrow selectorate so as to maintain power (Kang 2002, Shirk 1993, Svobik 2005, Tullock 1987: 17). A long-standing literature in China studies has built on this understanding of authoritarian politics, and insights developed in this literature have yielded highly robust predictions of policy outcomes (Bachman 1991, Manion 1993, Pei 2006, Shirk 1993). In this framework of analysis, understanding the background of the political elite also becomes important since interests are often determined by institutional affiliation or past experience (Lieberthal & Oksenberg 1988).

The general comparative literature also focuses on the dynamic interaction between elite because this interaction often leads to palpable political or economic outcomes. In a study of Meiji Japan, Ramseyer and Rosenbluth (1998) demonstrate that fierce factional rivalry between Meiji elite led to competitive alliance formation with forces outside of the oligarchy and the eventual collapse of the oligarchic arrangement. In both democracies and authoritarian regimes, competing elite likewise can delay the resolution of a major crisis in order to gain information on the strength of rivals, which leads to the deepening of a crisis (Alesina & Drazen 1995). While elite rivalries are readily observable in democracies because rivals often belong to different parties and the

media provide extensive coverage of competitions, this is not the case in most authoritarian regimes. Outside observers are often unaware of competition until someone has been unseated or until a coup has occurred.

In the studies of Chinese politics, elite rivalry became a focus of study after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, which saw Mao systematically purging nearly all of his former colleagues in the Politburo Standing Committee. A seeming “round-table” arrangement between the top leaders instantly slid into a frenzy of mutual accusation and purging (Teiwes 1993). Clearly, though difficult to observe, elite conflict is an important aspect of authoritarian politics. The Cultural Revolution has spawned an enormous literature that tries to understand its origins (e.g. MacFarquhar 1997), manifestation at the local and grassroots level (e.g. Forster 1990, Perry & Li 1997), and its long-term impact on society (e.g. Walder & Su 2003).

In sum, elite analysis remains important in the studies of authoritarian regimes because the preference, values, background of the elite and the often competitive interaction between elite continue to play a crucial role in shaping political and economic outcomes. With the proliferation of new tools and sources of information in formerly hermit regimes like China, we should, instead of abandoning elite studies, use these new sources to expand the scope and depth of elite studies.

The Central Committee Database

In the tradition of elite analysis, this project focuses on the characteristics of an institutionally defined group of the elite—the Central Committee (CC) members. Although by no means the universe of the power elite in China, one can reasonably argue

that most officials holding important positions are CC members. There are obvious exceptions, for example Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun in the 90s, but even they had been CC members for a long time. Chen Yun to this day holds the record as the longest serving CC member (1930-1987). CC members further wielded real power through controlling specific bureaucracies (i.e. provinces, ministries, military regions....etc.) and through exerting influence on the selection of top leaders in the regime (Shirk 1993). Thus, the Leninist party structure produces a fairly well-defined group of elite that can be systematically analyzed.

Given the importance of Central Committee members, it behooves us to know as much as possible about them. Indeed, various studies already examine the traits of CC members in various periods of time (Zhiyuan Bo 2004, Lee 1991, Li 1994, 2001, Nathan & Gilley 2002). While these studies have given us intimate understanding of subsets of the CC elite in various periods, we still lack an overall sense of how members of this elite body have evolved through the 85 years of CCP history. Furthermore, without data on CC members over time, it remains difficult to make causal inferences on how membership characteristics and overall makeup of the CC affected political and policy outcomes and vice versa. This has produced a field of study rich in theory but remarkably lacking in quantitative assessment of how the power elite impacted policy outcomes. To the extent there has been work (Huang 1996, Landry forthcoming, Shih 2004, Su & Yang 2000), it mainly focuses on a subset of the CC elite, the provincial and city leaders.

In the following, we first describe the conceptual underpinnings of a quantitative data-set that tracks the careers of all CC members from the First Party Congress to the

Sixteenth Party Congress. We further give an account of how we implemented the coding, the problems we encountered, and the solutions we devised to deal with these problems. In order to develop a comprehensive database of CC members, one has to overcome several conceptual and practical problems. First and foremost, the end-product must allow users to generate various indicators of interest without having to hand-code additional information from printed sources. New information on CC members only needs to be added to the existing database. This is a tall order for two reasons. First, beyond basic characteristics such as birth year, education level, year of obtaining party membership...etc., CC members typically rotated through a series of positions over the course of their careers. How does one track these movements over time? Furthermore, many CC members, especially senior officials, concurrently served in many different positions. How does one represent this complexity in a quantitative database without confusing various concurrent posts?

Inspired by work done by Adolph (2003) on the career trajectories of central bankers, this database overcomes the above difficulties by coding the positions, start year, and end year of nearly all the positions held by CC members throughout their careers, rather than just those positions held by CC members at the time they served in the CC. This produces a database where every row is a CC member. For every position a CC member held, three columns are dedicated to coding it—a numerical code to describe the position, start year, and end year. In this manner, if one adds enough columns, one can track their movement over time, as well as the positions they held simultaneously. The example on Table 1 contains an illustration of how the database codes Chen Yun's State Council career in the 50s. As one can see on Table 1, the multiple positions held by Chen

Yun simultaneously do not create any confusion under this coding scheme. We clearly see that Chen Yun served as Chair of Finance and Economic Committee, which overlapped with his duty as Vice Premier and Minister of Commerce. The positions held by Chen Yun were arranged in sequential order, although they need not be. With this data configuration, we are able to make logical statement such as:

locate all vice premiers who served between 1949 and 1970

or

locate all CC members who served concurrently as vice-premier and minister of commerce

or, since we coded CC members' tenure in a number of different posts,

locate all CC members from the Twelfth Party Congress who had prior military experience and also served as the party secretary of Sichuan

Table 1: Tracking Chen Yun's Positions in the 50s

Name	Chair, Finance and Economic Committee	Start year	End year	Vice Premier	Start Year	End Year	Minister of Commerce	Start year	End year
Chen Yun	1421	1949	1956	1025	1949	1975	1321	1956	1958

For the ease of coding and data processing, we further broke down positions into various categories: PLA posts, State Council posts, provincial posts, NPC/PPCC posts, court positions, university posts, and positions in the CCP itself. For party experience, we coded both the membership of the Central Committee and the positions in the central

party organs separately. For CC membership, we coded both full and alternate membership, as well as the sessions (from the First CC to the Sixteenth). For party positions, we first specified the central leadership positions, such as, Party Chairman/Secretary General, Standing Committee of the Politburo membership, membership of the Politburo, and alternate membership of the Politburo. Then we scored the composite units of the central party organization. In addition to the core organs such as the Secretariat, the Department of Organization, the Department of Propaganda, and so forth, we also coded the leadership in party newspapers and journals, such as the *People's Daily*, the *Guangming Daily*, and the *Red Flag*, as well as leadership positions in party directed mass organizations such as the All China Women's Association.

For each position, we assigned a four-digit number to represent it. The first three digits denote to which political organ this position belongs. The last digit represents the level of the position. The score 3021, for example, breaks down to 302, which stands for General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and the final digit—1 denotes the highest level in that Department—the chief of the General Political Department. In most cases, we used a “1, 3, 5, 7” system in which 1s represent ministerial positions, 3s represent vice-ministerial positions, 5s represent departmental positions (*si, ju, ting*), and 7 represents those positions below departments. With this coding system, we were able to quantify the promotions of all CC members throughout their careers.

We additionally included some demographic variables which will facilitate analysis of the background of CC members. We included basic demographic details including birth year, gender, party membership year, level of education, ethnicity,

princeling status, and whether and when the person was purged or rehabilitated. For education, we specified the levels of education and, if they attended university, the specific university they attended. To track the changes of the school network among CC members, we created a list of colleges and universities on the basis of the Inventory of National Universities at the website of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and employed the official school code as our scores for the universities.² We further traced their majors in university and graduate school, where information was available. We additionally divided CC members' careers before they entered any government offices into major categories, including workers, teachers, soldiers...etc.. With this variable, we obtained an image of what the person was before he or she entered into politics.

An important aspect of the career trajectories of many CC members was their service in various units before 1949. Because it is too unwieldy to code their participation in specific military units, we elected to code their participation in the Long March, their main base area before the Long March, and their main base area after the Long March. For base area experience, since the bases had changed a lot in different time period, we decided to code it according to major regions and revolutionary experience, which were relevant during various periods of the revolution. These regions/revolutionary experience included the central Soviet area in Jiangxi, the *Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia* Area, the northeast area (Manchuria), the North (Northern China and *Xinjiang* and *Qinghai*, except *Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia*), and the South (Southern China

² There are 1607 universities and colleges on the MOE website. We selected the top 102 schools according to the 2003 university ranking by netbig.com (there are ties in the ranking so we selected 102 instead of 100 schools). In addition, we added in the Peking Union Medical College, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Central Party School which are not included by the MOE list or by the netbig ranking but are prestigious in their fields. Also, we included the Southwest Union University, the Anti-Japanese Military and Politics University. These two do not exist today but were influential before 1949 and produced a number of CCP leaders. Finally, two general categories are also included: military academies and other schools. In total, there are 110 values in this variable.

except *Jiangxi*), the New Fourth Army, the Eighth Route Army, the Hubei-Henan-Anhui-Northern Jiangsu base area, the Southwest (including Tibet), and overseas work. Jiangxi and Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia were coded separately because they were the main bases for the party leadership and had a high density of CC members. We created additional dummy variables recording crucial experiences during the revolution, including experience in the Anyuan Mine in the 1920s, experience on Jinggangshan, teaching or matriculation at the Anti-Japanese University, and military experience on Taiheng Mountain.

For the experience during the 1946-49 Civil War, we coded field armies (Swaine 1992). Field army designations contain extremely useful information about the loyalty of some CC members because field armies formed out of existing units—for example the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army—and had fairly consistent leadership. We coded five field armies: the Northwest Field Army (or First Field Army), the Central Field Army (or Second Field Army), the East China Field Army (or Third Field Army), the Northeast Field Army (or Fourth Field Army), and the North China Field Army (or Fifth Field Army). Military commands became much easier to code after 1949 as PLA command structure institutionalized into major departments and military regions. We folded these commands accordingly into our main coding scheme of positions, followed by start and end years.

With the inclusion of demographic and career variables, the data set currently has 1604 observations (rows) and 261 variables (columns). As new positions of interest arise, it would be a relatively easy task to append additional codes or columns to describe them. This configuration of the database makes the database easily expandable.

Implementing Coding

The coding itself took place in several stages. We first hired an RA, a masters candidate at the School of Government Management at Peking University, to make a survey of the evolution of Party, State Council, and PLA organizations through time, since we needed to assign a code to nearly every position across these three institutions. Specifically, the RA collected such information as: 1) the organizational units of each CCP central committee from 1921 to 2002 2) the organizational units of the State Council 1949 to 2003 3) The evolutions of the People's National Congress (*renda*) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (*zhengxie*), as well as the Supreme Court and the Procuratorate. 4) the development of the army, from the Red Army in 1930s to the People's Liberation Army, from the base areas (*genjudi*) and the field Armies (*yezhanjun*) to the Military Areas (*junqu*), and from the central military committee to the PLA headquarters 5) The history of provinces, for instance, the merger of the Changdu District and Tibet, the establishment of Hainan Province and Chongqing Municipal City. 6) the evolution of universities and academic institutions. Since we coded the education background of CCP central leaders and many CC leaders served as heads of various education institutions, we followed these changes as well.

After making a complete catalogue of the positions we potentially wanted to code, we selected a subset of them and began coding. The main source we used was the *Dictionary of Past and Present Central Committee Members (Dictionary)* published by the Central Organization Department and the Central Party History Department jointly in 2004 (2004). We supplemented it with various Western and Chinese sources, as well as sources available on the internet (Bartke 1997, Bartke & Institut für Asienkunde

(Hamburg Germany) 1991, Lamb 2003, Mainland China Research Center 2006, Wang 1995). In order to fill in missing data, we also conducted some in-depth historical research, especially on biographical details on early revolutionaries (eg. Cai 1995, Kou 2008, Xu 2005).

In order to ensure integrity in our coding, we hired two research assistants (RAs)—both masters candidate at the Peking University School of Government Management—to code the data. *Both RAs coded the entire CC membership independently of each other.* We first composed a coding manual and trained both RAs in our coding concept, and one of them made a trial coding of a 3% random sample out of the *Dictionary* to check the feasibility of the coding manual. We then revised the manual according to the problems revealed by the trial coding, and both RAs began to code. In the following two years, as the coding progressed, new problems emerged, and we continued to revise the coding manual. Despite these changes, the fundamental logic of the database remained the same—position, start year, end year. All three authors of the paper monitored coding progress of the two RAs, both in person and through the Internet.

After both RAs completed coding, we had them cross check their entries with each other. If their codes matched, we left them as they were. This applied to the vast majority of the cases. If there were any discrepancies between the two, they noted them down, and the three of us “judged” on the merits of the two versions. This laborious process was completed in July 2006, when we obtained a preliminary data-set. We then found that there were quite a few missing data points, especially concerning the start and end years of various positions. In order to fill in the missing data, the authors further

conducted research to fill in as many of the blanks as possible. By October 2006, we had fewer than 400 missing data cells in a data-set that has over 417,000 cells.

Problems and Solution

After we began coding, several problems immediately became clear. We devised solutions to these problems, although they left the data set wanting in some aspects. First, as briefly discussed earlier, we discovered that it was extremely difficult to track the pre-1949 military experience of various CC leaders. Units were created and disbanded in days, while others were destroyed and reformed under the same name in a totally different place. Furthermore, there was a blur between civilian positions and military positions during the revolutionary period. To a largely extent the party was no more than a leadership group of the army. After all, the base areas were not only territorial areas administrated by the party, but also military bases for the Communist army. Thus, before 1946, we coded CC members' experience mainly according to base areas.

This problem became especially serious in the 1945-1949 period when the establishment of geographical administration overlapped with military units. With the information we were able to collect we had no clear picture of the relationship between the specific PLA units, the Field Armies, and the base areas. For example, for a vice-director of the Political Department of Shanxi-Chahaer-Hebei Military Area in 1945-48, Cai Shupan, do we code him as an officer within the North China Field Army or a local cadre of the Shanxi-Chahaer-Hebei Base Area? Was the Military Area a subordinate unit of the Field Army, or an administrative unit of the base area? Another case is Gao Weisong, who was a political commissar in the Shaaxi-Gansu-Ningxia-Shanxi-Shuiyuan United Defense Army in 1946. Was this army part of the Northwest Field Army or a

local army of the base area? Currently we have insufficient data to deal with these problems. In practice, our coders adhered to the following principle: although military positions were usually coded as Field Army experience, when we were unsure of the field army designation of a military position but were more certain about the geographical location of this unit, we coded this position according to the base area and left blank the field army designation.

The second major problem we encountered was that there were simply too many positions in the Chinese bureaucracy due to the multiple levels of government. Every ministry has departments (*si, ju*), which in turn have bureaus (*chu*), which in turn have sections (*ke*). Every province has both functional departments (*ting*) and geographical jurisdictions, including prefectures, counties, township (brigades), and villages. Of course, within each geographical jurisdiction, the various functional departments are replicated. An attempt to code every single position in the vast bureaucracy would make coding extremely unwieldy. Instead, we anchored our coding to the ministerial/provincial level. That is, for every position below or at the ministerial/provincial level, we identified them as a position under that ministry or province at one of four levels: below the departmental/prefecture level (*si, ju, ting, di*), at the departmental/prefecture level, vice ministerial/provincial level, or full provincial/ministerial level. We made some modifications to the provincial coding to distinguish between functional departments at the provincial level and the various geographical sub-units and to distinguish between the governor and the party secretary. We also devised a similar coding scheme for military regions and the main departments and branches of the PLA.

One drawback of this approach is that we do not track movement of CC members through various prefecture level cities or departments within ministries. For example, the data-set specifies that a CC member (say Li Yuanchao) served as a prefecture or county mayor or party secretary in Jiangsu, but does not specify that this person was in fact the party secretary of Nanjing. Of course, this also means that if this person rotated through a series of sub-departmental positions in a province or ministry, he or she would receive the same coding for all of these positions. We feel that this coding strategy does not forgo too much information, especially if one is interested in analyzing elite politics. Usually, promotions above the departmental/prefecture level signal one's entrance into national politics.

The third major problem we encountered was the frequent changes in the State Council bureaucracy and shifts in the military region structure. For example, the First Ministry of Machinery was merged into the Ministry of Machinery before folding into the State Economic and Trade Commission and eventually the State Asset Supervision and Administration Commission. In general, we adopted a principle of successor. That is, in principle, all codes of the party and state organs are based on their latest manifestations after 2002. Since we have tracked the evolution of all organs, we gave agencies in the past the same scores as their successor agency in the current government. For example, we coded both the Ministry of Domestic Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Cooperation as the Ministry of Commerce, because the former two were incorporated into the latter in 2003. This of course leaves out important information, especially in the State Council, where many top leaders emerged out of the now-abolished machinery or petrochemical ministries. Toward that end, we created three

general categories to score experience in these agencies: the machinery ministries (including the former 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, and 8th Ministries of Machinery), the petrochemical ministries (including the former Ministry of Petroleum Industry and Ministry of Chemical Industry), and the division of light industry ministries (such as the former Ministry of Textile Industry). Again, this solution is not perfect, but it is a necessary compromise.

We likewise applied the successor principle to military regions and party organs. A good case in point was the Xinjiang Military Region (MR). This MR became subordinate to the Lanzhou MR, so we coded positions in Xinjiang MR with the values of the same positions in the Lanzhou MR. We also applied this principle to code provincial revolutionary committees during the Cultural Revolution. In the beginning we were uncertain whether revolutionary committee positions were equivalent to provincial party or state positions. After some research, we found the NPC's July 1979 proclamation to replace all revolutionary committees with provincial governments (People's Daily 2001). This information allowed us to comfortably code the revolutionary committee chiefs with the values of provincial governors.

Work experience in enterprises (*qiye*) and institutes (*shiye*) after 1949 also presented a messy problem. The enterprises involved in our coding were mostly state-owned enterprises. During the planned economy era, all enterprises were supervised by governmental organs and behaved like a part of their supervising organs (Naughton 1996). They had the same bureaucratic ranks as departments or bureaus in the supervising agencies. Leaders of the enterprises were also party cadres who were appointed by the party organization departments. In our coding, we first tried to link enterprises to their

supervising party-state organs because the career paths of many party leaders, especially the technocrats, began in these enterprises. In some cases, finding out the supervising agencies became extremely difficult, if not impossible. For example, who supervised the Research Institute for Agricultural Mechanization? At first glance, this institute could be a subordinate organ of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, or the Ministry of Machinery Industry. After extensive research, we found the answer is the last choice. In many cases, we failed to figure out a certain enterprise or institute's "genealogical diagram" because of limited information.

It was even more difficult to determine the bureaucratic rank of an enterprise or institute. In the case of Xinanjiang Water Reservoir, for example, we did not know if it was a provincial-level (*shengbuji*) or departmental-level (*sijuji*) enterprise. Third, to make the situation more complicated, since 1990s many State Council organs were reorganized as corporations, such as Sinopec and China Telecom. Many of these corporations are now directly supervised by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC). Should we code these enterprises as their previous governmental ministries or a subordinate unit of the SASAC?

We approached this problem in two ways. First, we obtained a list of enterprises currently managed by SASAC and coded these enterprises and their recognizable "ancestors" as under SASAC or various line ministries. This still left many enterprises un-coded. We then created two variables in the demographic section, one denoting experience in enterprises and institutes and the other recording the location of the enterprise or institute. In the first variable, we coded all enterprise and institutes (except those SASAC-directed enterprises) into several categories according to their functions:

service units (*shiye danwei*), transportation, electronics/information, electricity/hyrotechnics, petroleum, mechanical/steel, light industry, and others. We followed this coding with the start and end years of the CC members' tenures in these enterprises. In the second variable, we recorded the provincial location of the enterprises involved in the former variable. With this strategy, although we do not collect information about the exact political genealogy of a certain enterprise or institute, we retained information about where the enterprise or institute was, as well as their broad bureaucratic *xitong* or *kou*. This allowed us to analyze the early careers of CC members.

Despite these problems and the less than perfect solutions we devised, we still have a firm grasp on the career trajectories of CC members once they took administrative offices. We also have nearly perfect information on their party posts. For the vast majority of CC members, the solutions we devised gave us a fairly clear picture of their early careers. Most important, with the basic logic of our data-set, if a research project compels it, we have the flexibility to incorporate additional information in the data-set to address new issues.

Annual Indicators

Given the data set, what is one to do with it? As a first step, we generated a number of annual indicators that provide year-to-year descriptions of the central committee as a whole. It has become a fairly regular exercise to derive various characteristics of the CCP elite over certain period of time or for various Party Congresses (Bo 2002, Zhiyue Bo 2004, Li 1994, 2000, 2001, 2004). These exercises

have yielded important insights into the social characteristics and preferences of the CCP elite.

While one can tabulate various characteristics of CC members for certain years, it becomes difficult to hand count the number of Long March veterans—for example—over half a century. Furthermore, previous work tabulating the characteristics of CC members has done so only for a small number of years, especially during the years of the Party Congresses (PCs) (Baum 1998, Dittmer 1983, Saich 1992, Starr 1976, Wich 1974). While major changes often occurred during PCs, shifts in CC membership also took place between congresses. For example, as the analysis below reveals, the 1985 national party conference convened by Deng had a major impact on the age and education structure of CC members. Finally, as one examines an increasing number of characteristics, hand counting becomes unwieldy. Even fully mapping CC members' characteristics for one year becomes a laborious exercise (Zhiyuan Bo 2004).

Because this data set records the start and end dates of most positions held by CC members, it becomes a relatively simple matter to derive various characteristics of CC members through time. Granted, devising such indicators still requires careful crafting of complex logical statement in the statistical software (Stata 9). As mentioned above, there are some drawbacks to the data set, particularly the inability to code many characteristics before 1949. Nonetheless, as the exercises below reveal, a thorough examination of the annual trends of these characteristics provides further empirical support for some of our core intuitions and generate new insights about CC members.

The Number of CC Members

At the Sixteenth PC, the CC is a body composed of some 198 members, but was this always the case? In fact, the number of CC members was kept at a fairly low level before 1949 and did not increase dramatically until the Eighth Party Congress (PC). These increases often came during “leaps” at various junctures (Figure 1). Besides these leaps, the number of CC members remained fairly stable, even through some major political shocks. An examination in the trend in CC membership strongly suggests that shifts in CC membership stemmed from reasons beside an institutional need to have more political elite to oversee an increasingly complex bureaucracy.

In the early history of the CCP, the size of the CC grew steadily from three members in 1921 to nine members by 1926. After the KMT-CCP split in April 1927, the CC saw a major expansion from 9 members to 32 members at the Fifth PC held in Wuhan (Figure 1). The following year, however, concerted KMT effort to hunt down senior CCP members led to several deaths and defections, which brought CC membership down to 24—a catastrophic 25% drop. CC membership suffered another major blow with Wang Ming’s effort to eliminate the Li Lisan “left” line from the party. Between 1931 and 1932, CC membership declined from 29 to 20, a substantial 31% decline.

The remarkable aspect of pre-1949 CC membership is that as the party underwent both major expansions and major contractions, CC membership did not shift substantially until the Seventh PC in 1945. For example, the Long March, which led to the catastrophic decline in party membership, in fact saw a slight increase in CC membership. A close look at the source material reveals that only four serving members of the CC died during the 1934-1935 period. Qu Qiubai, Fang Zhimin, and Li Zifen all died elsewhere

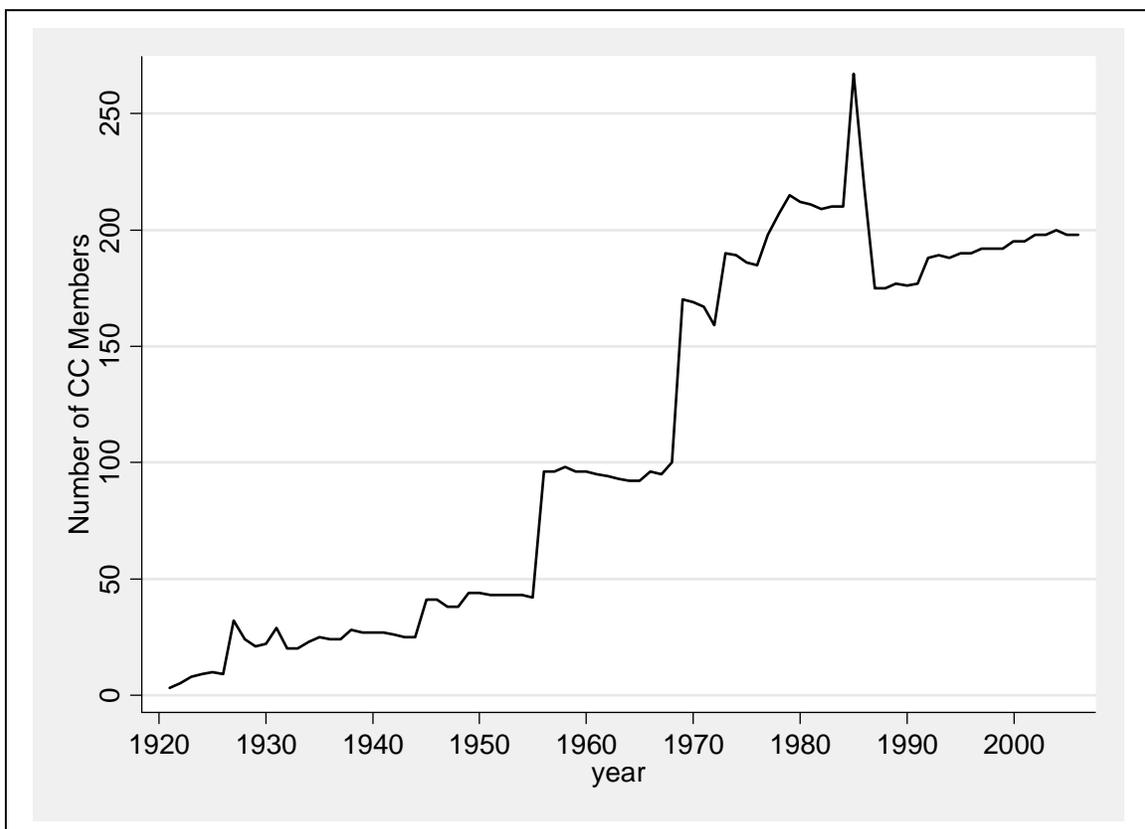
rather than in Ruijin or during the March. Gu Zuolin died from illness in Ruijin before the beginning of the Long March. Despite the horrendous loss to the party, none of the 17 serving members of the CC (out of 25) who went on the Long March died during it, resulting in a relatively whole CCP elite when the marchers arrived in Yan'an.

During the Yan'an period, CC membership remained remarkably stable, despite rapid expansion in party membership and a wide-ranging struggle against the KMT, the Japanese invaders, and the remnant warlords. This suggests post-1949 expansion in CC membership was due to factors other than an institutional need to have more members of the elite to carry out various tasks. In percentage term, the 1945 Seventh Party Congress saw the first major increase in CC membership since the 20s, resulting in an increase from 25 to 41 CC members. However, this paled in comparison to the more than doubling of CC membership at the 1956 Eighth Party Congress from 42 to 96. Somewhat surprisingly, the Gao-Rao Affair and the purge of Peng Dehuai did not result in any noticeable decline in CC membership.

The next major shock came in 1969 at the Ninth Party Congress, which saw a 70% increase in CC membership to 170. Mao had apparently replaced veteran cadres purged during the Cultural Revolution with many more new entrants. The high-tide of CC membership came surprising during the reform era when the 1985 Party Representative Conference inaugurated dozens of younger officials to the CC before the veterans retired at the Thirteenth PC, producing a CC membership of 267. This was clearly Deng's tactic to mute criticism of "the lack of experience" emanating from the veteran cadres. With two years of experience behind them, Deng had every reason to replace elderly CC members with a younger cohort at the 1987 Thirteenth PC (Baum

1994). Since then, CC membership stabilized around the 190-200 range without much change. Again, these major increases suggest a political purpose rather than institutional needs for more political elite in the system. It is quite clear that major expansions of CC membership during the Mao Era were not reversed during the Deng Era. Unlike other trends discussed below, the continuity of large CC membership likely served a political purpose in both eras.

Figure 1: The Number of Central Committee Members: 1921-2006



Age Structure of CC Members Over Time

From a Western perspective, the CCP is often known for its gerontocracy. However, the analysis here reveals that the CCP's tendency to have elderly elite mainly stemmed from the May Fourth generation's dominance over the party for several decades.

Both Mao and Deng carried out remarkable campaigns to rejuvenate the elite of the Party; their tactics, of course, differed substantially. By the late 80s, a system to regularly replace older officials with younger cohorts was firmly in place.

In Figures 2 and 3, we see that the initial CCP elite did not come from the May Fourth generation, if one thinks of the May Fourth Generation as those born around 1900 or so. In fact, most CC members from the First to the Third CC were substantially older than that in the early 20s. The Comintern clearly did not trust eager twenty-something with the early CCP, preferring more experienced revolutionaries such as Chen Duxiu and Dong Biwu. Once the May Fourth generation took over the party in 1934, however, they remained in charge until the Ninth PC in 1969 (Figure 3). Thus, the nearly continuous rise in the average age of CC members from 1934 to 1969 seen in Figure 2 was produced by the same age cohort controlling the CC during that period, as seen in Figure 3. In that period, the average age of CC members rose linearly from 33.7 to 55 with a minor rejuvenation at the 1956 Eighth Party Congress.

While the Cultural Revolution was many things, it also represented a substantial rejuvenation of the party. The 1969 Ninth Party Congress saw the formal removal of many in the May Fourth generation from the CC after they had been purged in 1966 and 1967. The average age of CC members plummeted from 64 in 1968 to 55 in 1969 after the replacement of the May Fourth generation with officials who were born around 1913. This spelled the end of the May Fourthers as the dominant generation in the CC. Although the average age of CC members crept upward toward the end of the CR as many veterans were rehabilitated into important positions, the average CC member

nonetheless came from the 1914 cohort instead of an earlier cohort. Clearly, many veteran CC members never returned to active duty.

Into the Deng era, the rejuvenation effort continued relentlessly (Manion 1993). The Twelfth PC in 1982 saw the displacement of the 1913 cohort with those born around 1919, which brought the average age of CC members from 66.5 to 62. The most momentous rejuvenation effort engineered by Deng and Chen Yun rivaled even that carried out by Mao. The 1985 Party Representative Conference and the Thirteenth Party Congress removed wholesale the generation of leaders born before 1919 in favor of much younger officials from the cohort born after 1929. This brought the average age of CC members down to 58 from 64.5 in 1984. After that, the age structure of CC members stabilized into a regular pattern of late 50s at the time of a party congress, followed by a gradual rise between congresses toward the early 60s. By these indicators, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun's effort to institutionalize mechanisms to continuously rejuvenate the CCP was successful.

Another way to track the successful rejuvenation of the party is to follow Long March veterans in the CC through time. As Figure 4 shows, the number of Long Marchers in the CC rose steadily through the late 30s and 40s and enjoyed a dramatic rise at the 1956 Eighth PC. Although the rapid expansion of the CC in 1956 saw a slight decline in the share of CC who were also Long Marchers, these veterans nonetheless occupied over 60% of the seats in the CC. The dominance of Long Marchers in the CC was maintained until the Cultural Revolution, when the Ninth PC inducted many from a younger generation into the CC. This is despite the fact that the Ninth CC included the highest number of Long Marchers. The high number of Long Marchers in the CC in

1969 was not surprising since many commanders of military regions took over as heads of various provincial revolutionary committees, granting them passages into the CC.

Lin Biao's purge in 1971 led to a substantial decline in Long Marchers in 1972 and 1973 as his suspected followers were systematically removed. Long Marchers then enjoyed a brief revival with Deng's rehabilitation in the late 70s and early 80s, but policies enacted by Deng and Chen, in addition to illness and death, produced extremely sharp drops in both the number and share of Long Marchers in the CC at the Twelfth and Thirteenth PC. Although many Long Marchers remained healthy in the early 90s, the Fourteenth PC did not induct any Long Marchers into the CC, thus spelling an end to the Long Marchers' influence in formal politics. Without active policy to pressure Long Marchers into retirement, the Long March generation likely would have enjoyed a few more years of formal influence.

Figure 2: The Average Age and 25th and 75th Percentile Age of Central Committee Members-1921-2006

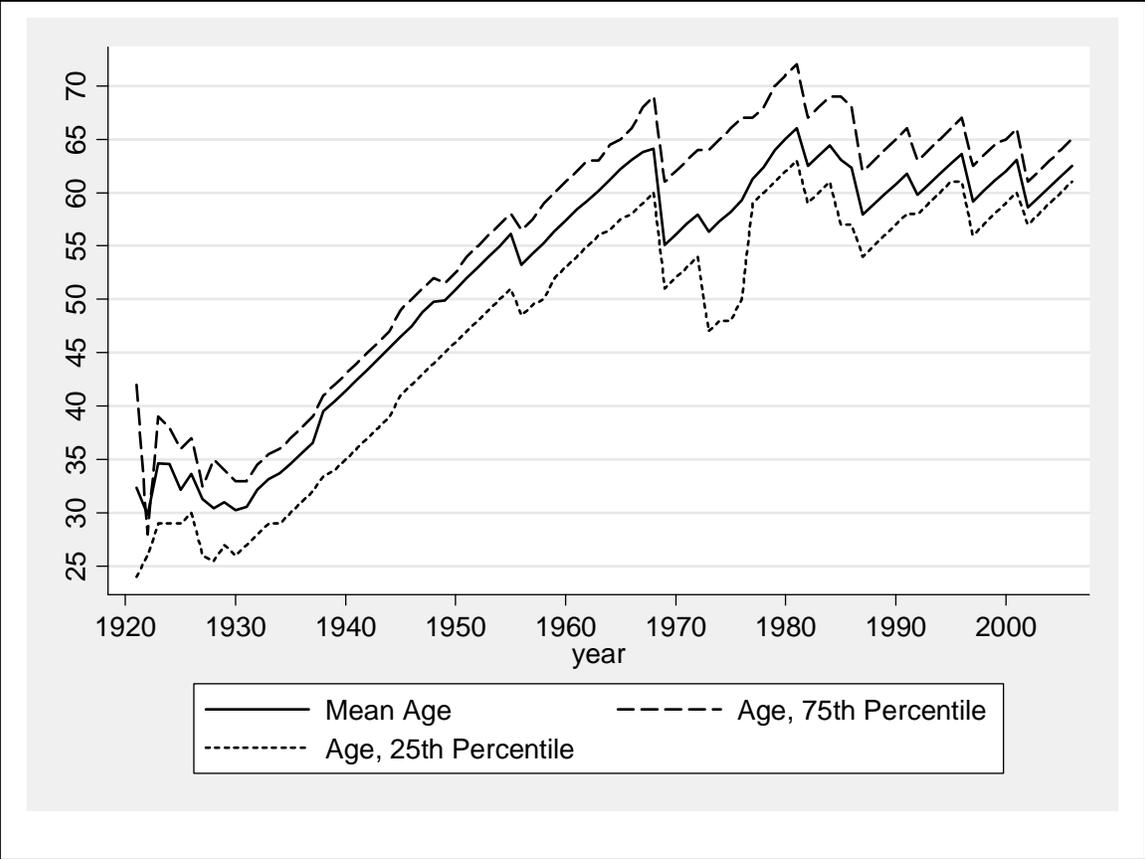


Figure 3: The Average Birth Year and 25th and 75th Percentile Birth Year of CC Members-1921-2006

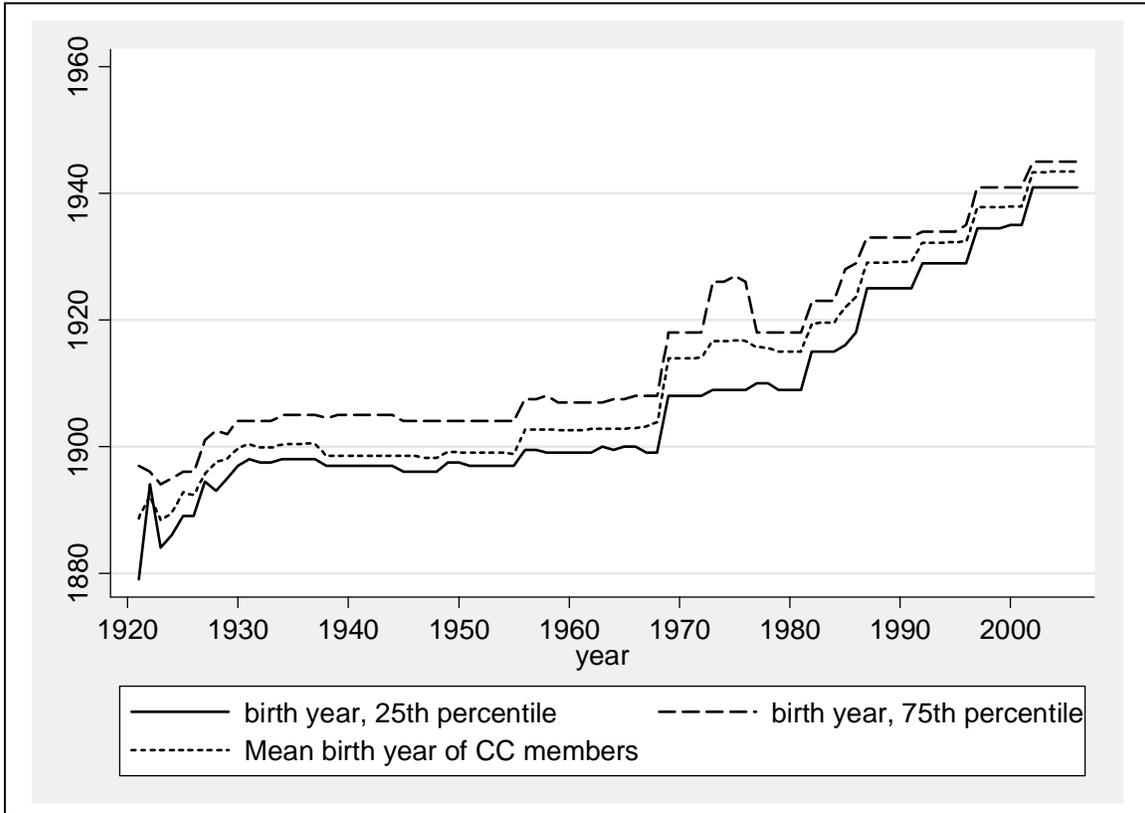
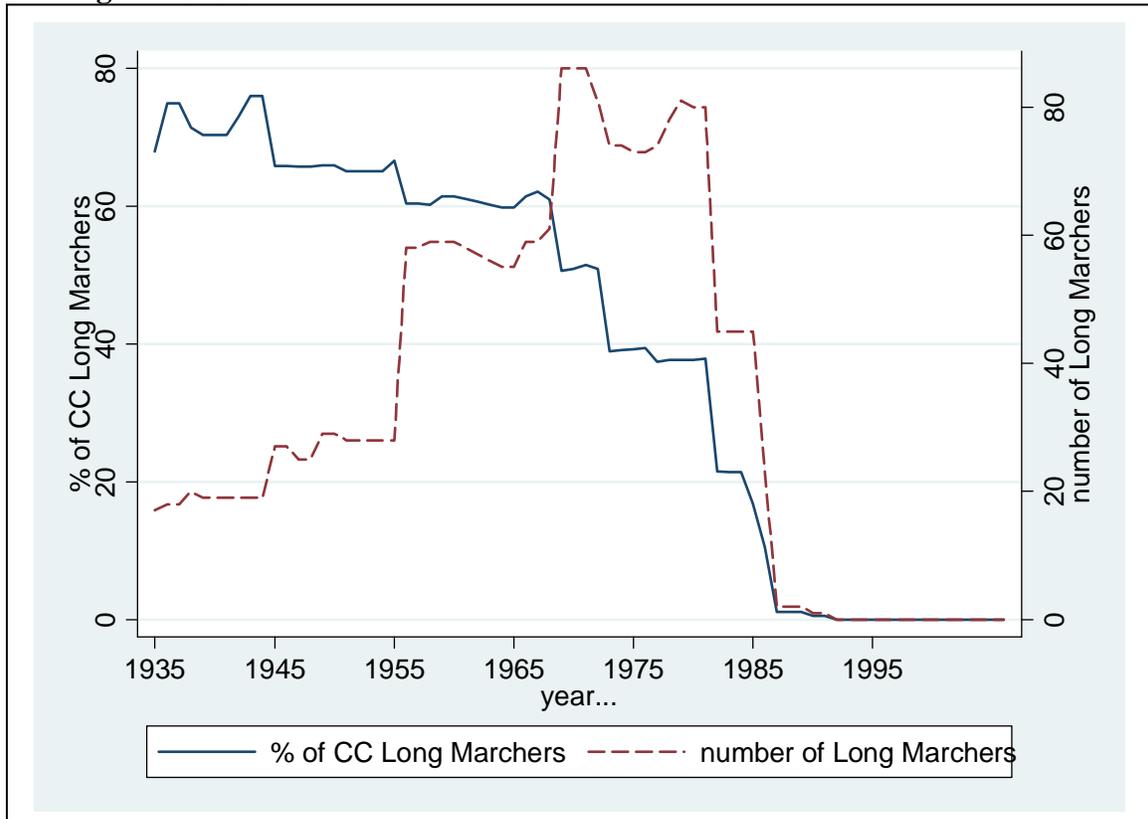


Figure 4: Percentage of CC Members with Long March experience and the Number of Long Marchers



Education of CC Members

The final demographic variable under examination is the education level of CC members over time. As seen on Figure 5, political events clearly had a substantial impact on the average education level of CC members. In Figure 5, the 0 to 3 scale on the Y-axis represents less than high school education, high school education (or equivalent), college education, and graduate school education. As the figure reveals, the CC began as a highly educated body dominated by cosmopolitan intellectuals. After the CCP split with the KMT, the party inducted many labor leaders who had participated in anti-imperialist strikes in the mid-20s into the CC, which led to a plummeting of the average education level of CC members to well below high school level. Many of these new CC

members turned out to be highly unreliable and either defected to the KMT or absconded with party funds.

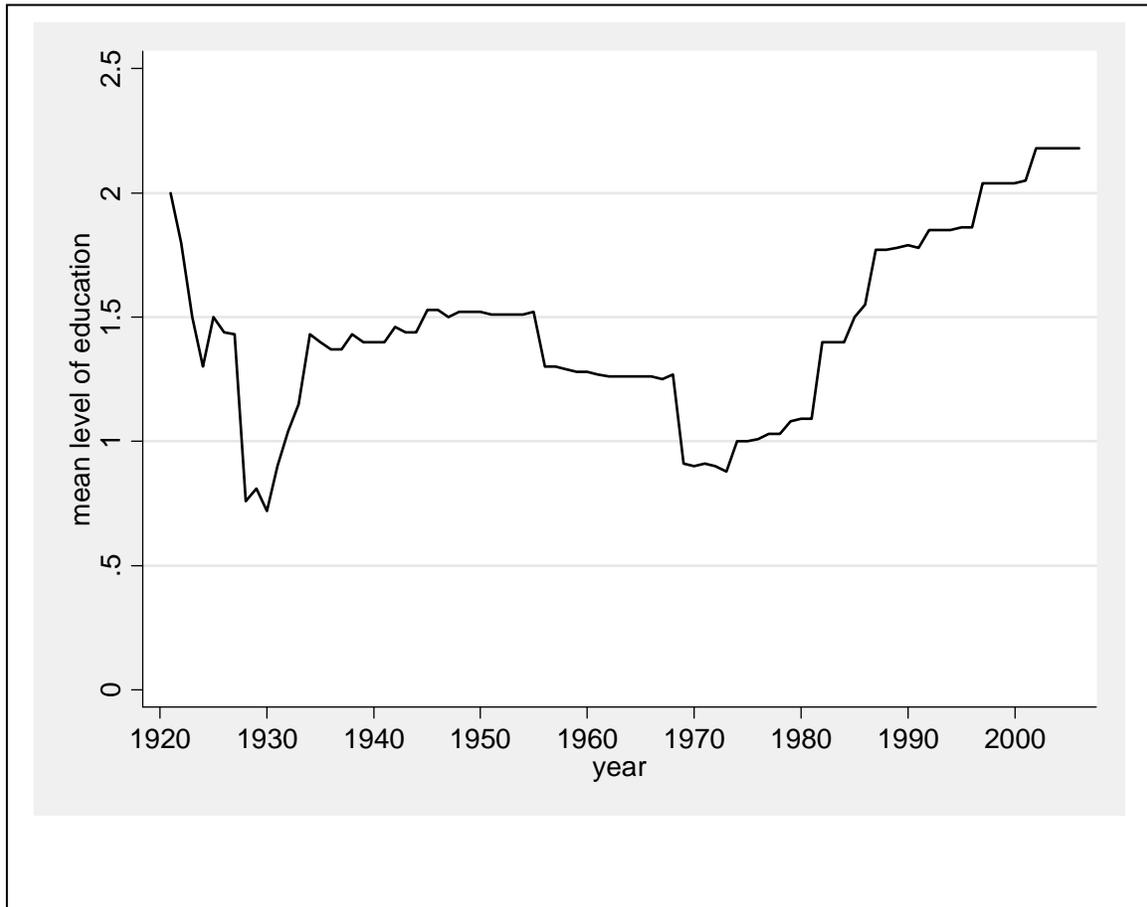
As the party shifted toward a rural focus in the early 30s, however, the average education level of CC members climbed back toward the mid point between high school and college. This possibly signified the lesson learned by the CCP by the poor performance of labor leaders. Although the CCP elite actively recruited peasants during the Jiangxi Soviet period, there are few signs that many of them were immediately inducted into the CC. This accords with Benton (1992)'s finding that the southern guerrilla bases in the early 30s often saw splits between the intellectual "leftists" elite sent down by the party center and the local guerrilla forces of mostly uneducated peasants. Instead of inducting uneducated peasants into the party center, the average education level of CC members remained the same throughout the Long March and the Yan'an period, a mix of high school and college educated leaders. Some of the peasant fighters recruited in the 30s, especially those who had participated in the Long March, were finally inducted into the CC at the Eighth PC in 1956, which saw a sharp drop in the education level of CC members.

A much sharper drop occurred during the Cultural Revolution as Mao introduced a mix of veteran peasant fighters and mass representatives who had been ordinary workers into the CC at both the Ninth and Tenth CC. This caused the average education level of CC members falling to below high school level, the lowest level since the late 20s. The lowering of average education level both at the Eighth and at the Ninth PC likely were manifestations of Mao's "mixing in sand" tactic of filling the ranks of the

elite with loyal, though not necessarily capable, leaders (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals 2006: 333).

After the fall of the Gang of Four, the average education of CC members slowly recovered, although the pace was much slower than once would expect. Again, due to the active retirement policy pursued by Deng and Chen, the average education level of CC members climbed from nearly high school level just before the Twelfth PC to over half way toward the college level by the Thirteenth PC. As the norm of meritocracy was established, the average education level of CC members climbed with each subsequent party congress. Although the education trend of CC members supports the notion of a transition from revolutionary cadres to technocrats (Lee 1991), this transition did not have a clear effect on the elite makeup of the CCP until well into the Deng era. The average education level climbed above college level at the Fifteenth PC in 1997 and continued its ascent at the Sixteenth PC. The membership of the CC is now among the most educated elite in the world, at least on paper.

Figure 5: Average Education Level of CC Members: 1921-2006



Note: On the Y-axis, 0 denotes less than high school and equivalent; 1 denotes high school or equivalent; 2 is college and equivalent; 3 is graduate level education.

PLA Representation in the CC

Beyond basic demographic trends, this data set also allows researchers to explore more salient political issues, such as the representation of senior PLA officers in the CC. The representation by PLA officers in the CC might reflect the insecurity of the top party leaders, which in turn can have a substantial impact on policy outcomes. Figure 6 reveals that the number of serving PLA officers began at a fairly low level both in terms of number and as a share of CC. Again, the Eighth PC saw an increase in number and a slight increase in the share of PLA officers in the CC. PLA representation in the CC

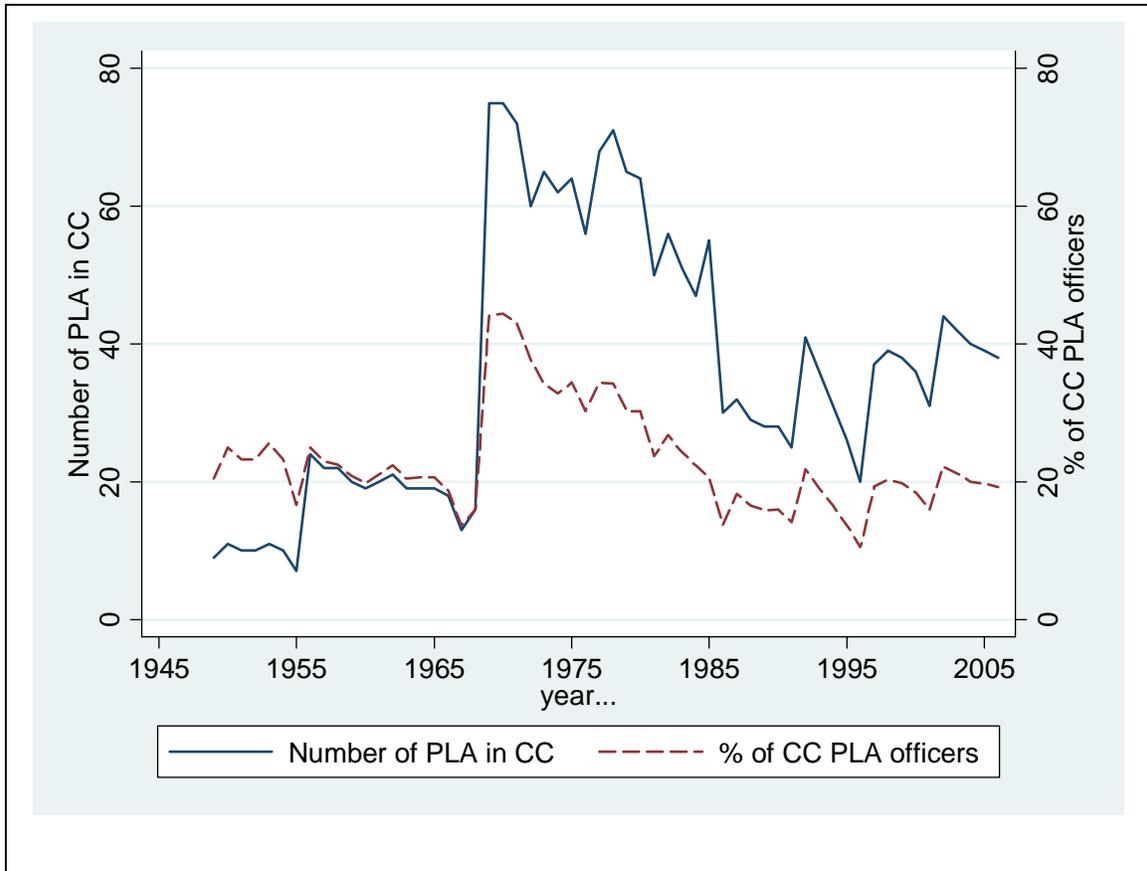
remained fairly stable until the Cultural Revolution. As alluded to previously, the Ninth PC saw the explosive growth of PLA representation from 16 to 75. Despite the rapid increase in CC members at the Ninth PC, PLA share of the CC also rose dramatically to 44%. Again, this is not surprising, since many PLA commanders also became regional administrators in the revolutionary committees (Klein & Hager 1971).

Through the turbulent years for the remainder of the CR, PLA representation remained at a high level both in absolute terms and as a share of CC (Figure 6). Although PLA share of CC had a downward trend into the early reform period, the trend was by no means a neat one. PLA share of CC was not brought down to pre-CR level until 1985. Furthermore, because the CC was irrevocably enlarged during the CR (Figure 1), the number of PLA officers in the CC remained high at 55. In subsequent years, PLA representation hovered around the 20% range, but the trend was not nearly as smooth as the trends in age structure or education level.

In the reform era, the representation of PLA officers in the CC in fact exhibited highly irregular cyclical patterns not easily explainable by conventional wisdom. For example, PLA representation essentially remained the same in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre, where massive military forces were deployed to suppress the student movement. Few were immediately rewarded with CC membership. In contrast, the purge of the Yang Family clique from senior PLA positions at the 1992 Fourteenth Party Congress in fact led to a dramatic rise in PLA representation in the CC. It is possible that many PLA commanders who had demonstrated loyalty to the regime in 1989 were not rewarded until 1992. During the first Jiang Zemin term (1992-1997), PLA representation fell steadily to nearly 10% of CC membership by 1996. Nonetheless, the

Fifteenth Party Congress saw a substantial resurgence in PLA representation back to the 20% level. There seems to be a pattern of “replenishing” PLA representatives in the CC at every party congress to roughly the 20% level in the post-Deng era. But why was this necessary, and why did PLA representation decline between PCs? More careful theorizing and time series analysis are needed to understand this interesting pattern.

Figure 6: The Number of Serving PLA Officers in the CC and their Share of CC Membership (%)



Factional Influence

Finally, this data set is useful in deriving indicators of factional influence. If one believes that factions are formed on the basis of shared native place, as well as common

education and work experience (Lieberthal & Oksenberg 1988: 156), then these biographical data would enable one to infer the share of CC members with factional ties with top leaders. The purpose of this exercise would be to track the relative balance of power between various top leaders, which would also provide an indication of how fragmented the party elite is at a particular moment.

In the past, a main challenge of coding factional ties was the enormous amount of work entailed in uncovering how the numerous members of the CC were tied with Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) members. To be sure, it is a relatively simpler task to find out all the Tsinghua University graduates or all Hunan natives among CC members at any given time, and important work on factions has been done on the basis of these simpler biographical coincidences (Li 1994). Nonetheless, it becomes much more difficult to track job coincidences to capture all CC members who had worked in the same unit as a PSC member, especially one with a rich career. Taking Hu Yaobang as an example, he was a native of Hunan and a graduate and instructor of the Anti-Japanese University. However, he also held the following positions before becoming secretary general of the CCP: a senior cadre in the Communist Youth League between 1936 to 1937 and between 1952 and 1966, a senior cadre in the Central Military Commission between 1939 and 1946, a commander in various units of the Northern China Field Army between 1946 and 1949, a member of the Southwest Military and Political Committee between 1953 and 1956, one of the party secretaries of the CC Northwest Bureau between 1964 and 1965, the vice president of the Central Party School between 1977 and 1982, the head of the Central Organization Department between 1977 and 1978, and

finally the third secretary of the Central Discipline and Inspection Commission between 1979 and 1982.

In order to find all CC members who had worked with him at the Twelfth Party Congress (PC), for example, one would have to carefully examine the biographies of all the CC members elected at the Twelfth PC. If one wanted to track those who had worked with Hu through time, one would have to examine every CC member's biography over a period of time. This exercise would become even more laborious if one wanted to compare Hu's influence with that of Hua Guofeng, whose followers would presumably be quite different from Hu's followers. Although it took us quite a while to code the CC data set, because we have the start and end years of most of the positions held by CC members, we can deploy computer algorithm (in Stata) to search for CC members who had worked at the same time and at the same unit with Hu Yaobang. We can do this for every year in Hu's career, but especially during the years when he served as Party Secretary General. While by no means a simple exercise, the availability of the data and the use of computer algorithm make comparing the influence of various PSC members in the CC a manageable task.

In Figure 7, we present a comparison of the share of CC members who had common experience with Hu Yaobang and Hua Guofeng, two contenders for power in the late 70s. As one can see, Hu Yaobang's wide ranging experience gave him a large advantage over Hua Guofeng throughout the entire period, even before the Eleventh PC. Figure 3 reveals that in the 70s the post-May Fourth generation who was born between 1910 and 1925 began to take over important positions in large numbers. Although Hu Yaobang was six years older than Hua, they were in the same post-May Fourth

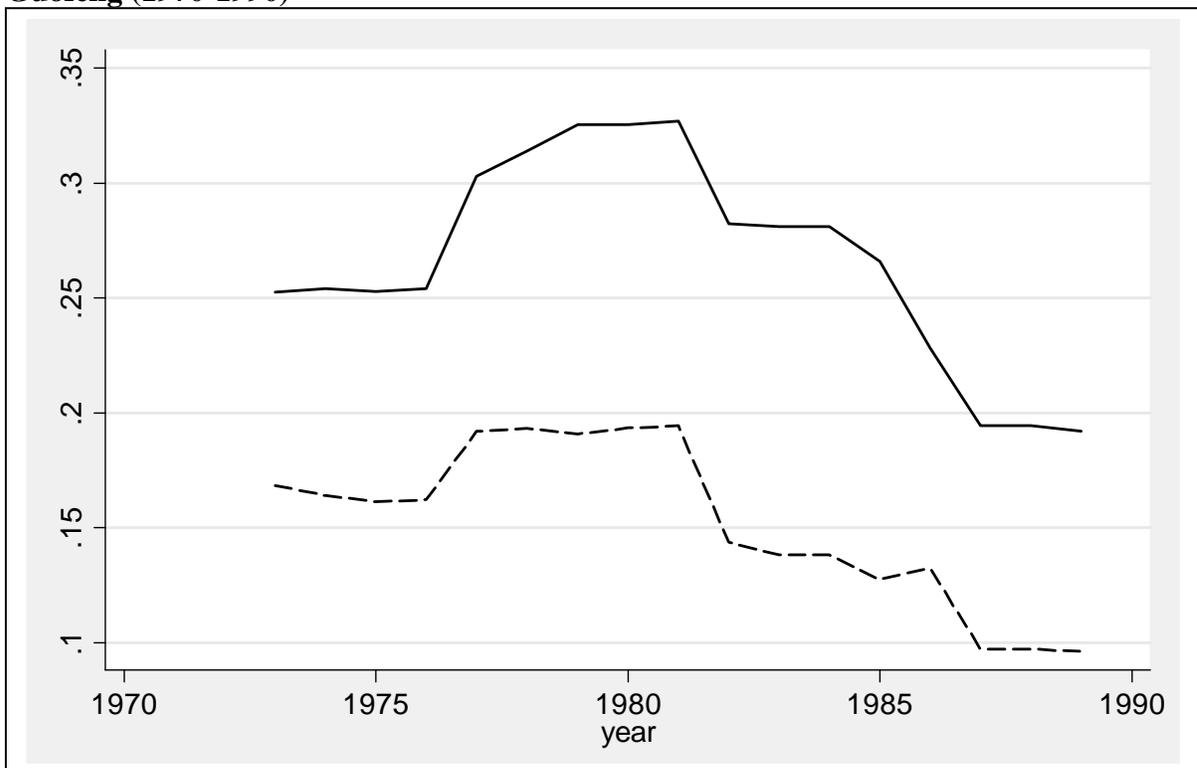
generation. Hu's wide ranging experience afforded him shared experience with a much higher proportion of the CC throughout the entire period that the post-May Fourth generation dominated. In contrast, Hua Guofeng only served in provincial positions in Shanxi, Hunan, and Guangdong, as well as a short stint as the minister of public security before becoming the party's helmsman. Thus, although the Eleventh Party Congress in 1977 allowed Hua to induct some cadres with shared experience into the CC, his influence in the CC still paled in comparison with Hu's, who shared experience with roughly 30% of the CC in 1977.

Why couldn't Hua have blocked Hu followers from entering the CC at the Eleventh Party Congress? Even if we discount Deng Xiaoping's backing of Hu Yaobang, it would have been very difficult to do so given Hu's wide ranging experience. In order to block all possible Hu followers from the CC, one would have to exclude cadets at the Anti-Japanese University, officers of the North China Field Army, and senior cadres in the Communist Youth League for much of the 50s and 60s. As these cadres made up some of the best human capital in the party at the time, it simply would have been unimaginable to exclude them all. Although one's influence in the CC does not entirely determine one's political fortune, Figure 7 is certainly consistent with Hua's eventual fall and the elevation of Hu to the position of party secretary general. Knowing his own weakness, Hua scrambled to use massive investment projects to buy support within the Party (Baum 1994: 54), but it could not compete with the deep ties that Hu had established with a large share of the CC.

To be sure, Hu later suffered his own fall from power at the hands of a powerful coalition between Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun (Fewsmith 1994). Beyond pushing for

a liberal line against Deng's wishes and causing instability, Hu's own influence also began to slip by the mid-80s due mainly to the death and retirement of many in his cohort. This may have made removing him from the party secretary general position easier for Deng and Chen. However, one can see that even after his demotion and the retirement of many of his followers at the Thirteenth PC in 1987, Hu remains an influential figure in the CC.

Figure 7: The Share of CC with Common Experience with Hu Yaobang and Hua Guofeng (1970-1990)



The Next Step

In this paper, we introduce a new database of all Central Committee members which uses an unconventional logic of coding biographies. Instead of focusing on time and sequence, the coding scheme focuses on positions, followed by when CC members served in a given position. This logic of coding elite biographies provides enormous

flexibility both to generate various indicators of elite characteristics and to allow for the expansion of the data-set in various directions. As a preliminary step, we developed a few basic time series trends of the CC. We hope this paper paves the way for other researchers to code other elite bodies in China and in other countries. For example, it would be fruitful to code all the PLA commanders, not all of whom are CC members. Likewise, one can code members of the Central Discipline and Inspection Commission to examine their role in Chinese politics.

With the CC data, one can conduct three kinds of analysis. First, with these annual indicators, one can conduct time-series analyses, especially given the numerous data points provided by the database. Elite characteristics can either be used as a dependent or independent variable. For example, certain type of political crises might increase the number of PLA representatives in the CC. Likewise, shifting characteristics of the CC, such as the average education level of CC members, might explain the pace of adopting new policies.

At the other extreme, one can conduct individual level analysis and treat every CC member as an observation. With this data set, one can infer the characteristics that would earn CC members promotions to the Politburo level. The individual level data can be augmented by various economic and political indicators to provide a comprehensive look at the factors that drive elite promotions. Instead of focusing on regional administrators, which is the focus of the existing literature (Landry forthcoming), theories of how promotions occur in other parts of the CCP regime can be tested systematically. Likewise, a general theory of the factors that drive elite promotions *across* the various segments of the CCP regime can be tested rigorously.

Furthermore, this data-set also allows researcher to segment the CC population into sectors or geographical regions and to correlate characteristics of regional or sectoral elite with various policy outcomes. Regional elite indicators, including regional representation in the CC, provincial factional affiliations, and the average education level of provincial elite, can be used to explain a host of regional economic and policy outcomes. With the development of these various indicators, we hope to make the quantitative studies of Chinese elite a less burdensome task.

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