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SIGA Study:

CHINESE FACTIONS AND XI JINPING'S TOP LEADERSHIP NETWORK



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SIGA Study: Chinese Factions and Xi Jinping's Top Leadership Network

*Generally speaking, gentlemen were united as a party by a common principle,
while villains were combined into a party by common interests.
It was something in the nature of things.
(Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修, 1007-1072 CE)¹*

Scholars have pointed out that viewing the Chinese party leadership as a monolithic group whose prominent members all share the same ideology, political associations, socioeconomic background, and policy preferences impedes the understanding of domestic Chinese politics and the dynamic of factional politics within it. Of course, factional politics is not a new development in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In fact, there had been a vibrant factionalism within the CCP dating all the way back to the end of the Mao and Deng eras. The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959), the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and the 1989 Tiananmen crisis were all related to factional infighting within the CCP leadership. During the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth National Party Congress in 1966, Mao Zedong stated the following: "No party outside the party reflects an imperial ideology; no faction within the party is an incredibly bizarre notion" (党内无派, 千奇万怪 *dangnei wupai, qianqi wan guai*). After Mao's death, there was a famously great power struggle between those loyal to Maoist doctrine (the Gang of Four) and the reformists (Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, and Hu Yaobang). Since Deng instituted presidential term limits in 1982, Chinese politics has been dominated by a complex power sharing agreement between an elitist faction led by Jiang Zemin and a populist clique led by Hu Jintao. The conventional understanding of Chinese politics for decades has been that once a presidential term limit is completed, power will be exchanged between the two sides and the faction outside of power is given the presidency. Today, however, the remarkable consolidation of power under Xi Jinping has thrown into question the rules and norms of this factionalist system, leading various scholars and analysts to examine the emergence of a new faction in Chinese politics, headed by Xi Jinping – the so-called Xi Faction.

The present study is organized in four parts. The first part provides a general introduction to Chinese factions by describing their main characteristics. The second part offers an overview of the major factions in Chinese politics, namely the Shanghai Gang, the Chinese Communist Youth League Faction, and the Princelings. The third part consists of a study of the Xi Jinping Faction by tracking personal and political association between Xi and his protégés through

¹ Song Dynasty historian Ouyang Xu's essay "On Cliques" (朋党论 *pengdang lun*) emphasizes the undeniability of factional politics in a regime.

various political networks. The following questions will be discussed in this part: Which groups constitute Xi's inner circle? Who are the suggested individuals and trusted associates in each group? How were and are they positioned in the national leadership? This is then followed by the fourth part which discusses the emergence and rise of the Xi Faction, looks at the dynamics of CCP leadership after the 20th National Congress, and investigates the composition of the new leadership organizations with reference to possible economic, foreign, and military policy implications. These implications are summarized by a strategic outlook.

1. Introduction: Defining Chinese Factions

In the study of modern Chinese politics, the informal dimension has always played a vital role. Factions are regarded as rather informal and loosely organized groups of political entrepreneurs. According to Nathan (1973), a faction can be defined as “a vertically organized patron-client network linked by personal face-to-face ‘connections’ (*guanxi*)”. In this system and network of patronage, a leader in a position of power would appoint his loyal protégées in various positions below him. As the leader is promoted up the ranks, he would ensure that so were his protégés. Under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, the opening of the Politburo and the Central Committee were filled with mostly the top leaders of their respective factions – this emphasizes how factions accumulate power once their chief becomes the paramount leader. Described by Nathan (1973) as part of the informal dimension in Chinese politics, a faction is “external to but dependent upon the formal structure along which it extends.” It is also important to note that informal connections with supporters are a source of power at least as important as their formal positions for top Chinese leaders. This is because one's formal position alone may not be enough to ensure real power. Therefore, one's informal personal influence is seen as a necessary supplement to formal authority. This situation has been described by Dittmer (1995) as “informal politics overshadowing formal politics.” As a result, scholars like Dittmer define the relationship between formal and informal as fluid and ambiguous – this is because informal groups are often absorbed into formal structures, and formal structures in turn operate with a great deal of informality.

Altogether Chinese factions exhibit the following main features:

- Factions are made up of networks of personal associations which may have overlapping memberships. These networks tend to take a hierarchical shape and eventually strive to attach themselves to certain leaders who had a successful career in the CCP. For instance, under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, the openings in the Politburo and the Central

Committee were filled with mostly the top leaders of their respective factions – thus emphasizing how factions accumulate power once their leader becomes the paramount leader.

- Factions are primarily based on personal exchange relationships which create linkage networks for the support of particular leaders. The glue that holds factions together can be mutual career self-interest, shared characteristics, or the highly particular sentiments associated with personal ties in Chinese culture (*guanxi*).

Lieberthal and Oksenberg (1988), explain *guanxi wang* (the network of relationship) as “bonds of *guanxi* entail mutual obligation; these bonds arise from family connections, common geographical origin, shared experience (school or military service ties), or shared loyalty toward the same patron or commander (such as having served Zhou Enlai or Liu Shaoqi).” However, contrary to this view, Pye’s contribution in the early 1980s rejected the premise that factions are defined by ties such as shared generation, school ties, ideological affinity, class or geographical origins. Pye argued that factionalism is a central component of Chinese political behavior that is deeply rooted in cultural and psychological security drives: China’s political culture is said to be averse to conflict, and norms of consensus predominate, but meanwhile the search for personal security generates a ceaseless counter-mobilization of informal loyalty networks.

- The sources of factions can be policy choice and institutional interest, but also political alliances built on certain components of *guanxi*, and a common identity (see figure 1).

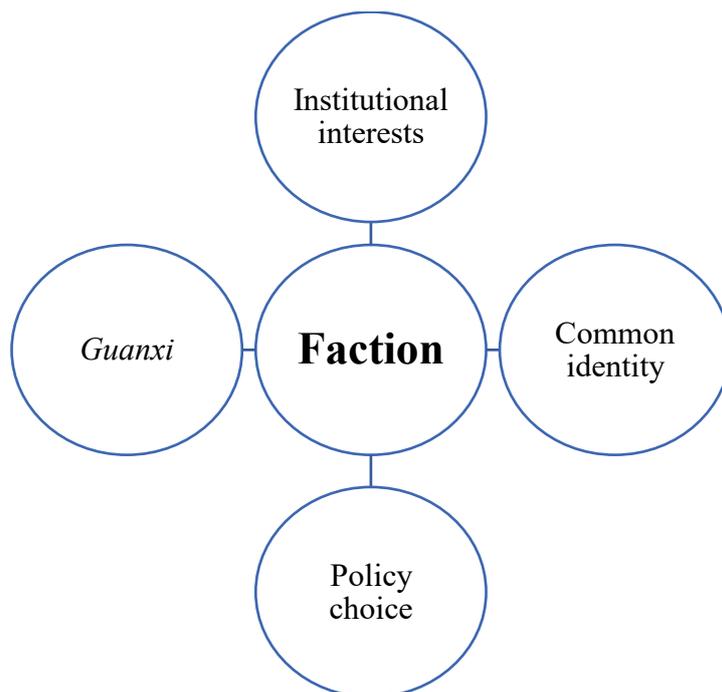


Fig. 1: Sources of Chinese factions.

- Competing factions represent different socioeconomic and geographic constituencies and therefore seek to advance contrasting policy agenda. However, cross-coalition personal friendships and other sorts of close connections do exist as well. Moreover, there is evidence of power sharing between the factions (e.g. between the Shanghai Gang and the CCYL Faction).
- The leaders of two coalitions have alternated in the top position in the leadership as evidenced first in the power transition from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, and then in the succession from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. This rotation reflects not only the need for collective leadership to make up for the shortcomings of the previous administration but also the opportunity to adopt new policy initiatives of the other.
- Factional politics and political coalitions in present-day China still lack public transparency. Most political leaders in China usually take a low-profile-approach lobbying for promotion in a non-public manner (exceptions include Bo Xilai and Wang Yang). Factional politics within the CPC have not yet been legitimated by the CCP constitution.

2. Overview: Shanghai Gang, Chinese Communist Youth League, and Princelings

The Shanghai Gang

Membership in the “Shanghai Gang” (上海帮 *Shanghai Bang*) is based on political association rather than geographic origin, even though many members were born in Shanghai and the nearby provinces. The Shanghai Gang refers to leaders who had advanced their careers primarily as a result of their political association with CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin while he was in Shanghai – both the base of his power and a showcase of China’s economic progress under his rule. When Jiang served as mayor and party chief in Shanghai during the mid-1980s, he began to cultivate a web of mentor-protégés ties with his Shanghai associates. After becoming the party’s top leader in 1989, Jiang appointed several of his confidants in Shanghai to important positions in Beijing. Moreover, a significant number of municipal leaders in Shanghai have been promoted to the national leadership or transferred to other provinces and cities where they served as top leaders. Examples include Meng Jianzhu 孟建柱, Wang Anshun 王安顺 and Li Xi 李希. Altogether they have formed a very powerful political network in China.

Therefore, almost all senior officials who served in the municipal leadership of Shanghai since the 1980s can be considered members of the Shanghai Gang.

The Shanghai Gang is more closely associated with China's east coast (e.g., provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu) – the region that has been known for fast economic growth. This elitist faction's main membership primarily consists of “Princelings” – leaders born into the families of communist revolutionaries or other high-ranking officials, including both Jiang Zemin and Xi Jinping. Therefore, there is a strong bond between the Shanghai Gang and the princeling group.

Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) Faction

Created by the CCP, the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), also known as *Tuanpai* 团派 (lit. “league faction”), is essentially the youth wing of the party and had long been a source of recruitment for the party, offering the youth an entry point in the CCP. The CCYL is a faction comprising “those officials who worked in the senior levels of CCYL leadership anytime from 1982 to 1998, during which they likely formed close working relationships or even mentor-protégé ties with *tuanpai* leaders like Hu Jintao, Song Defu, and Li Keqiang”, according to Lam (2015). The rise of the CCYL faction is marked by appointment of Hu Jintao as general secretary of CCP in 2002.

The CCYL officials rise to power through the elevation and selections processes of the party beginning with their membership in the faction. Because most of them have humble family backgrounds and need to demonstrate their achievements by improving the living standard in the provinces of the hinterland, they favor policies promoting equity in the redistribution of the wealth. They aim to combat social inequality and provide purchasing power for the people who live in the countryside through the creation of a “harmonious society” as propagated by Hu Jintao. They prefer more populist policies that aimed at restoring the balance of power between the wealthy eastern coastal provinces and the poorer interior ones. Their populist agenda includes eliminating the agricultural tax on farmers, supporting more lenient policies toward migrant workers, economically prioritizing inland cities to allow them to “catch up,” establishing basic health care, and promoting affordable housing projects. In sum, the populist camp attempts to represent the needs of the common people.

Due to their humble family backgrounds, CCYL members do not have the abundant resources and profound *guanxi* network that members of the Shanghai Faction or the Princelings have. Therefore, they must rely on themselves to cultivate relationships with their superiors at different levels and pursue their career advancement step by step, often though the

party, propaganda, and mass (social) organizations rather than in the economic and financial sector.

The unofficial sharing of power between the Shanghai and the CCYL factions is what led many scholars to categorize the CCP as “one party, two factions”. These two factions or coalitions within the CPC leadership have been competing for power, influence, and control over policy initiative since the late 1990s. Li (2007) categorized this factional dynamic in the CCP as “inner-Party bipartisanship”:

“Factional politics is becoming less a zero-sum game in which the winner takes all, and more a power-sharing dynamic in which two factions or coalitions compete in certain arenas and cooperate in others. Within this emerging system of ‘inner-Party bipartisanship,’ Chinese politicians are constantly engaged in coalition-building, political negotiation, compromise and deal-making to ensure that their faction maintains its relative position.” (Li 2007, 3)

It is interesting to note that over the past few years, with the rise of Xi Jinping and the gradual domination of Xi’s faction, the established norms of inner-Party bipartisanship or the characteristics that symbolized the idea of “one party, two factions” have been overhauled. As a result, the opposing factions find it increasingly difficult to balance against Xi in either the Politburo or the Politburo Standing Committee, which leads to a fundamental watering down of factional power sharing arrangements in the CCP. While some analysts argue that Xi’s rapid power consolidation since 2012 reflects Chinese public opinion favoring a stronger and more-effective leadership, others believe that due to the deficiencies of collective leadership, China is now returning to the era of strongman politics. Regardless of whether Xi aims to replace collective leadership in order to become a Mao-like figure, one should pay attention to the key aspects of Xi’s leadership, including the formation of his own faction.

The Princelings

In Chinese elite studies, a “princeling” usually refers to a political leader who comes from a veteran communist revolutionary family or has a high-ranking official family background. Also known as *Taizidang* (太子党) or the “descendants of the reds” (红后代 *honghoudai*), the Princelings are said to have a sense of natural superiority that makes view the PRC as their own property and inheriting the communist orthodoxy and revolutionary spirit as their mortal obligation. Family ties in elite recruitment are not unique to China but are often used to advance political careers in other countries as well. As Isaac Stone Fish pointed out in his *Foreign Policy* article (2012) regarding rulers with family ties across Asia: “With few exceptions outside the dictatorships in the southeast and central part of the continent, virtually

every country in Asia has been ruled by the offspring of a high-ranking politician in the 21st century.”

The princelings faction’s interests usually lie in representing China’s entrepreneurs and emerging middle class. However, the political interests of princelings are not always aligned, and there is often infighting over power and wealth. They are more likely to begin their careers and hold positions in economically well-developed coastal areas – possibly due to their privileged status – and some possess close ties with the military.

It is interesting to note that the princelings are not necessarily part of a monolithic organization or a formal network, and they do not implicitly have strong patron-client ties among themselves. Since they are neither a cohesive unit nor a well-organized group, the camaraderie and commonality of purpose among Princelings are significantly less pronounced than those among members of organizationally or geographically based groupings such as the CCYL Faction and the Shanghai Gang. Despite various differences (inter alia, occupational backgrounds, political experiences, and personalities) within this group, the princeling leaders share a strong political identity, a sense of “red nobility” entitlement, and the common interest to deal with rival factions.

By reviewing the career path of the most prominent Princelings in present-day China, Li (1016) summarized the following three traits: (1) many Princelings served as *mishu* (office clerks) to senior leaders – this not only enabled them to become familiar with the work and decision-making processes at the national and provincial levels of leadership, but also gave them credentials that accelerated their political careers; (2) princelings often received shortcuts for their career advancement (e.g., Xi Jinping); (3) many princelings have substantial leadership experience in economic administration, finance, foreign investment, and foreign trade.

The Gang of Princelings is one of Xi’s major power bases, particularly cadres with a “revolutionary bloodline” who are serving in the PLA.

	Shanghai Gang 上海帮 <i>Shanghai Bang</i>	CCYL Faction 团派 <i>Tuanpai</i>	Princelings 太子党 <i>Taizidang</i>
Category	“Elitist coalition” (精英同盟 <i>jingying tongmeng</i>)	“Populist coalition” (民粹同盟 <i>mincui tongmeng</i>)	“Elitist coalition” (精英同盟 <i>jingying tongmeng</i>)
Political leaders’ background	Leaders who have advanced their careers in Shanghai under Jiang Zemin. The membership is mainly based on political association. Politicians holding official positions in the Shanghai municipal party apparatus, municipal government, and municipal People’s Political Consultative Conference. Close ties with Jiang Zemin.	Leaders who come from humble family backgrounds, work in less developed inland provinces, and advance their careers from the grassroots level through a step-by-step promotion. Leaders who advance in politics through the CCYL leadership. Close ties with Hu Jintao.	Leaders coming from a veteran communist revolutionary family or having a high-ranking family background. Princelings are more likely to hold positions in the rich coastal areas. Moreover, they are bound by their shared elite political identity and a sense of entitlement as “red nobility.” Connection with Xi Jinping.
Interests and Policies	Elite and eastern coastal interests within China. Tendency to be economically liberal and supportive of market reform, but politically conservative.	Policies regarding economic equality, social justice, and more balanced regional development. Often voicing concerns of vulnerable social groups such as farmers, migrant workers, and the urban poor. Offering the youth an entry point in the CCP.	Interests in representing Chinese entrepreneurs and emerging middle class. Political interests are sometimes not aligned. In support of market reform, but politically conservative, especially with regard to control over the media and intra-party elections.
Key Figures	Wang Daohan, Jiang Zemin, Rui Xingwen, Zhu Rongji, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Qu, Xu Kuangdi, Wu Bangguo, (Xi Jinping) ²	Hu Jintao, Li Keqiang, Wang Yang, Liu Qibao, Li Yuanchao, Ling Jihua, Liu Yandong, Hu Chunhua, Lu Hao	Xi Jinping, Liu He, Li Zhanshu, Chen Xi, Ding Xuexiang, Cai Qi, Huang Kunming, Liu Qi, Ying Yong, Chen Ming’er, Xiao Jie, Yu Zhengsheng, Ma Kai, Wang Qishan, Zhang Dejiang

Table 1: Summary of the three major factions in Chinese politics.

² Whether or not Xi Jinping counts as a member of the Shanghai Gang is a matter of debate among scholars interested in Chinese elite politics. Xi spent only seven months in any official role in Shanghai, but Jiang’s substantial influence on Xi has been noted by many scholars.

3. Study: Xi Jinping Faction

The Xi Jinping Faction (习近平派系 *Xi Jinping paixi*), also known as the “Xi Clan” (习家军 *Xi Jiajun*), the Zhejiang Gang (浙江帮 *Zhejiang bang*), the Shaanxi Gang (陕西帮 *Shaanxi bang*), or the Tsinghua Gang (清华帮 *Tsinghua bang*), refers to a term used by observers to represent political figures in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) who are closely related to Xi Jinping. It has been pointed out by many experts that Xi assumed China’s top leadership role with the support of an inner circle of friends and protégés. This group has been crucial to Xi’s efforts to consolidate power during his first years in office, supporting him with wide-ranging economic and political initiatives which reflect his growing power and influence. Many of these protégés are still playing crucial roles now. Since Xi’s promotion of his own protégés is among the most important indicators of his power and authority at present and in the future, examining his inner circle of protégés will help explaining some of the driving forces for change and provide clues to Xi’s political trajectory.

Based on information derived from scholarly literature, Chinese publications, and databases (online), this chapter will track personal and political association between Xi and his protégés through various political networks, and discuss the following questions: Which groups constitute Xi’s inner circle? Who are the suggested individuals and trusted associates in each group? How were and are they positioned in the national leadership?

Since the 18th National Party Congress in 2012, Xi began cultivating a web of mentor-protégé ties by re-using (1) the old ministry when he served as a county leader in Hebei (1982-1985), as a top leader in Fujian Province (1985-2002), Zhejiang Province (2002-2007), Shanghai (2007), as well as (2) longtime friends formed through school and university ties and (3) native-place associations from Shaanxi province, (4) connections from the provinces of Liaoning and Guangdong; and (5) ties to the military-industrial sector, the Central Party School and the security sector to establish the following groups or networks:

- “New Zhijiang Army” (之江新军 *Zhijiang Xinjun*)
- “Hebei Clique” (河北系 *Hebei xi*)
- “Fujian Clique” or “New Minjiang Army” (福建系 *Fujian xi*)
- “Zhejiang Clique” (浙江系 *Zhejiang xi*)
- “Schoolmates and Tsinghua Gang” (同窗系 *Tongchuan xi*, 清华帮 *Qinghua Bang*)
- “Shaanxi Clique” (陕西系 *Shaanxi xi*)
- “New Shanghai Gang” (新上海帮 *Xin Shanghai Bang*)
- “Liaoning Clique” (辽宁系 *Liaoning xi*)
- “Guangdong Clique” (广东系 *Guangdong xi*)
- “Military Industry Department” (军工系 *Jungong xi*)
- “Central Party School Group”
- “Security Sector Group”
- “Peng Liyuan Group”

For Xi, these friends and protégés are more trustworthy than political allies with whom he built bonds primarily on shared factional association. These groups have become Xi’s power base as he placed them in important positions in the party government, and the PLA, relying on them for his power consolidation and pursuing his domination in the party leadership. Over the past years, most major provincial and central positions in China have been filled by either Xi’s protégés or protégés of his loyal men. This way, Xi has ensured that the future leadership of bodies like the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee would be ruled by members of his own faction (the Xi Faction), further limiting the role of the previous two dominant factions (the CYL Faction and the Shanghai Gang). It should be noted that after the 19th National Party Congress in October 2017, Xi Jinping’s faction gradually dominated the CPC leadership.

Period	Xi’s age	Life & Career Experiences	Personal & Political Associations	Main Friends & Protégés
1953-1968	1-7	Family ties	Shaanxi native place	Yu Zhengsheng 俞正声 Wang Qishan 王岐山 Li Zhanshu 栗战书 Zhao Leji 赵乐际 He Yiting 何毅亭

1960-1968	7-15	Student at Bayi School and Beijing No. 25 School	“Princeling” and growing up in cadre’s compound	Zhang Youxia 张又侠 Liu He 刘鹤 Liu Yuan 刘源
1969-1974	16-21	Rural laborer in Yanchuan County, Shaanxi	“Sent down youth” (a rural laborer during the “Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement”) and Shaanxi connection	Wang Qishan 王岐山 Wang Chen 王晨
1975-1978	22-25	“Worker-peasant-soldier student” at Tsinghua University	Tsinghua network	Chen Xi 陈希 Chen Jining 陈吉宁 Hu Heping 胡和平
1979-1982	26-29	Working as a <i>mishu</i> (secretary) for Minister of Defense Geng Biao in the early years of the Deng era	Experience with PLA and in affairs regarding Taiwan and Hong Kong	Liu Xiaojiang 刘晓江
1982-1985	29-32	County leader in Zhengding county, Hebei (gaining substantial leadership experience)	Hebei connection	Li Zhanshu 栗战书 Yang Zhenwu 杨振武
1985-2002	32-49	Leader in Xiamen, Ningde, Fuzhou, Fujian (gaining substantial leadership experience)	Fujian connection	Zhao Keshi 赵克石 Cai Yingting 蔡英挺 He Lifeng 何立峰 Cai Qi 蔡奇 Huang Kunming 黄坤明 Song Tao 宋涛 Wang Ning 王宁 Wang Xiaohong 王小洪
2002-2007	49-54	Governor and Party Secretary of Zhejiang (gaining substantial leadership experience)	Zhejiang connection	Chen Min’er 陈敏尔 Li Qiang 李强 Xia Baolong 夏宝龙 Zhong Shan 钟山 Ying Yong 应勇 Lou Yangsheng 楼阳生 Zhong Shaojun 钟绍军 Shu Guozeng 舒国增 Meng Qingfeng 孟庆丰 Shen Haixiong 慎海雄
2007	54	Party Secretary of Shanghai (gaining substantial leadership experience)	Shanghai connection	Han Zheng 韩正 Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥 Yang Xiaodu 杨晓渡 Xu Lin 徐麟 Fang Xinghai 方星海

Table 2 presents a chronological overview of Xi's formative years and career experiences before 2007, tracing the personal and political associations formed during each of these periods and representing the key friends and associates. Data is based on Cheng Li, *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping Era: Reassessing Collective Leadership*, 2016, 305.

New Zhijiang Army

The Xi Jinping Faction is sometimes called the New Zhijiang Army (之江新军 *zhijiang xinjun*) which refers to political figures in the CCP who are closely related to Xi Jinping. Most members held important provincial and local posts during Xi Jinping's term as Communist Party Secretary of Zhejiang province (e.g., Liu He 刘鹤, Li Qiang 李强 and Gong Zheng 龚正). The membership of New Zhijiang Army is also comprised of people who were recruited by Xi in Fujian and of the "classmates" from his Tsinghua University days (e.g., Li He 刘鹤, Chen Xi 陈希), as well as those who had served as Xi's secretaries (e.g., Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥 and Wang Huning 王沪宁) and those who have been recommended by or had worked under Xi (e.g., Li Zhanshu 栗战书). Since then, the figures of the New Zhijiang Army have taken on important political posts at the provincial level or in central party and state organs. Moreover, they wield enormous power and have a huge influence on Chinese politics today.

The term *Zhijiang* was first used in an article written by Ma Haoliang 马浩亮 (editor at Hong Kong-based newspaper Ta Kung Pao) and refers to the Qiantang River, which runs through the province, but is often used as a poetic reference for the greater Zhejiang region.

Hebei Clique

In 1982, Xi Jinping left the position of *mishu* at the Ministry of Defense and arrived in Zhengding, a poor county in north China's Hebei Province, where volunteered to work at the grassroots level and served as Deputy Party Secretary of the county until 1985. This was an unusual career move for princelings like Xi at that time, because most were more interested in working in the offices of the national leadership in Beijing. Today, however, it has become a more popular choice for the new generation of princelings. In a *Xinhua* article, Peng Liyuan, Xi's wife, mentioned that unlike many of his classmates who went abroad, Xi stayed and chose a much harder path – to be a servant to the people.

The most important "Hebei connection" for Xi is his friendship with Li Zhanshu 栗战书 who was appointed Director of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee in 2012, replacing Hu Jintao's confidant Ling Jihua 令计划.

Yang Zhenwu 杨振武, who served as president of the *People's Daily* from 2014 to 2018, the official newspaper of the CCP, is another important protégé of Xi from his Zhengding years.

Yang was a *People's Daily* reporter stationed in Hebei Province and first met Xi in Zhengding in the early 1980s. It was reported that Yang wrote some articles showing Xi to be a highly effective local leader. Yang's career promotions seemed to parallel Xi's own consolidation of power. After Xi became a Politburo Standing Committee member in 2007, Yang was appointed Standing Committee member and Director of the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. In 2014, he was made president of the *People's Daily*, becoming Xi's point man on propaganda and media, especially in domestic affairs.

Name	Previous position in Hebei	Current position
Li Zhanshu 栗战书	Colleague of Xi in Hebei (Wuji County Party Secretary)	Current outgoing (10th) Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
Yang Zhenwu 杨振武	<i>People's Daily</i> reporter in Hebei who wrote feature stories about Xi	Secretary-General of the 13th National People's Congress (since 2018); President of the <i>People's Daily</i> (2014-2018)

Fujian Clique

The Fujian Clique, or the Minjiang New Army (岷江新军 *Minjiang xinjun*), is dominated by officials who once worked in Fuzhou City or Fujian Province and were promoted by Xi Jinping after he became General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee. The term *Minjiang* is a reference to the Min River, which is the most important river in Fujian Province and one of the symbols of Fuzhou City.

Xi has spent about 17 years of his career in Fujian (1985-2002) where he steadily moved up the political hierarchy. He has served as the Deputy Mayor of Xiamen, Secretary of the Ningde District Committee, Secretary of the Fuzhou Municipal Committee, full-time Deputy Secretary of the Fujian Provincial Committee, and Governor of Fujian. During his tenure in Fujian, a province that has always played an important role in national security and military affairs due to its proximity to Taiwan, Xi took a number of military positions. For example, from 1999 to 2002 he was the director of the National Defense Mobilization Committee of Fujian Province from 1999 to 2002, while serving primarily as a civilian leader. By doing so, Xi established important relationships with officers who were stationed in the province. Prominent military figures with whom Xi built strong personal ties in Fujian were Zhao Keshi 赵克石, Cai Yingting 蔡英挺, He Weidong 何卫东 and Miao Hua 苗华.

While in Fujian, Xi also developed friendships with several civilian leaders, most prominently with He Lifeng 何立峰, Huang Kunming 黄坤明 and Cai Qi 蔡奇 – all of them have attained key positions under Xi's leadership.

Name	Office held in Fujian	Office held at present
He Lifeng 何立峰	First met Xi in 1985 when he served as Deputy Director of the General Office of Xiamen Municipal Government; Fuzhou Party Secretary	Head of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and member of the Politburo of the CCP; plays great importance in the economic leadership of the country
Huang Kunming 黄坤明	born in Zhejiang; Party Committee Secretary of Yongding County, later its Mayor; worked with Xi both in Fujian and Zhejiang.	Communist Party Secretary of Guangdong province
Wang Xiaohong 王小洪	Served as Deputy Director of the Public Security Bureau of Fuzhou City (1993-98) when Xi Jinping was Municipal Party Secretary and was appointed Henan Vice-Governor in December 2014; was later appointed as Director of the Public Security Bureau of Beijing	Minister of Public Security and Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP
Chen Xi 陈希	born in Fujian; attended Tsinghua University where he became friends with Xi Jinping; known as one of Xi's "iron buddies"	Head of the Organization Department of the CCP and President of the Central Party School
Song Tao 宋涛	Advanced his early career in Fujian; served as Vice-President of Fujian International Trust and Investment Corporation (1997-2000) when Xi was Deputy Party Secretary and later Governor of Fujian	Member of the Ministerial Leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Miao Hua 苗华	born in Fujian; as political commissar of the navy he was based in Xiamen (Fujian) around the same time when Xi served as Deputy Party Secretary of Fujian; during the long period that Miao was stationed there he became close to Xi	Admiral of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy and member of the 19th Central Committee of the CCP
He Weidong 何卫东	born in Fujian; spent his formative years in Fujian	Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (Party Commission: 2022) (is serving alongside Zhang Youxia)
Liang Jianyong 梁健勇	Standing Committee of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee; Director of Publicity Department	Deputy Director and Party Secretary of the Fujian Standing Committee; Chairman of the Provincial Federation of Trade Unions

Deng Weiping 邓卫平	Chief of the Suburb Division of the Bureau of Public Security of Fujian; worked under Xi in the early 1990s in Fuzhou	Retired; Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Public Security (2015)
Tang Dengjie 唐登杰	Governor of Fujian	Minister of Civil Affairs of the PRC
Chen Wenqing 陈文清	Deputy Secretary of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee and Secretary of the Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection; was assigned to work in Fujian after Xi became CCP Party Chief	Chinese Intelligence Office; member of the Politburo; Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission
Yin Li 尹力	Yin had been Fujian Party Secretary (a power base of Xi Jinping); he assigned to work in Fujian after Xi became CCP Party Chief; has close connections with Peng Liyuan	Party Secretary of Beijing (since November 2022)
Pei Jinjia 裴金佳	born in Fujian, Party Secretary of Siming District; later vice mayor of Xiamen	Minister of Veterans Affairs
Ni Yuefeng 倪岳峰	Party Secretary of Fuzhou and Deputy Party Secretary of Fujian	Party Secretary of Hebei
Wang Ning 王宁	Stationed in Zhejiang; developed strong political ties with Xi in Zhejiang; Governor of Fujian (2020)	Communist Party Secretary of Yunnan
Lin Xiangyang 林向阳	served long term in the Fujian Army	General of the PLA
Lin Wu 林武	born in Fujian; acting mayor of Loudi City (2005); CPC Secretary (2008)	Governor of Shanxi province
Weng Zuliang 翁祖亮	born in Fujian; Party Chief of Huangpu District (2013); District Governor of Pudong (2016)	Communist Party Secretary of Pudong New Area (Shanghai's major economic development zone)
Cai Qi 蔡奇	born in Fujian; Deputy Party Secretary and later Mayor of Sanming City (1996); Party Secretary of Taizhou in Zhejiang (2004); worked with Xi Jinping in Zhejiang Province from 2002 to 2007, serving as party secretary and mayor of several counties and cities, while Xi was Zhejiang Party Secretary	First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP and Communist Party Secretary of Beijing; member of the Politburo Standing Committee
Hou Jianguo 侯建国	born in Fujian	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and The World Academy of Sciences

Kong Jun 孔军	Commander of the Eastern Theater Army stationed in Fuzhou	Lieutenant General of the PLA and a delegate to the 13th National People's Congress
Xu Qiling 徐起零	Commander of the Eastern Theater Army stationed in Fuzhou	General of the PLA
Zhang Hongbing 张红兵	Political commissar of the Eastern Theater Army stationed in Fuzhou	General of the PLA
Cai Yingting 蔡英挺	born in Fujian; possibly a "princeling"; advanced his career mainly in the Nanjing Military Region	Former general of the PLA; served as commander of the Nanjing Military Region and president of the PLA Academy of Military Science (until 2017)
Zhao Keshi 赵克石	Advanced his career in the Nanjing Military region; was stationed in Fujian when Xi worked as a municipal and provincial leader	Retired general in the PLA; Director of the Logistic Support Department (2012-2017)
Lei Chunmei 雷春美	Vice-Mayor of Ningde (Fujian) (1988-91), when Xi was Party Secretary of Ningde	Head of the United Front Work Department in Fujian
Liu Cigui 刘赐贵	born in Fujian; advanced his career in Fujian at the time when Xi was a municipal and provincial leader	Communist Party Secretary of Hainan Province

Zhejiang Clique

Xi had served as Party Secretary of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee from November 2002 to March 2007. After he became General Secretary, many of the officials who had worked under or with him have been appointed to party and state leadership positions. Many of these protégés were candidates for the membership on the 19th CCP Central Committee. Therefore, Zhejiang represents one of Xi's major power bases.

Name	Office held in Zhejiang	Office held at present
Li Qiang 李强	born in Zhejiang; Secretary-General of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee; worked directly under Xi from 2004 to 2007	Member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee
Chen Min'er 陈敏尔	born in Zhejiang; advanced his career through positions within the province until 2012 when he was appointed Deputy Secretary and Governor of Guizhou; promoted to Party Secretary of Guizhou in 2015. While he was party boss of the province, Chen also served as director of the Propaganda Department, supposedly providing	Member of the CCP Politburo and Party Secretary of Chongqing

	support for Xi's weekly columns in the <i>Zhejiang Daily</i> .	
Cai Qi 蔡奇	Party Secretary of Quzhou; Party Secretary of Taizhou; Former member of Xi Jinping's Zhejiang Department and Fujian Department	First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP and Communist Party Secretary of Beijing; member of the Politburo Standing Committee
Ying Yong 应勇	President of Zhejiang High Court, Director of Supervision Department (Zhejiang)	Deputy Prosecutor-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate
Zhong Shan 钟山	born in Zhejiang; Vice-Governor of Zhejiang from 2003 to 2008; assisted Xi with foreign trade in Zhejiang	Minister of Commerce (2017-2020)
Zhong Shaojun 钟绍军	Deputy Chief of the Municipal Party General Office (Xi's chief of staff or <i>mishu</i>), followed Xi from Zhejiang to Shanghai	Director of the General Office of the Central Military Commission; Lieutenant General of the PLA (Xi's top aide on military affairs in the CMC General Office)
Luo Huining 骆惠宁	born in Zhejiang; Governor and then Party Secretary of Qinghai province, Party Secretary of Shanxi province	Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong
Xia Baolong 夏宝龙	Vice Mayor of Tianjin; Governor and Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province; worked under Xi for three years in Zhejiang	Vice Chairman of the 13th CPPCC and Director of Hong and Macau Affairs Office
Si Xinliang 斯鑫良	Vice Chairman of the Zhejiang Provincial People's Political Consultative Conference	currently expelled from the CCP (due to the anti-corruption campaign)
Huang Xingguo 黄兴国	worked under then Zhejiang Party Secretary Zhang Dejiang and in 2002 under Xi Jinping	currently expelled from the CCP (due to anti-corruption campaign)
Huang Kunming 黄坤明	Mayor of Huzhou and Party Secretary of Jiaying (Zhejiang province), also a member of the Fujian clique	Party Secretary of Guangdong province
Bayanqolu 巴音朝鲁	Member of the CCYL; Vice-Governor of Zhejiang province in 1990s; Ningbo Party Chief	Communist Party Secretary of Jilin
Lou Yangsheng 楼阳生	born in Zhejiang; served as Party Secretary of Lishui City (Zhejiang) when Xi was Provincial Party Secretary	Party Secretary of Henan province
Li Xi 李希	Director of Shanghai municipality's Organization Department; later Deputy Party Secretary	Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, member of Politburo Standing Committee

Shu Guozeng 舒国增	born in Zhejiang; <i>Mishu</i> (Deputy Office Director) to Xi; also known as Xi’s “facile writer” (笔杆子 <i>biganzi</i>) in Zhejiang; Director of Zhejiang Provincial Government Development and Research Center	Head Discipline Inspection Team of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection
Chen Yixin 陈一新	born in Zhejiang; served as Deputy Secretary-General of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee during Xi’s tenure in Zhejiang	Minister of State Security; Secretary-General of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission
Meng Qingfeng 孟庆丰	Worked under Xi in Zhejiang Province as Vice-Director of the Department of Public Security of the provincial government	Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Public Security Note: During the Chinese stock market crisis in 2015, it was Meng Qingfeng who directed law enforcement officials from the Ministry of Public Security to investigate illegal trading in the China Securities Regulatory Commission.
Shen Haixiong 慎海雄	born in Zhejiang; also known as the “imperial reporter” (御用记者 <i>yuyong jizhe</i>); as a Xinhua reporter based in Zhejiang and Shanghai Shen wrote extensively to promote Xi’s popular image when Xi was in charge of those two places	Deputy Director of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television; alternate member of the 19th CPC Central Committee
Chen Derong 陈德容	born in Zhejiang; former Party Secretary of Wenzhou and Vice-Governor of Zhejiang under Xi’s leadership	President of the state-owned Baosteel Group Corporation (2014)
Gong Zheng 龚正	Former Vice-Governor of Zhejiang under Xi’s leadership	Governor of Shandong

It is significant to point that a large number of Zhejiang officials close to Xi have been picked to staff key Central Leading Groups or Central Commissions such as the Central Leading Group on Comprehensively Deepening Reforms, the Central Leading Group on Finance and Economics and the Central National Security Commission:

Central Leading Group	Zhejiang official
Central Leading Group on Finance and Economics	Former Deputy Secretary-General of the Zhejiang Party Committee Shu Guozeng 舒国增 was Deputy Director of its General Office from 2014 to 2015.

Central National Security Commission	Former Executive Vice-Governor of Zhejiang Cai Qi 蔡奇 was Deputy Director of its General Office
Central LSG for Comprehensively Deepening Reform	Former member of the Standing Committee of the Zhejiang Party Committee and Party Secretary of Wenzhou Chen Yixin 陈一新 was Deputy Director of its Office from 2015 until 2016.

Xi Jinping’s Zhejiang protégés have also been assigned to senior military posts. The best example is Zhong Shaojun 钟绍军, who was a right-hand man to Xi when Zhong served as his chief of staff and deputy chief of the Zhejiang Organization Department. In 2013, Zhong who had no military experience was elevated to Deputy Director of the General Office of the Central Military Commission. The power of this Commission has been immensely raised in the wake of military structural reforms undertaken in late 2015.

Schoolmates and Tsinghua Gang

As shared early life associations are another important element in Xi’s political networking, he has recruited a number of middle school, high school and university classmates to form his inner circle. Xi spent most of his childhood years in an elite academic and residential environment. He received his early education at the Bayi School (八一学校 *bayi xuexiao*), which was located in Beijing’s Haidian District. Some of the schools in the district, especially Beijing No. 101 School and Beijing No. 25 School, were famous for being cradles of “red nobility.” Many princelings attended schools in this district.

Xi attended the prestigious Tsinghua University (1975-1979) as a so-called worker-peasant-soldier student (工农兵学员 *gongningbing xueyuan*). During that time, he introduced his classmate Chen Xi 陈希 to the CCP, and after Xi achieved national power, Chen rose from Party Secretary of Tsinghua University to the leading position of CCP organizational affairs.

Leaders with whom Xi established close ties during his formative and school years are:

Name	School / Tsinghua	Office held at present
Liu He 刘鹤	Beijing No. 101 Middle School (elite middle and high school); “Princeling”	Vice Premier of the PRC, Head of the Financial Stability and Development Committee
Liu Weiping 刘伟平	Beijing No. 25 School; Liu’s father was a PLA General and served as	Governor of Gansu Province

	Vice-Commander of the PLA Air Force; “Princeling”	
Chen Xi 陈希	Xi’s roommate at Tsinghua University in the mid- to late-1970s	Head of the Organization Department of the CCP and President of the Central Party School
Liu Yuan 刘源	Beijing No. 4 High School; Liu and Xi had similar experiences in their formative years and early career; “Princeling”	Retired; Political Commissar of the PLA General Logistics Department (2010-2015)
Chen Jining 陈吉宁	Tsinghua University president	Party Secretary of Shanghai
Hu Heping 胡和平	Communist Party Secretary of Tsinghua University	Communist Party Secretary of Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Shaanxi Clique

The Shaanxi Clique mainly consists of senior cadres who were either born in Shaanxi Province, who spent a significant period of their professional career in the province or who were sent-down there during the late Mao period. Some analysts have used the term “Shaanxi Clique” or “Shaanxi Gang” to highlight the rapid rise of national leaders who have strong ties to Shaanxi.

Xi Jinping’s reliance on his fellow natives of Shaanxi reflects a political norm in Chinese elite politics. Xi has been quite outspoken about his strong affection for Shaanxi. It is not only the native province of his father Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋, but it is also where Xi Jinping himself spent his formative years and launched his own political career. During the Cultural Revolution, millions of urban middle-school students were sent to the countryside (“Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement”), where they worked as farmers and in other manual labor jobs during their adolescent years, becoming known as “sent-down youths.” Xi Jinping’s strong family ties to Shaanxi and his father revolutionary legacy in the region explain why in 1969 young Xi chose Yanchuan County of Shaanxi’s Yan’an prefecture as the location to undertake his “sent-down youth” work. Xi spent almost seven years there as a farmer, serving as the branch party secretary of a local village after 1974.

For Xi, the time in Yan’an as a “sent-down youth” was a “defining experience” and a “turning point” in his life. He was surrounded by fellow Shaanxi natives and was able to develop deep ties to his native region. Moreover, he was particularly grateful for the knowledge, strength, and confidence that his native province instilled in him. It is reported in Chinese media that Xi

has identified himself as a “Yan’an native,” claiming Shaanxi as his “root and base” and Yan’an as his “soul and spirit”.

Name	Position held in Shaanxi	Office held at present
Wang Qishan 王岐山	“Princeling”; “sent-down youth”; Wang was friends with Xi beginning in their youth, they shared a bunk when they were both performing manual labor in Shaanxi province during the Cultural Revolution	Vice President of the PRC
Yu Zhengsheng 俞正声	born in Shaanxi; “Princeling”; Party Secretary of Shanghai (replacing Xi Jinping)	Retired; Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (2013-2018); member of the Politburo Standing Committee (2012-2017)
Li Zhanshu 栗战书	“Princeling”; Head of the Shaanxi Organization Department; colleague of Xi in Hebei	Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress
Li Xi 李希	Party Secretary of Yan’an (Shaanxi) in 2006; worked in Shaanxi for years	Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; member of Politburo Standing Committee
Wang Chen 王晨	He was sent to Shaanxi to perform manual labor during the Cultural Revolution	First-ranked Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress
Zhao Leji 赵乐际	Shaanxi native; went to the countryside to perform manual labor on a commune; served as Party Secretary of Shaanxi province from 2007 to 2012	Zhao is a member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee; between 2017 and 2022, he served as Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection
Hu Heping 胡和平	Governor of Shaanxi (2016-2018)	Communist Party Secretary of Ministry of Culture and Tourism
Wang Dongfeng 王东峰	born in Shaanxi; spent much of his career in Shaanxi province	Communist Party Secretary of Hebei Province
Jing Junhai 景俊海	born in Shaanxi; spent much of his career in Shaanxi province	Governor of Jilin
He Rong 贺荣	Deputy Party Secretary of Shaanxi province (2018-2020)	Deputy Chief Justice and Executive Vice President of the Supreme People’s Court of China
Du Hangwei 杜航伟	Former Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of Shaanxi province	Vice minister of China’s Public Security Bureau
He Yiting 何毅亭	born in Shaanxi; “sent-down youth” during the Cultural	Executive Vice President of the Central Party School

	Revolution; Deputy Chief of the Policy Research Office (2000-2013)	
Liu Xiaojiang 刘晓江	born in Shaanxi; “Princeling”; “sent-down youth”; served in the PLA	Retired; Served as Political Commissar of the PLA Navy (2008-2014)
Chang Wanquan 常万全	Stationed in Shaanxi as an officer for 28 years (1974-2002)	Former Minister of Defense and State Councilor of the PRC; a general in the PLA
Fang Fenghui 房峰辉	born in Shaanxi; stationed in Shaanxi for 35 years (1968-2003)	Chief of Joint Staff (2016-2017); convicted in 2017
Zhang Youxia 张又侠	Shaanxi native; “Princeling”	General in the PLA, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission

The New Shanghai Gang

The “New Shanghai Gang”, also known as the “New Pujiang Army”, includes both persons who are Shanghai natives as well as outsiders who were transferred to the municipality. Since Xi Jinping was party secretary of Shanghai for only eight months (March to October 2007), it did not give him much time to cultivate solid personal ties and he only weakly dominated personnel appointments. While in office, he had to rely on the leadership team that was largely formed by his own mentors, Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong. However, these eight months gave Xi a chance to identify some capable Shanghai leaders to include on his own team in Shanghai and to consider for high-level positions in the future, when he would become a top national leader. Among Shanghai-affiliated cadres who have crossed over to the Xi camp are:

Name	Shanghai background	Office held at present
Wang Huning 王沪宁	born in Shanghai; made significant career advances in Shanghai	Member of the Politburo Standing Committee
Han Zheng 韩正	born in Shanghai and spent much of his career in Shanghai; later Shanghai Mayor	Senior Vice Premier of the State Council; leader of the LSG on Hong Kong and Macau Affairs
Yang Xiaodu 杨晓渡	born in Shanghai; “sent-down youth” in Anhui; served in Shanghai during his early political career; Secretary of Discipline Inspection Commission of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (2012-2014)	Director of the National Supervisory Commission
Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥	Secretary-General of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee; Xi was particularly impressed by Ding’s administrative skills,	Sixth-ranked member of the Politburo Standing Committee; Director of the General Office of the CCP

	political counsel, low profile, and humble personality	
Yang Jiechi 杨洁篪	born in Shanghai; served as the Foreign Minister of China between 2007 and 2013	Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission General Office
Ying Yong 应勇	Director of the Supervision Department of the Zhejiang Municipal Government (2003-06) and president of the Zhejiang Higher People's Court (2005-07); played a key role in advancing Xi's anticorruption efforts in Zhejiang	Deputy Prosecutor-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate
Shen Xiaoming	Vice Mayor of Shanghai (2008); head administrator of the Shanghai Free-Trade Zone (2015)	Party Secretary of Hainan
Wang Wentao 王文涛	Deputy Party Chief and later Governor of Huangpu District (Shanghai)	Minister of Commerce
Zhou Zuyi 周祖翼	Deputy Head of Organization Department of Shanghai Municipal Committee from 2008 until 2011	Minister of human resources and social security
Hou Kai 侯凯	Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection (2013); member of the Standing Committee of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee	Auditor-general of the National Audit Office
Tang Dengjie 唐登杰	born in Shanghai and spend much of his career there; Deputy Mayor of Shanghai (2003)	Minister of Civil Affairs of the PRC
Xu Lin 徐麟	born in Shanghai; Director of the Agriculture Committee of the Shanghai Municipal Government; worked under Xi in Shanghai in 2007	Director of the National Radio and Television Administration
Fang Xinghai 方星海	Director of the Office of Financial Services in the Shanghai Municipal Government; Deputy CEO of the Shanghai Stock Exchange (2001-2015); worked under Xi in Shanghai in 2007 Note: Because of his broad experience and expertise in global finance, Fang plays an important role in China's financial reforms.	Vice-Chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission

Liaoning Clique

This group refers to officials with a background in Liaoning who were promoted to key positions after Xi became general secretary. It is worth mentioning that the outgoing premier of China Li Keqiang 李克强 once served as the party secretary of Liaoning (2004-2007). However, he is regarded as a member of the Communist Youth League Faction rather than the Xi Jinping Faction.

Name	Office held in Liaoning	Office held at present
Sun Chunlan 孙春兰	Deputy Party Chief of Liaoning and President of the Provincial Party School (2001)	Second-ranked Vice Premier of the PRC
Chen Xi 陈希	Deputy Communist Party Secretary of Liaoning (2010)	Head of the Organization Department of the CCP and president of the Central Party School
Li Xi 李希	Communist Party Secretary of Liaoning (2015-2017)	Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; member of the 20th Politburo Standing Committee
Xi Qiliang 许其亮	Commanded the Shenyang Military Region Air Force (1994-2004)	Air Force General in the PLA, Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission
Zhang Youxia 张又侠	Commanded the Shenyang Military Region Air Force (2007-2012)	General in the PLA, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission
Wang Yong 王勇	born in Liaoning	State Councilor
Tang Yijun 唐一军	Governor of Liaoning (2017-2020)	Minister of Justice
Wang Dongming 王东明	born in Liaoning; served as Vice Mayor in several Liaoning counties	Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; Chairman of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions
Liu Ning 刘宁	Governor of Liaoning (2020-2021)	Communist Party Secretary of Guangxi
Yi Lianhong 易练红	Deputy Party Chief of Liaoning (2018)	Communist Party Secretary of Jiangxi
Chen Xiaojiang 陈小江	Secretary of the Liaoning Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection (2016)	Executive Deputy Head of the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the CCP

Guangdong Clique

Many officials with leadership experience in Guangdong, especially in Shenzhen, have been promoted since 2012. Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, was once the first secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee.

Name	Office held in Guangdong	Office held at present
Li Xi 李希	Communist Party Secretary of Guangdong (2017-2022)	Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; member of the 20th Politburo Standing Committee
Li Hongzhong 李鸿忠	spent much of his career in Guangdong province; Mayor and Party Secretary of Shenzhen	Communist Party Secretary of Tianjin; member of the 19th Politburo of the CCP
Liu Kun 刘昆	born in Guangdong and served in various posts in the Office of the Guangdong Provincial Government	Minister of Finance
Ma Xingrui 马兴瑞	Governor of Guangdong (2016-2021); supposedly has connections with Xi Jinping's wife Peng Liyuan.	Party Secretary of Xinjiang; member of the 20th Politburo of the CCP
Xu Qin 许勤	Party Secretary of Shenzhen (2016-2017); Mayor of Shenzhen (2010-2017)	Party Secretary of Heilongjiang
Zheng Yanxiong 郑雁雄	born in Guangdong; Secretary-General of Guangdong Provincial Communist Committee (2018-2020)	Director of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the CPG in the HKSAR

Military Industry Department

The “Military Industry Department”, now a large group on the Politburo, refers to a group of aerospace military industry officials who have been promoted by Xi Jinping since the 18th National Congress of the CCP. Most members have good educational backgrounds (e.g., Ma Xingrui 马兴瑞, Yuan Jiajun 袁家军, Zhang Guoqing 张国清, and Li Ganjie 李干杰), having been trained as aerospace, nuclear, or military-weapon engineers and having risen within the military-industrial sector to leadership positions of major state-owned, military-industrial corporations, and then transferred to the party-state’s provincial administrative posts. In the bigger picture, the rise of this group is seemingly indicative of Xi’s new strategy of economic and technological development, with an emphasis on state capacity in promoting technological progress and a reduction in the weight of the private sector in the Chinese economy.

Name	Military/industrial position	Office held at present
Wang Yong 王勇	Previously worked in the Aerospace System	State Councilor
Ma Xingrui 马兴瑞	General manager of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation; Director of the China	Party Secretary of Xinjiang; member of the Politburo of the CCP

	National Space Administration; chief commander of Chang'e 3 (China's first lunar exploration mission) Connections with Peng Liyuan.	
Xu Dazhe 许达哲	began his career in the Ministry of Aerospace Industry	CPC Secretary of Hunan province (until 2021)
Chen Qiufa 陈求发	Director of the China National Space Administration (2010-2013)	Communist Party Secretary of Liaoning
Yuan Jiajun 袁家军	Chief of the Shenzhou program, or Project 921, which carried the first Chinese man into space	Party Secretary of Zhejiang
Zhang Guoqing 张国清	worked at China North Industries Group Corporation Limited (military supplier)	CPC Secretary of Liaoning; member of the Politburo of the CCP
Li Ganjie 李干杰	Head of the National Nuclear Safety Administration	Party Secretary of Shandong province, member of the Politburo of the CCP
Zhang Qingwei 张庆伟	President of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation; Chairman of Comac (an aerospace manufacturer)	Party Secretary of Hunan
Huai Jinpeng 怀进鹏	President of Beihang University (Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics)	Minister of Education of the PRC
Tang Dengjie 唐登杰	Head of the China National Space Administration	Minister of Civil Affairs of the PRC
Huang Qiang 黄强	Deputy Director of the State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (2008-2014)	Governor of Sichuan Province
Jin Zhuanglong 金壮龙	Chairman and Party Secretary of the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China Ltd.	Minister of Industry and Information Technology
Yuan Jiajun	Yuan acted as vice-president of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation and was involved in the Lunar mission and the joint Chinese-Russian mission to explore Mars	Party Secretary of Chongqing (since 2022)
Liu Guozhong	Liu does not have much experience in running a huge military-industrial corporation, but he was trained as a military-industrial engineer	Party Secretary of Shaanxi (2020-2022)

“Central Party School Group”

Shi Taifeng 石泰峰 (current Head of the United Front Work Department) and Li Shulei 李书磊 (current Head of the CPC Central Committee’s Publicity’s Department) worked together with Xi Jinping at the Central Party School for many years and both are alumni of the Peking University. There are various signs that it was this time that they gained Xi’s trust. He Yiting 何毅亭 (currently is the executive vice president of the Central Party School) and Chen Xi (currently president of the Central Party School) also can be included in this group.

“Security Sector Group”

A noticeable feature of the new Politburo is the extraordinary weight of members who either had experience or currently have responsibilities in the security sector. Such leaders include: Chen Wenqing 陈文清 (former Minister of State Security, current Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission) who is in charge of law enforcement; Liu Jinguo 刘金国 (earlier career in the Ministry of Public Security, now a new member of the Central Secretariat); and Wang Xiaohong 王小洪 (currently Minister of Public Security and China’s chief of police).

“Peng Liyuan Group”

Both Yin Li 尹力 (current Party Secretary of Beijing) and Ma Xingrui 马兴瑞 (current Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Committee of the CCP) have connections with Peng, and their promotions may be partly attributed to such relations.

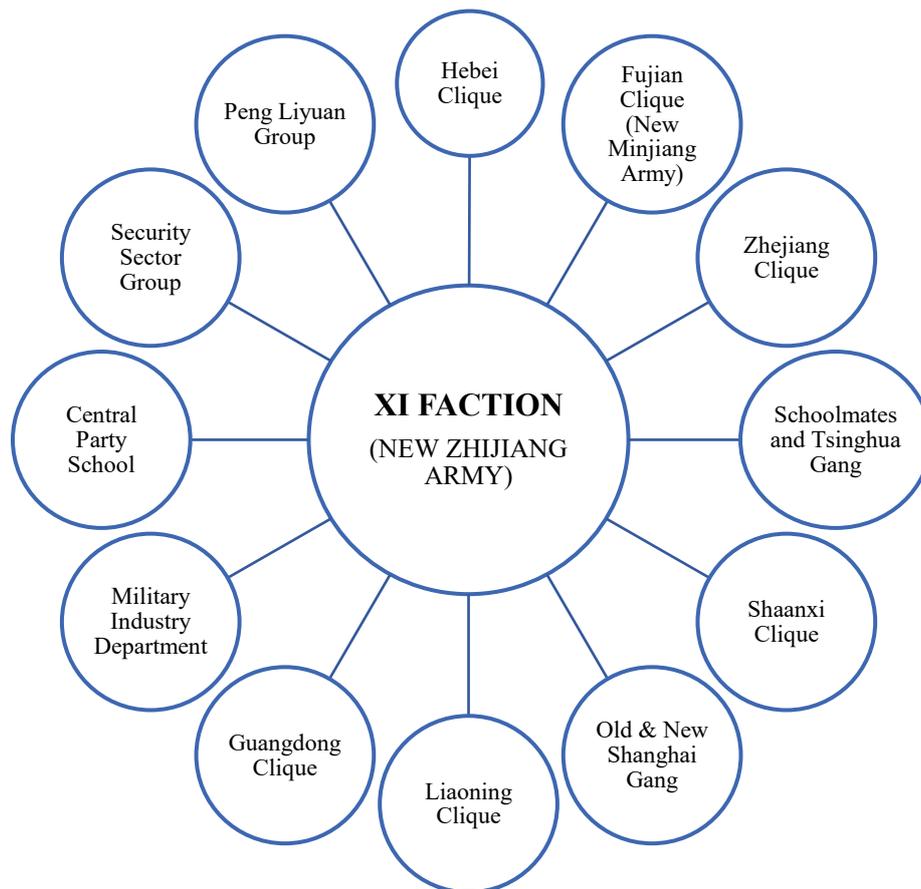


Fig. 2: Cliques and sub-groups of the Xi Jinping Faction.

Interim Conclusion

This study has identified twelve groups that have produced the political starts in Xi Jinping's China. Members of all twelve groups are closely connected to Xi during various stages of his life experiences prior to his rise to national power – this suggests that elites emerge in CCP politics due to their patronage relationships with the supreme leaders.

The following observations can be made. First, through native-place associations (Shaanxi), family connections, school ties, and broad local and professional leadership experience in several provinces, Xi has cultivated a large network of political protégés in the civilian and military leaderships. These protégés are well positioned at both the national and provincial levels. Most of the friendships can be traced back to Xi's adolescent and formative years (most notably Wang Qishan 王岐山), and these friends are more trustworthy than political allies who formed connections with Xi mainly based on shared factional association. The support and loyalty of Xi's inner circle have been crucial to his rise to power.

Second, since becoming general secretary of the CCP in 2012, Xi has appointed his protégés and friends to important leadership positions. Some of them were even promoted twice

within two years (for example, Cai Qi 蔡奇), which is a case out of step with the CCP norm and regulation that leaders should work at one level of leadership for a minimum of two years before being promoted. The quick promotions might have helped Xi form his circle to carry out important policy initiatives in a timely manner.

Third, Xi's team consists of leaders with different expertise and leadership skills. Members of Xi's inner circle have occupied relevant leadership positions in different areas: Party discipline, party operation, party organization, propaganda, economics, foreign affairs, state security, legislation, and the party's united front work. It is essential for leaders to maintain strong ties with their geographical power base in order to consolidate their power and influence in Beijing. This is due to the growing importance of political power and economic interests in provincial-level administrations. Moreover, the members of Xi's inner circle also differ greatly when it comes to personality, education, occupational background, and policy preferences. A notable common characteristic of Xi's inner circle is the fact that many are princelings – for example, Wang Qishan 王岐山, Yu Zhengsheng 俞正声; Li Zhanshu 栗战书, Zhang Youxia 张又侠, Liu He 刘鹤, Liu Yuan 刘源, Liu Xiaojiang 刘晓江, and Liu Weiping 刘伟平.

Fourth, there is overlap among the various groups which can further complicate the factional landscape. However, even though they can all be considered Xi's men, they are members of different sub-Xi groups or cliques in terms of shared identities, similar experiences, related career paths, and thus they provide a solid base for political faction-building.

4. Discussion

Summary: Emergence and Rise of the Xi Faction

Interestingly, it has been suggested by many studies that dominant factions are rare in the CCP. For instance, Andrew Nathan argued that it is unlikely that a dominant faction would emerge, because other factions would join forces against it. The balancing of power is only possible when there are several reasonably strong factions. If there are only two strong factions competing with each other, there is low possibility for either to form an alliance. In one faction fails to do internal balancing, is it possible that a dominant faction would emerge.

When Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, there were only two main rival factions, namely the Shanghai Faction and the CCYL Faction. When Xi first took position of CCP General Secretary, he had the backing of the Shanghai Faction which helped him gain influence on the Standing Committee – these are favorable conditions which have provided Xi with an opening to build up his own faction quickly.

Another relevant factor that helped Xi to strengthen his own faction and weaken his rivals' factions was the massive anti-corruption campaign (反腐败工作 *fan fubai gongzuo*). It targeted both “tiger” (high-level officials) and “flies” (lower-level officials). Intimidating high-ranking leaders with the possible threat of corruption charges probably helped Xi to undermine opposition to his power consolidation. Also, the anti-corruption drive resulted in the purging of members from both the Shanghai and the CCYL factions, as well as the military.

What may also have facilitated the rise of the Xi faction was the launching of the massive “poverty alleviation” program (精准扶贫 *jing zhun fu pin*) that aimed to lift 40 million Chinese out of poverty – it reflected Xi’s attempt to reduce the power and the role of CCYL as representatives of the hinterland Chinese provinces and their population. CCYL’s mass politics was then attacked for his supposedly elite politics and institutions. As a result, many of the provincial positions occupied by CCYL members had been replaced by Xi’s own protégés. Consequently, the presence of both the Shanghai Gang and the CCYL at the Politburo Standing Committee, Politburo and the Central Committee had been reduced. This marked the emergence of a dominant faction under the patronage of Xi.

On the one hand, the composition and inner workings of this new faction are quite similar to the previous two dominant factions. The members of the Xi Faction are essentially officials who have had professional, educational, or personal connection with Xi. On the other hand, the rise of the Xi Faction has meant a shift in the factional dynamics, specifically resulting in the weakening of the power-sharing arrangements between Chinese factions. Moreover, the idea of collective leadership has been watered down. Xi’s faction enjoys majority at all significant decision-making levels, and the two rival factions are unable to balance its power.

Over the past few years, most major provincial and central positions in China have been filled by either Xi’s protégés or protégés of his loyal men. By appointing his protégés across key cities and provinces – such as Tianjin, Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Guangzhou – Xi made sure that the future leadership of bodies like the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee would be ruled by members of his own faction, thus further limiting the role of the previous two dominant factions.

Findings: Dynamics of CCP Leadership After the 20th National Congress of the CCP

In the attachments of this study is an overview of the new Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee members, containing brief bios of each member and how they are connected to Xi Jinping. The composition of the new leadership shows that as a result of the 20th National Congress, Xi Jinping’s loyalists have filled all the vacancies on the Politburo and

the Politburo Standing Committee. The same goes for the Central Secretariat, the Central Military Commission, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and all subnational leadership nationwide. At the same time, the protégés of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have been pushed into retirement or excluded from the redistribution of top-level power. With the retirement of Li Keqiang 李克强 and Wang Yang 汪洋 from the 20th Politburo, Hu Jintao's faction, mainly consisting of those with Communist Youth League backgrounds, has now left centerstage. The legacy of Jiang Zemin on the 20th Politburo seems a bit stronger than that of Hu Jintao since a number of the current top leaders, including Wang Huning 王沪宁 and Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥, made significant career advances in Shanghai (Jiang's major power base). Since Xi's coming to power, however, Wang Huning has also won Xi's trust and Ding Xuexiang, who worked as Xi's chief of staff during the past decade, has also thrived politically under Xi's patronage. Therefore, there may be a Shanghai Gang in the current leadership, but it is a new Shanghai Gang that is to be distinguished from the old Shanghai Gang.

With Xi Jinping now having established domination over the CCP central leadership, it can be said that the old era of factional politics has come to an end and a new era of factional politics is unfolding. Xi's status and authority as top leader is unlikely to meet any challenges from within high-ranking CCP cadres. In his article "New Faces of Leaders, New Factional Dynamics: CCP Leadership Politics Following the 20th Party Congress", Guoguang Wu³ describes Xi Jinping's overwhelming dominance of the CCP leadership and comes to the following conclusion:

"As Xi emphasizes 'struggle' to achieve the goals that the 20th Party Congress has formulated for the CCP and China, "struggle" will also take place among his own men. This is inevitable due to many significant reasons, especially those embedded in the political, administrative, and institutional nature of the regime and in the forthcoming generational change and power succession. [...] In fact, in arranging the current leadership, Xi has already intentionally made use of such factional differences to strengthen his control over these powerful leaders, and, in particular, to avoid any one of them of becoming sufficiently powerful that they might undermine his rule. This dynamic will continue as new leaders in future job assignments will need to build up their own teams to implement Xi's policies. In the long term, perhaps even beyond five years, these sub-Xi factions that will become involved in relatively moderate competition over the short term might well become engaged in tense struggles in preparation for a post-Xi power transition" (Guoguang Wu 2022).

Hence, multi-faceted relationships to secure one's own power remains a basic constant for Xi. This internal balancing and multiple hedging will have to be constantly negotiated by Xi. This study has shown this with the intricate analysis of the factions; above all, it is immensely important for Xi's power context that there are a multitude of factions that also balance each

³ Senior Research Scholar at the Center on China's Economy and Institutions, Stanford University

other out. It is therefore also clear that the Xi faction consists of several sub-factions that provide a kind of "check-and-balances". Only certain economic, cultural or social factors need to change, and a monolithic led faction would be much more prone to fractures and splits. This danger is present in the current context of Xi's power politics, especially when new rivalries within his faction can already become dominant in the medium term.

Strategic Outlook: Policy Implications of the Composition of Politburo Standing Committee and Politburo

The membership and composition of the new Politburo Standing Committee and Politburo on 23 October 2022 is certain to condition policy implementation and ideological/political correctness of the CCP. Most importantly, these leadership bodies ensure that Xi's vision for China remains the guiding principle at least for the next five years.

The new Politburo Standing Committee and Politburo are stacked with Xi's loyalists, members of the Party who have worked with Xi in the past and have a track record of loyalty to him. Worth mentioning is Li Qiang 李强, the candidate for premier, who worked with Xi in Zhejiang as his chief of staff between 2004 and 2007, and demonstrated loyalty through his implementation of the zero-COVID policy in Shanghai. He is expected to take Li Keqiang's position as Premier in March 2023, even though he lacks national level leadership credentials – this may put him firmly under the control of Xi. Although Li Qiang does have a record of developing coastal regions through economic openness and reform – for example, in Shanghai, he established the Shanghai Stock Exchange's Science and Technology Innovation Board, oversaw the construction of the Tesla Gigafactory and helped implement the "Characteristic Town" (特色小镇) platform – his influence on long-term economic policy will be limited, further weakening the role of Premier under Xi. Le's example demonstrates that Xi involves personalities with other policy outlooks⁴ and yet position them in historically strategic important roles. Nevertheless, Le's engagement is a rare example, but it also shows that Xi needs to operate with a certain foresight in order to reposition himself situationally in factional politics. Economic openness and reforms are not Xi's focus at all, but should be considered within the vain of a holistic approach in terms of content and personnel. Operating with options is a hallmark of Xi's hold on power.

⁴ The main goal of Xi's economic policy is rather economic nationalism, including his security-focused "self-reliance" policies.

The appointments of Li Xi 李希, Cai Qi 蔡奇 and Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥 reveal the primacy of personal relationships with Xi Jinping over the factors in determining political promotions. Their high-profile responsibilities reveal their proximity to Xi, for example, Cai Qi is credited with the establishment of Xiong'an special economic zone and was responsible for hosting the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Based on the age restriction of 69, it was expected that 11 Politburo members would be retiring from the 19th Politburo. 10 of these retired with the exception of Zhang Youxia 张又侠 (72). However, four other members – Li Keqiang 李克强, Wang Yang 汪洋, Hu Chunhua 胡春华 and Chen Quanguo 陈全国 – were removed from the Politburo despite not reaching the age limit. This is very likely due to their connection with the Communist Youth League. Moreover, Zhang Youxia (72) Wang Yi 王毅 (69) have retained their positions in the Politburo. Wang Yi, China's Foreign minister, is almost certain to replace Yang Jiechi 杨洁篪 as the Director of Central Foreign Affairs Commission, the highest diplomatic position in China. The appointments show that the age limit norm has been selectively applied. From a policy perspective, leadership turnover at the 20th National Party Congress suggests that China's defense and foreign policy will seek continuity while cultivating the potential to become sharper and more assertive in the coming years. In the case of military policy, the appointment of He Weidong 何卫东, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, who has previous experience as Commander of Western (2016-2019) and Eastern Theater Commands (2019-2022), highlights the PLA's emphasis on Taiwan and India policy. With He Weidong but also with Miao Hua, two members have been promoted to the PLA leadership who have operational experience in China's Eastern Theatre Command, which also geographically includes Taiwan. This is also the case of Liu Zhenli and Zhang Youxia, two veterans with experience both on the border with India and the Taiwan-focused Eastern Theater Command. Two strategic regions where supply chains can be geopolitically and -economically crucial.

Therefore, and in the vain of Beijing's "active defense" strategy, the military option can be read as part of China's Taiwan plan. But also more generally, the conception of active defense emphasizes a holistic security conception including foreign policies, internal security politics but also science and "fortress economy", supply chain rationalities and integral intelligence and military approaches. Hence, economic development must be in "coordination" with security issues. The military reforms reflect very much the emphasizes on the active defense doctrine: more joint-concepts, innovative combination of intelligence, space, cyber and

psychological warfare with PLA's Strategic Support Force and the inclusion of the three warfares (media, psychological and legal). In that sense it is telling that Li Shangfu, a Chinese aerospace engineer and former commander of the China Manned Space Program, Zhang Shengmin, general of the PLA Rocket Force and Admiral Miao Hua, Director of the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission, have been appointed to the Central Military Commission. Also, the Politburo has been updated its personnel with people from the defense industry and/or military-science complex. The party congress demonstrated a clear prioritization of security concerns, including and elevating Foreign Minister Wang Yi to the Politburo. This reflects Xi's concerns about a more geopolitical competitive environment and the need to maintain security and stability within the region.

Chen Wenqing affiliated with the Ministry of State Security (MSS, China's foreign intelligence service) and also newly appointed to the Politburo, could run the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLAC). This very appointment is most properly the most interestingly one. The CPLAC is the most important internal-focused security body which would be run by a MSS officer for the first time in history.

Hence, Xi's report reflects the security dimension very well: "State security is the foundation for the rejuvenation of the nation," and "national security must be implemented in every aspect and in the entire process of the party-state's work." (Guoguang Wu 2022).

Technocrats form an integral part of the Politburo as seven out of 24 members have an education in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields. This signifies that Xi believes in technical experts to carry out China's policies aimed at achieving self-reliance. Two of these technocrats – Ma Xingrui 马兴瑞 and Yuan Jiajun 袁家军 have aerospace expertise while Li Ganjie 李干杰 and Chen Jining 陈吉宁 are environment experts. Other technocrats come from health, manufacturing, and trade sectors, implying Xi's priority areas in the coming years. Hence, state-related business and technology including research is emphasized. Space has therefore a special meaning: "Solar Silk Road", technological supremacy through space economy and also through basic research are fundamental. Consequently, research and technology development are closely coupled with the economy and also embedded in party and the state apparatus.

In terms of China's economic policies, it is possible that the zero-covid policy will continue to hamper economic recovery. Moreover, China's current economy team members –Premier Li Keqiang and four Vice-Premiers, People's Bank of China Governor Yi Gang 易纲 and banker/financial regulator Guo Shuqing 郭树清 – all have been excluded from Politburo membership. Members of the new economy team are certain to demonstrate their commitment to Xi's economic ideology and can be expected to make policy changes based on Xi's economic preferences. Consolidation is also occurring in the media, where the Princeling-faction is strong and media companies by other factions are being nationalized.

The old Shanghai Faction was one of the three central factions. It has been somewhat transformed into the new Shanghai Faction. It seems that in the old faction, the lower economic circles were still supported. There are important industries and sectors represented. In particular, the real estate industry is part of it, which is expected to be nationalized. The current crises in this industry, could play Xi into the hands. Here Xi's clever playing off of factions flashes again. Once supported by the Shanghai faction, he needs its stumbling to gain situational and opportunistic capital for his own agenda.

In conclusion, Xi's new leadership team underlines the importance of having a personal or professional relationship with Xi Jinping in the past. It enhances prospects for promotion and assures Xi of loyalty, reliability, and competence. Although Xi Jinping runs the risk of surrounding himself with yes-men, the new leadership team confirms Xi's complete control over the Party which will have far-reaching implications on China's policymaking in the next years.

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Members of the 20th Politburo Standing Committee (PSC)

No.	Photo	Information / Personal Details	Principal Positions	Faction / Background
1st		<p>Xi Jinping 习近平</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: June 1953 in Beijing; native of Fuping County (Shaanxi Province) • CCP member since: 1974 • PSC member since: 22 October 2007 • Studied at Tsinghua University as a “worker-peasant-soldier student” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Secretary of the CCP • Chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission • President of the PRC • Chairman of the PRC Central Military Commission • 1979-1982: Working as a <i>mishu</i> for Minister of Defense Geng Biao in the early years of the Deng Xiaoping era • 1982-1985: County leader in Zhengding county, Hebei • 1985-2002: Leader in Xiamen, Ningde, Fuzhou, Fujian • 2002-2007: Governor and Party Secretary of Zhejiang • 2007: Party Secretary of Shanghai 	<p>Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Xi served as Party Secretary of Shanghai from March to October 2007. At that time, Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong were his mentors. With the support from leaders like Jiang (key figure of the Shanghai Gang), Xi assumed the party’s top position in 2012.</p> <p>Princelings 太子党: Xi is the son of Xi Zhongxun, former Vice Premier and former Politburo member. Xi is supported by the “second red generation”.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 Xi worked in provinces such as Hebei, Fujian, Zhejiang and Shanghai, and relies on the relationships he established during these postings. Moreover, he reuses longtime friends formed through school ties and native-place associations from Shaanxi province to form his own faction.</p>

<p>2nd</p>		<p>Li Qiang 李强</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: July 1959 in Rui'an City (Zhejiang Province) • CCP member since: 1983 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Alma mater: Zhejiang Wanli University; China Sociology Correspondence University; Zhejiang University; Central Party School; Hong Kong Polytechnic University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee of the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee • Communist Party Secretary of Shanghai (2017-2022) • Communist Party Secretary of Jiangsu (2016-2017) • Zhejiang Governor (2012-2016) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / New Zhijiang Army and Zhejiang Clique:</p> <p>Li worked directly under Xi from 2004 to 2007 as his trusted Secretary-General of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee. Back then, the future president was Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province (2002-2007). In 2016, Li was transferred from Zhejiang to Jiangsu Province to address rampant corruption as Party Secretary. Li is a typical member of the New Zhijiang Army and Zhejiang Clique – officials who were close to Xi during his time in Zhejiang.</p>
<p>3rd</p>		<p>Zhao Leji 赵乐际</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: March 1957 in Xining (Qinghai Province); Shaanxi native • CCP member since: 1975 • PSC member since: 25 October 2017 • Studied philosophy at Peking University (1977-1980) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (2017-2022) • Head of the Organization Department of the CCP (2012-2017) • Party Secretary of Shaanxi (2007-2012) 	<p>CCYL Faction</p> <p>Zhao Leji is related to the CCYL Faction: Between 1980 and 1983 he held various positions within the Qinghai Provincial Commerce School, including Secretary of the CCYL. But his major career advancements occurred during the Jiang Zemin era, and he obviously successfully cultivated connections with Xi Jinping.</p>

				<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Shaanxi Clique: Like Xi Jinping, Zhao Leji has a strong Shaanxi connection. Zhao served as Party Secretary of Shaanxi (2007-2012) – Xi Jinping’s ancestral home – and developed close relations with Xi’s family. As head of the Organization Department, Zhao has helped appoint Xi allies to top positions in important locations, such as Beijing and Chongqing.</p>
<p>4th</p>		<p>Wang Huning 王沪宁</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1955 in Shanghai; native of Laizhou (Shandong Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • PSC member since: 25 October 2017 • Graduated from the Department of International Politics of Fudan University • Studied in the U.S. • Former professor at Fudan University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP (2017-2022) • Chairman of the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization • Director of the Central Policy Research Office (2002-2020) • Dean of the Fudan University Law School (1994-1995) • Chairman of the Department of International Politics (1989-1994) 	<p>Old Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Wang was recruited into the party by Jiang Zemin’s Shanghai Gang. He made significant career advances in Shanghai, Jiang’s major power base.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / New Shanghai Gang: When Xi Jinping was serving as Party Secretary of Shanghai in 2007, he identified Wang as a capable Shanghai leader to include in his faction.</p> <p>Wang Huning is the brain of Xi’s administration and accompanies</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advised three presidents on foreign policy – Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping 		<p>him on almost all overseas trips. Wang is responsible for overall policy, including diplomacy and security, as Director of the Central Policy Research Office.</p>
5th		<p>Cai Qi 蔡奇</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born: December 1955 in Youxi County (Fujian Province) CCP member since: 1975 PSC member since: 23 October 2022 Graduated from Fujian Normal University, majored in Political Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP (since 2022) Party Secretary of Beijing (2017-2022) Mayor of Beijing (2016-2017) President of the Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (2018-2022) Chair of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (2017-2022) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Fujian Clique, Zhejiang Clique and New Zhijiang Army: Xi Jinping spent more than 17 years of his career in Fujian (1985-2002). During this time, he developed a close friendship with Cai Qi. Cai gained Xi’s trust as his subordinate in Zhejiang Province (position: Deputy Director of the office of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee and Secretary of Sanming City) and was later promoted to Deputy Director of the General Office for the National Security Commission, Mayor of Beijing and Party Secretary of the capital. Cai is a significant former member of Xi Jinping’s Zhejiang Department and Fujian Department.</p>

<p>6th</p>		<p>Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: September 1962 in Nantong City (Jiangsu Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Graduated from Northeast Heavy Machinery Institute (Yanshan University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of the General Office of the CCP (since 2017) • Director of the General Secretary Office of the CCP (since 2013) • Secretary of Political and Law Commission (2012-2013) • Chief-of-Staff of the Municipal Party Committee (2007-2012) 	<p>Old Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Ding made significant career advances in Shanghai, Jiang's major power base.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / New Zhejiang Army and New Shanghai Gang: Ding Xuexiang has been one of Xi Jinping's closest allies as Director of the General Secretary Office (chief of staff). Under Xi's patronage, he has thrived politically.</p> <p>Alongside Chen Min'er, Ding is viewed as among Xi's favorite protégés.</p>
<p>7th</p>		<p>Li Xi 李希</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1956 in Liangdang County (Gansu Province) • CCP member since: 1982 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Graduated from Northwest Normal University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (since 2022) • Communist Party Secretary of Guangdong (2017-2022) • Communist Party Secretary of Liaoning (2015-2017) • Governor of Liaoning (2014-2015) • Director of the Organization Department (2011-2013) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Zhejiang Clique, Shaanxi Clique, Liaoning Clique and Guangdong Clique: Li Xi spent many years working in Shaanxi Province and is seen as a member of the Shaanxi Clique close to Xi Jinping. In 2011, he was transferred to Shanghai, and in 2014, back Liaoning Province, where Li Keqiang used to serve as Party Secretary from 2004 to 2007. In Liaoning, Li Xi addressed the</p>

				<p>problem of the province's economic data manipulation. Some experts interpreted this as an attempt to check the influence of the CCYL faction – Li Keqiang's power base.</p> <p>Ties between Li and Xi is believed to span over 40 years through connections between Li's former patron and Xi's father in Gansu.</p>
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Members of the 20th Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party

Photo	Information / Personal Details	Principal Positions	Faction / Connection with Xi
	<p>Ding Xuexiang 丁薛祥</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: September 1962 in Nantong City (Jiangsu Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Graduated from Northeast Heavy Machinery Institute (Yanshan University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of the General Office of the CCP (since 2017) • Director of the General Secretary Office of the CCP (since 2013) • Secretary of Political and Law Commission (2012-2013) • Chief-of-Staff of the Municipal Party Committee (2007-2012) • Politburo Standing Committee member 	<p>Old Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Ding Xuexiang made significant career advances in Shanghai, Jiang’s major power base.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / New Zhijiang Army and New Shanghai Gang: Ding Xuexiang has been one of Xi Jinping’s closest allies as Director of the General Secretary Office. When Xi was serving as Party Secretary of Shanghai in 2007, Ding served as Secretary General of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. Under Xi’s patronage, he has thrived politically.</p> <p>Alongside Chen Min’er, Ding is viewed as among Xi’s favorite protégés.</p>

	<p>Xi Jinping 习近平</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: June 1953 in Beijing; native of Fuping County (Shaanxi Province) • CCP member since: 1974 • PSC member since: 22 October 2007 • Studied at Tsinghua University as a “worker-peasant-soldier student” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Secretary of the CCP • Chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission • President of the PRC • Chairman of the PRC Central Military Commission • 1979-1982: Working as a <i>mishu</i> for Minister of Defense Geng Biao in the early years of the Deng Xiaoping era • 1982-1985: County leader in Zhengding county, Hebei • 1985-2002: Leader in Xiamen, Ningde, Fuzhou, Fujian • 2002-2007: Governor and Party Secretary of Zhejiang • 2007: Party Secretary of Shanghai 	<p>Old Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Xi served as Party Secretary of Shanghai from March to October 2007. Back then, Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong were his mentors. With the support from leaders like Jiang (key figure of the Old Shanghai Gang), Xi assumed the party’s top position in 2012.</p> <p>Princelings 太子党: Xi is the son of Xi Zhongxun, former Vice Premier and former Politburo member. Xi is supported by the “second red generation”.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 Xi worked in provinces such as Hebei, Fujian, Zhejiang, and Shanghai, and relies on the relationships he established during these postings. Moreover, he reuses longtime friends formed through school ties and native-place associations from Shaanxi province to form his own faction.</p>
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	<p>Ma Xingrui 马兴瑞</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1959 in Shuangyashan (Heilongjiang Province) Shandong native • CCP member since: 1988 • Full member of the Central Committee of the CCP since: 2017 • Graduated from Liaoning Technical University, Tianjin University, and Harbin Institute of Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Committee of the CCP (2021-present) • First Political Committee Member of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) (2021-present) • First Secretary of the Committee of the XPCC (2021-present) • Governor of Guangdong (2016-2021) • Party Secretary of Shenzhen (2015-2016) • Director of the China National Space Administration (2013); Chief commander of Chang'e 3 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Guangdong Clique and Military Industry Department:</p> <p>Ma Xingrui is among the officials with leadership experience in Guangdong and Shenzhen who have been promoted by Xi Jinping.</p> <p>Ma's strategic emphasis on China's space development enabled his political ascendance. Xi Jinping has long advocated prioritizing China's space program – 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. This is the reason why Xi promoted leaders from the aerospace industry.</p> <p>Part of the “Cosmos club” of aerospace technocrats favored by Xi.</p> <p>Ma is also said to have established close connections with Peng Liyuan (彭丽媛), Xi's wife, at some stage of his career.</p>
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	<p>Wang Yi 王毅</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1953 in Beijing • CCP member since: 1981 • Full member of the Central Committee since: 21 October 2007 • Graduated from Beijing International Studies University and China Foreign Affairs University • Fluent in English and Japanese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Councilor of the PRC (2018-present) • Minister of Foreign Affairs (2012-present) • Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office (2008-2013) • Chinese Ambassador to Japan (2004-2007) 	<p>Does not have long-term Xi ties.</p> <p>Wang Yi has made huge efforts in recent years to demonstrate his loyalty to Xi, and now he has been rewarded by his appointment to the Politburo as a veteran diplomat.</p> <p>Family background: Wang Yi married into China's foreign policy aristocracy. Wang's father-in-law, Qian Jiadong, had been one of Zhou Enlai's top aides and China's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.</p>
	<p>Wang Huning 王沪宁</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1955 in Shanghai; native of Laizhou (Shandong Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • PSC member since: 25 October 2017 • Graduated from the Department of International Politics of Fudan University • Studied in the U.S. • Former professor at Fudan University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP (2017-2022) • Chairman of the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization • Director of the Central Policy Research Office (2002-2020) • Dean of the Fudan University Law School (1994-1995) • Chairman of the Department of International Politics (1989-1994) 	<p>Old Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Wang was recruited into the party by Jiang Zemin's Shanghai Gang. He made significant career advances in Shanghai, Jiang's major power base.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / New Shanghai Gang: When Xi Jinping was serving as Party Secretary of Shanghai in 2007, he identified Wang as a capable Shanghai leader to include in his faction.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advised three presidents on foreign policy – Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politburo Standing Committee member 	<p>Wang Huning is the brain of Xi’s administration and accompanies him on almost all overseas trips. He is believed to have helped developing key concepts such as Xi Jinping Thought, Chinese Dream and the Belt and Road Initiative. Wang is responsible for overall policy, including diplomacy and security, as Director of the Central Policy Research Office.</p>
	<p>Yin Li 尹力</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: August 1962 in Linyi County (Shandong Province) • CCP member since: 1983 • Graduated from Shandong Medical University and from Former Soviet Union Social Health Economics and Health Business Management Institute • Full member of the Central Committee since: 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Beijing (since November 2022) • Party Secretary of Fujian (2020-2022) • Governor of Sichuan (2016-2020) • Director of the State Food and Drug Administration (2012-2013) • Vice Minister of Health Ministry (2008-2012) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Fujian Clique: Yin had been Fujian Party Secretary, a power base of Xi Jinping.</p> <p>Yin Li is a former public health official with diverse international experience before entering government. A technocrat promoted by Xi Jinping.</p> <p>Access to Xi Jinping: Yin Li is said to have established close connections with Peng Liyuan (彭丽媛), Xi’s wife, at some stage of his career.</p>

	<p>Shi Taifeng 石泰峰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: September 1956 in Yushe County (Shanxi Province) • CCP member since: 1982 • Graduated from the Law Department of Peking University (classmates with Li Keqiang) • Sent-down youth during the Cultural Revolution • Alternate member of the 18th and 19th Central Committee of the CCP • Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee • Member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee (since 2022) • President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (since 2022) • Vice-chairman of the Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee of the National People's Congress • President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences • Party Secretary of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (2019-2022) • Party Secretary of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (2017-2019) • Governor of Jiangsu (2015-2017) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Central Party School: Shi Taifeng was once Xi Jinping's deputy at the Central Party School. He has served in the Party School for 25 years, worked with Hu Jintao for 10 years and Xi Jinping for 3 years. He was directly subordinate to Hu and Xi at the Central Party School. In addition, Shi and Li Keqiang were classmates in the law department of Peking University.</p> <p>When Shi Taifeng was Party Secretary of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, he implemented anti-corruption work in full conformity with Xi Jinping's emphasis on clean government. About 1,000 officials in Inner Mongolia covering their corrupt behavior for 20 years were investigated. As Xi Jinping emphasized in the 20th Party Congress that the CPC must engage in "self-revolution" and continuous renewal through anti-corruption campaigns, Shi's work was clearly highly regarded by Xi.</p>
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			Shi as a loyalist of the Xi Jinping thought. A former scholar promoted by Xi.
	<p>Liu Guozhong 刘国中</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: July 1962 in Wangkui County (Heilongjiang Province) • CCP member since: 1986 • Graduated from Nanjing Institute of Technology and Harbin Institute of Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Shaanxi (2020-2022) • Governor of Shaanxi (2018-2020) • Governor of Jilin (2016-2018) • Member of the Secretariat of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (2013) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Shaanxi Clique:</p> <p>Liu Guozhong entered the Politburo from the post of Party Secretary of Shaanxi province. Earlier in his career, Liu had worked closely with Xi’s ally Li Zhanshu in Heilongjiang. Liu Zhanshu is Xi’s closest ally on the 19th PBSC and China’s No. 3 leader who now chairs the NPC.</p>
	<p>Li Xi 李希</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1956 in Liangdang County (Gansu Province) • CCP member since: 1982 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Graduated from Northwest Normal University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (since 2022) • Communist Party Secretary of Guangdong (2017-2022) • Communist Party Secretary of Liaoning (2015-2017) • Governor of Liaoning (2014-2015) • Director of the Organization Department (2011-2013) • Politburo Standing Committee member 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Zhejiang Clique, Shaanxi Clique, Liaoning Clique and Guangdong Clique:</p> <p>Li Xi spent many years working in Shaanxi Province and is seen as a member of the Shaanxi Clique close to Xi Jinping. Shaanxi spent seven years in Shaanxi as a “sent-down youth.” In 2011, he was transferred to Shanghai, and in 2014, back Liaoning Province, where Li Keqiang used to serve as Party Secretary from 2004 to 2007. In Liaoning, Li Xi addressed the</p>

			<p>problem of the province’s economic data manipulation. Some experts interpreted this as an attempt to check the influence of the CCYL faction – Li Keqiang’s power base.</p> <p>Ties between Li and Xi is believed to span over 40 years through connections between Li’s former patron and Xi’s father in Gansu.</p>
	<p>Li Qiang 李强</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: July 1959 in Rui’an City (Zhejiang Province) • CCP member since: 1983 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Alma mater: Zhejiang Wanli University; China Sociology Correspondence University; Zhejiang University; Central Party School; Hong Kong Polytechnic University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee of the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee • Communist Party Secretary of Shanghai (2017-2022) • Communist Party Secretary of Jiangsu (2016-2017) • Zhejiang Governor (2012-2016) • Politburo Standing Committee member 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / New Zhijiang Army and Zhejiang Clique:</p> <p>Li worked directly under Xi (as his right-hand man) from 2004 to 2007 as his trusted Secretary-General of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee. Back then, the future president was Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province (2002-2007).</p> <p>In 2016, Li was transferred from Zhejiang to Jiangsu Province to address rampant corruption as Party Secretary.</p> <p>Li is a typical member of the New Zhijiang Army and Zhejiang Clique – officials who were close to Xi during his time in Zhejiang.</p>

			<p>Note: As recently as the beginning of this year, Li was considered fast-tracked for promotion, but Shanghai’s disastrous response to the pandemic has left a cloud of uncertainty over his political future.</p>
	<p>Li Ganjie 李干杰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: November 1964 in Wangcheng County (Hunan Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • PSC member since: October 2022 (youngest member of the Politburo) • Member of the 19th CPC Central Committee • Graduated from Tsinghua University where he studied industrial physics and nuclear safety • Studied in France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Shandong (since 2021) • Governor of Shandong (2020-2021) • Minister of Ecology and Environment (2018-2020) • Minister of Environmental Protection (2017-2018) • Deputy Party Secretary of Hebei province (2016) • Director of the National Nuclear Safety Administration (2007-2016) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Military Industry Department: Li Ganjie is a former nuclear official and member of the military industry department.</p> <p>Tsinghua Clique: Li is a protégé of Chen Xi who was Xi’s roommate when they were both undergraduates at Tsinghua.</p>
	<p>Li Shulei 李书磊</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: January 1964 in Yuanyang County (Henan Province) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the CPC Central Committee’s Publicity Department (since 2022) • Deputy head of the CPC Central Committee’s Publicity Department (2022) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Central Party School: Li Shulei was Xi’s deputy at the Central Party School (alongside</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCP member since: 1986 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Member of the 18th and 19th CCP Central Commissions for Discipline Inspection • Graduated from Peking University • Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee • Member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Vice President of the Central Party School of the CCP (2020-2022) • Secretary of CPC Beijing Municipal Committee Discipline Committee (2016-2017) 	<p>Shi Taifeng). It was at this time that Li gained Xi’s trust. Li is a prominent policy adviser to Xi and believed to be closely involved in efforts to work out details of the national supervisory commission.</p>
	<p>Li Hongzhong 李鸿忠</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: August 1956 in Shenyang (original domicile in Shandong Province) • CCP member since: 1976 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Member of the 19th Politburo • Graduated from Department of History of Jilin University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Tianjin (since 2016) • Party Secretary of Hubei (2010-2016) • Governor of Hubei (2007-2010) • Deputy Party Chief, then Governor of Hubei (2007) • Party Chief of Shenzhen (2005) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系: Guangdong Clique: Li Hongzhong spent much of his career in Guangdong province (Mayor and Party Secretary of Shenzhen). Li has never worked with Xi Jinping. However, when Li was promoted to Party Secretary of Tianjin, he repeatedly pledged his loyalty to Xi making references to “comrade Xi Jinping as core leader” of the party center. Li further stated, “to proactively maintain the authority of the party center means maintaining the</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sent-down youth” in Liaoning Province 		<p>leading core of the General Secretary Xi Jinping” (Jan. 2016). As a secretary for former Politburo member Li Tieying, Li Hongzhong worked for the old Ministry of Electronics Industry. He reportedly has an amicable relationship with former president Jiang Zemin who led the “machinery industry faction.”</p> <p>Shanghai Gang 上海帮: Close ties to Jiang Zemin’s faction.</p>
	<p>He Weidong 何卫东</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: May 1957 in Nanping (Fujian Province) • PLA member since: 1972 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Delegate to the 13th National People’s Congress • Graduated from PLA Nanjing Army Command College and National University of Defense Technology (in Hunan Province) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (Party Commission: 2022) (serving with Zhang Youxia) • Commander of the Eastern Theater Command (2019-2022) • Commander of the Western Theater Command Ground Force (2016-2019) • Commander of the Shanghai Garrison (2014-2016) • Commander of Jiangsu Military District (2013) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系: Fujian Clique (and Zhejiang Clique): He Weidong spent his formative years in Fujian. He is an ally of Xi Jinping, having overlapped in Fujian province in the late 1990s and early 2000s when Xi was Deputy Secretary and governor. The PLA general who has joined the 20th Politburo as a dark horse, became close to Xi when he was stationed in Huzhou of Zhejiang. With He’s promotion to CMC Vice Chairman, Xi’s control of</p>

			<p>the PLA has been further strengthened.</p>
	<p>He Lifeng 何立峰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: February 1955 in Xingning (Guangdong Province) • CCP member since: 1981 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Member of the 19th CPC Central Committee • Alternate member of the 17th and 18th CPC Central Committee • Graduated from Xiamen University, School of Economics, where he studied finance • “Sent-down youth” in Yongding County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13th Minister of the National Development and Reform Commission (since 2017) • Deputy Director of the National Development and Reform Commission (2014-2017) • Party Secretary of Xiamen (2005-2009) • Party Secretary of Fuzhou (2000-2005) • Party Secretary of Quanzhou City (1998-2000) • Mayor of Quanzhou City (1996-1998) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系: Fujian Clique and New zhjiang Army:</p> <p>He Lifeng worked in Fujian province for some 25 years. He worked successively in Xiamen, Quanzhou and Fuzhou. In Xiamen, he headed the city’s Finance Department (at the time, Xi Jinping was Vice Mayor of Xiamen). He worked under Xi in Fujian province in the 1980s.</p>
	<p>Zhang Youxia 张又侠</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: July 1950 in Beijing, a native of Weinan City (Shaanxi Province) • Son of Zhang Zongxun • PLA member since: 1968 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (State Commission: 2018; Party Commission 2017) • Head of the Equipment Development Department of the Central Military Commission (2016-2017) 	<p>Princelings 太子党:</p> <p>Zhang Youxia rose to the highest rank in China’s military, Colonel General. The same was true of his father, Zhang Zongxun (born in Shaanxi) – like Xi Jinping’s father, Xi Zhongxun. The two fathers fought together in their</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the 19th and 20th Politburo of the CCP (the eldest member of the Politburo) • Member of the 17th and 18th Central Committees of the CCP • Graduated from PLA Military Academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the PLA General Armaments Department (2012-2016) • Commander of Shenyang Military Region of PLA (2007-2012) • Deputy Commander of Beijing Military Region of PLA (2005-2007) 	<p>youth and became leaders of the Communist Party’s “northwest faction.”</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Shaanxi Clique, Liaoning Clique: Zhang Youxia and Xi Jinping have maintained a friendship of their own. Zhang is one of Xi’s closest personal allies.</p>
	<p>Zhang Guoqing 张国清</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: August 1964 in Luoshan County (Henan Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • Alternate member of the 17th Central Committee of the CCP • Full member of the 18th, 19th and 20th Central Committee • Graduated from Changchun University of Science and Technology, Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Tsinghua University • 2001: Took part in an executive management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Liaoning (2020-2022) • Mayor of Tianjin (2018-2020) • Mayor of Chongqing (2016-2018) • 2013: Deputy Party Chief of Chongqing, president of the Chongqing party school • 1999-late 2000s: China North Industries Group Corporation (Norinco) (acted as Vice-President, later as chief executive) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Military Industry Department: Zhang Guoqing worked for a long time at China North Industries Group Corporation (military supplier). Zhang shares a military-industrial background with Ma Xingrui, Yuan Jiajun and Li Ganjie.</p> <p>Zhang is a defense industry technocrat, often categorized as a famous member of the so-called Defense-Aerospace Faction in party politics.</p> <p>Note: It seems that Zhang Guoqing is the sole person among the new members of the Politburo who has never had a special</p>

	course at Harvard Business School		personal relationship with Xi or with any from Xi’s inner circle.
	<p>Chen Wenqing 陈文清</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: January 1960 in Renshou County (Sichuan Province) • CCP member since: 1983 • Member of the Politburo and Central Secretariat (since October 2022) • Member of the standing committee of the 18th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (until 2015) • Graduated from Southwest University of Political Science & Law Sichuan Union University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the CCP (since 2022) • 5th Minister of State Security (2016-2022) • Political commissar of a PLA Reserve Force anti-aircraft artillery division in Fujian – “Fujian experience” • Deputy Secretary of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee and Secretary of the Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection (2006) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Fujian Clique: Chen Wenqing has been one of Xi Jinping’s right-hand men in security issues. Does not have long-term Xi ties.</p> <p>Chen Wenqing is the first person to enter the Politburo from the Ministry of State Security. In the past five years, Chen was concurrently in charge of the Central Commission on State Security, which was chaired personally by Xi.</p>
	<p>Chen Jining 陈吉宁</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: February 1964 in Gaizhou (Liaoning Province) • CCP member since: 1984 • Full member of the 19th and 20th Central Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Shanghai (since 2022) • Mayor of Beijing (2017-2022) • Minister of Environmental Protection (2015-2017) • President of Tsinghua University (2012-2015) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Tsinghua Clique: Chen Jining is part of a coterie of officials from Xi’s alma mater, Tsinghua University. Chen is an environment expert. He is described as a protégé of Chen Xi, who was Xi’s roommate when they were both undergraduates at Tsinghua.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Deputy to the 12th National People's Congress. • Was awarded the Silver Olympic Order after the 2022 Winter Olympics • Graduated from Tsinghua University, Brunel University London, Imperial College London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-President of Tsinghua University (2006) • Deputy Director of the Environmental Engineering Department of Tsinghua University (1998) 	
	<p>Chen Min'er 陈敏尔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: September 1960 in Zhuji (Zhejiang Province) • CCP member since: 1982 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Alternate member of the 17th Central Committee • Full member of the 18th, 19th and 20th Central Committee of the CCP • Education: Shaoxing University (Zhejiang), Zhejiang Party School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Tianjin (since 2022) • Party Secretary of Chongqing (2017-2022) (replacing Sun Zhengcai) • Party Secretary of Guizhou (2015-2017) • Governor of Guizhou (2012-2015) • Vice Governor of Zhejiang (2007-2012) (worked under Xi Jinping) • Member of the provincial Party Standing Committee • Propaganda Chief of the Zhejiang Communist Party organization (2001) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Zhejiang Clique and New Zhijiang Army: Chen Min'er is a trusted protégé of Xi's. Chen worked with Xi in the Zhejiang Provincial Standing Committee for five years. Chen formed close bond with Xi in the early 2000s. Chen has been named part of the New Zhijiang Army.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Party Secretary of Ningbo (1999) 	
	<p>Zhao Leji 赵乐际</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: March 1957 in Xining (Qinghai Province); Shaanxi native • CCP member since: 1975 • PSC member since: 25 October 2017 • Studied philosophy at Peking University (1977-1980) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (2017-2022) • Head of the Organization Department of the CCP (2012-2017) • Party Secretary of Shaanxi (2007-2012) • Politburo Standing Committee member 	<p>CCYL Faction Zhao Leji is related to the CCYL faction: Between 1980 and 1983 he held various positions within the Qinghai Provincial Commerce School, including secretary of the CCYL. But his major career advancements occurred during the Jiang Zemin era, and he obviously successfully cultivated connections with Xi Jinping.</p> <p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Shaanxi Clique: Like Xi Jinping, Zhao Leji has a strong Shaanxi connection. Zhao served as Party Secretary of Shaanxi (2007-2012) – Xi Jinping’s ancestral home – and developed close relations with Xi’s family. As head of the Organization Department, Zhao has helped appoint Xi allies to top positions in important locations, such as Beijing and Chongqing.</p>

	<p>Yuan Jiajun 袁家军</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: September 1962 in Tonghua (Jilin Province) • CCP member since: 1992 • Alternate member of the 17th Central Committee of the CCP • Full member of the 19th and 20th Central Committee • PSC member since: 25 October 2017 • Graduated from Beijing Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (major in aircraft design and applied mechanics) • Studied at the German Aerospace Center • Received many awards for his work in the Chinese Space Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Chongqing (since 2022) (succeeding Chen Min'er) • Party Secretary of Zhejiang (2020-2022) • Governor of Zhejiang (2017-2020) • Deputy Party Chief of Zhejiang and Head of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Zhejiang (2016) • Party Standing Committee member of Zhejiang, later executive vice governor • Vice-Chairman of Ningxia (2013) • Vice-President of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (2007), was involved in the Lunar mission and the joint Chinese-Russian mission to explore Mars 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Military Industry Department: Due to his military-industrial background, Yuan Jiajun is described to be a member of the so-called “cosmos club” of aerospace technocrats favored by Xi. Moreover, as Party Secretary of Zhejiang (2020-2022) and Chongqing (since 2022), Yuan is Xi’s major power base.</p>
	<p>Huang Kunming 黄坤明</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: November 1956 in Shanghang County (Fujian Province) • Joined the PLA in 1977 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Secretary of Guangdong (since 2022) • Head of Central Publicity Department of the CCP (2017-2022) • Party Secretary of Hangzhou (2010-2013) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Fujian Clique, Zhejiang Clique and New Zhijiang Army: The later years of Huang Kunming’s career align with the footsteps of Xi Jinping. Huang worked with Xi in Fujian and</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined the CCP in 1979 • Alternate member of the 18th Central Committee of the CCO • Full member of the 19th and 20th Central Committee • PSC member since: 2017 • Graduated from Fujian Normal University and Tsinghua University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the provincial Party Standing Committee and head of the provincial party organization's Publicity Department (2007) • Party Secretary of Jiaxing (2003) • Mayor of Huzhou (Zhejiang) (1999) 	<p>Zhejiang. After Xi rose to become Party Leader, Huang obtained a more central position in the party. Because of Huang's close links with Xi, he is considered a member of the New Zhijiang Army an informal grouping of Xi's closest associates who were considered destined for higher office.</p> <p>Huang is responsible for shaping public opinion in the party's Publicity Department.</p>
	<p>Cai Qi 蔡奇</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: December 1955 in Youxi County (Fujian Province) • CCP member since: 1975 • PSC member since: 23 October 2022 • Graduated from Fujian Normal University, majored in Political Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP (since 2022) • Party Secretary of Beijing (2017-2022) • Mayor of Beijing (2016-2017) • President of the Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (2018-2022) • Chair of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (2017-2022) 	<p>Xi Jinping Faction 习近平派系 / Fujian Clique, Zhejiang Clique and New Zhijiang Army: Xi Jinping spent more than 17 years of his career in Fujian (1985-2002). During this time, he developed a close friendship with Cai Qi. Cai gained Xi's trust as his subordinate in Zhejiang Province (position: Deputy Director of the office of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee and Secretary of Sanming City) and was later promoted to Deputy Director of the General Office for the National Security</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Politburo Standing Committee member	Commission, Mayor of Beijing and Party Secretary of the capital. Cai is a significant former member of Xi Jinping's Zhejiang Department and Fujian Department.
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Further Connections with Xi Jinping



Liu He 刘鹤

- Born: January 1952 in Beijing
- Graduated from Renmin University and John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University
- “Princeling”: Went to Beijing No. 101 Middle School (a school famous for being cradles of “red nobility”) and was Xi Jinping’s classmate and childhood friend. His father was former vice-governor-level leader in Shaanxi Province.
 - ➔ (Xi Jinping faction)
- “Sent-down youth” in Jilin Province during Cultural Revolution
- Current position: Vice Premier of the PRC, Head of the Financial Stability and Development Committee
- Liu was on hand for the U.S.-China summit in April 2017
- Described as “one of the technocrats that Xi Jinping trusts a great deal”, “Xi Jinping’s right-hand man for economic affairs”, “economic tsar”, “Xi Jinping’s point man on trade and financial policymaking”, “Liu has a special bond with Xi and he plays a role like a door-stopper” that keeps China’s economic and trade flows with the rest of the world open, even when Xi’s policies become more inward-looking” (Prof. Mariko Watanabe, Tokyo Gakushuin University)
- Liu He’s likely exit: Liu, two years past the accepted retirement age of 68 for Communist Party leaders, has step down from the Party’s Politburo at the Party Congress in October 2022. Whoever is anointed to succeed Liu should already have been involved in the cut and thrust of international trade and economic policymaking
 - ➔ Possible candidates: Guo Shuqing (widely known as a reformer with a proved track record) and He Lifeng (former Xi subordinate, seen as the favored candidate) are likely to succeed Liu.
 - ➔ Liu’s departure could add more uncertainty to the China’s economic prospects. Therefore, his continued leadership is very likely needed for at least one more year

	<p>Wang Qishan 王岐山</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: July 1948 in Qingdao (Shandong Province), Shanxi native • Graduated from Northwest University (Xi'an) as a “worker-peasant-soldier student” • “Princeling” due to his marriage to Yao Mingshan, a daughter of former Vice Premier of China Yao Yilin • “Sent-down youth” in Yan’an, where he met and befriended Xi Jinping → Shaanxi connection (Xi Jinping faction) • Current position: Vice President of the PRC • Helped Xi Jinping carry out the anti-corruption campaign since 2013 • Described as “one of the leading figures behind China’s foreign affairs”, “one of Xi’s closest political allies” • At 74, Wang has passed the unofficial retirement age for party officials (68) → Removal from the Central Committee and Politburo Standing Committee in 2017, but was given the role of vice president
	<p>Wang Shaojun 王少军</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: 1955 in Yongnian County (Hebei Province) • Current positions: Lieutenant general of the PLA (since July 2016); Director of the Central Security Bureau of the CCP since 2015 • During Xi Jinping’s visit to the Eastern Military Command in late 2014, Wang was seen accompanying Xi. • Connection with Xi: According to reports, Wang worked as Xi Jinping’s personal security before taking on the role of Director of the Central Security Bureau. • One of Xi’s confidants
	<p>Zhong Shaojun 钟绍军</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born: October 1968 in Kaihua County (Zhejiang Province) • Graduated from Tsinghua University (PhD in Public Policy) and Zhejiang University (M.A..) • Current position: General Secretary of the CCP; Director of the General Office of the Central Military Commission; Lieutenant general

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connection with Xi:<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Zhejiang Clique (Xi Jinping faction): Zhong worked as Xi's chief of staff in Zhejiang, then followed him to Shanghai and Beijing. In Zhejiang, Zhong often drafted Xi's official statements. Zhong had frequently accompanied Xi on trips between Shanghai and Hangzhou. Zhong Shaojun was Xi's personal assistant (<i>mishu</i>) for 12 years.→ New Zhijiang Army: Zhong is a trusted lieutenant of Xi Jinping who shares Xi's political philosophies <p>Xi's top aid on military affairs in the CMC General Office</p>
	<p>He Yiting 何毅亭</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Born: January 1952 in Hanzhong (Shaanxi Province)• CCP member since March 1983• “Sent-down youth” during the Cultural Revolution• Graduated from Beijing Normal University (major in history)• At the beginning of his career, he worked in the General Office of the CCP and the Central Policy Research Office• From 2000 to 2013 he was appointed Deputy Chief of the Policy Research Office. In 2013, he was named Executive Vice President of the CCP Central Party School (rank equivalent of Minister). Thus, he is considered to be within the inner circle.• In June 2020, the <i>Study Times</i> ran an article titled “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is 21st Century Marxism.”¹ Its author is He Yiting. According to him, Xi has given many new theories for the New Era and is to be named the true heir of Karl Marx. He subsumes the ideological thoughts of all of Xi's predecessors (Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping

¹ <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0615/c40531-31746437.html>

	<p>Theory, The Three Represents of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao's Scientific Concept of Development) into Xi Jinping Thought. He Yiting has been described by Agnes Andresy (author of <i>Xi Jinping: Red China, The Next Generation</i>) as the “pen of Xi Jinping”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connection with Xi: probably a member of the Shaanxi Clique and the Central Party School Group• Xi's point man on doctrinal matters
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XI'S TOP LEADERSHIP NETWORK

CCP Leadership after the 20th Party Congress

Since the 18th National Party Congress in 2012, Xi Jinping began extensively cultivating a web of mentor-protégé ties by re-using (1) the old ministry when he served as a county leader in different Provinces; (2) longtime friends formed through school and university ties; (3) native-place associations from Shaanxi Province; as well as (4) thematic webs to establish the following groups or networks:

- "Fujian Clique" or "New Minjiang Army" (福建系 Fujian xi)
- "Zhejiang Clique" (浙江系 Zhejiang xi)
- "Schoolmates and Tsinghua Gang" (同窗系 Tongchuan xi, 清华帮 Qinghua Bang)
- "Shaanxi Clique" (陕西系 Shanxi xi)
- "New Shanghai Gang" (新上海帮 Xin Shanghai Bang)
- "Liaoning Clique" (辽宁系 Liaoning xi)
- "Guangdong Clique" (广东系 Guangdong xi)
- "Hebei Clique" (河北系 Hebei xi)
- "Military Industry Department" (军工系 Jungong xi)
- "Princelings" (太子党 Taizidang)
- "Central Party School Group"
- "Security Sector Group"
- "Peng Liyuan Group"

MAJOR FACTIONS IN CHINESE POLITICS

- Shanghai Gang 上海帮 Shanghai Bang, "Elitist coalition" (精英同盟 jingying tongmeng)
Elite and eastern coastal interests within China. Tendency to be economically liberal and supportive of market reform, but politically conservative.
- Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) Faction 团委 Tuanpai, "Populist coalition" (民粹同盟 minciui tongmeng)
Policies regarding economic equality, social justice, and more balanced regional development. Often voicing concerns of vulnerable social groups such as farmers, migrant workers, and the urban poor. Offering the youth an entry point in the CCP.

- Princelings 太子党 Taizidang, "Elitist coalition" (精英同盟 jingying tongmeng)
Interests in representing Chinese entrepreneurs and emerging middle class. Political interests are sometimes not aligned. In support of market reform, but politically conservative, especially with regard to control over the media and intra-party elections.

FACIT:

- Xi Jinping has now established absolute domination over the CCP central leadership
- A new era of factional politics is unfolding
- Xi's status and authority as top leader are unlikely to meet any challenges from within high-ranking CCP cadres, but factional competition is already starting to take place among the various groups and cliques of Xi's followers

COMMON IDENTITY

Sources of Factions

POLICY CHOICE

GUANXI

personal (face-to-face) 'connections'

INSTITUTIONAL INTEREST

Sources:

SIGA Study: Chinese Factions and Xi Jinping's Top Leadership Network, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies

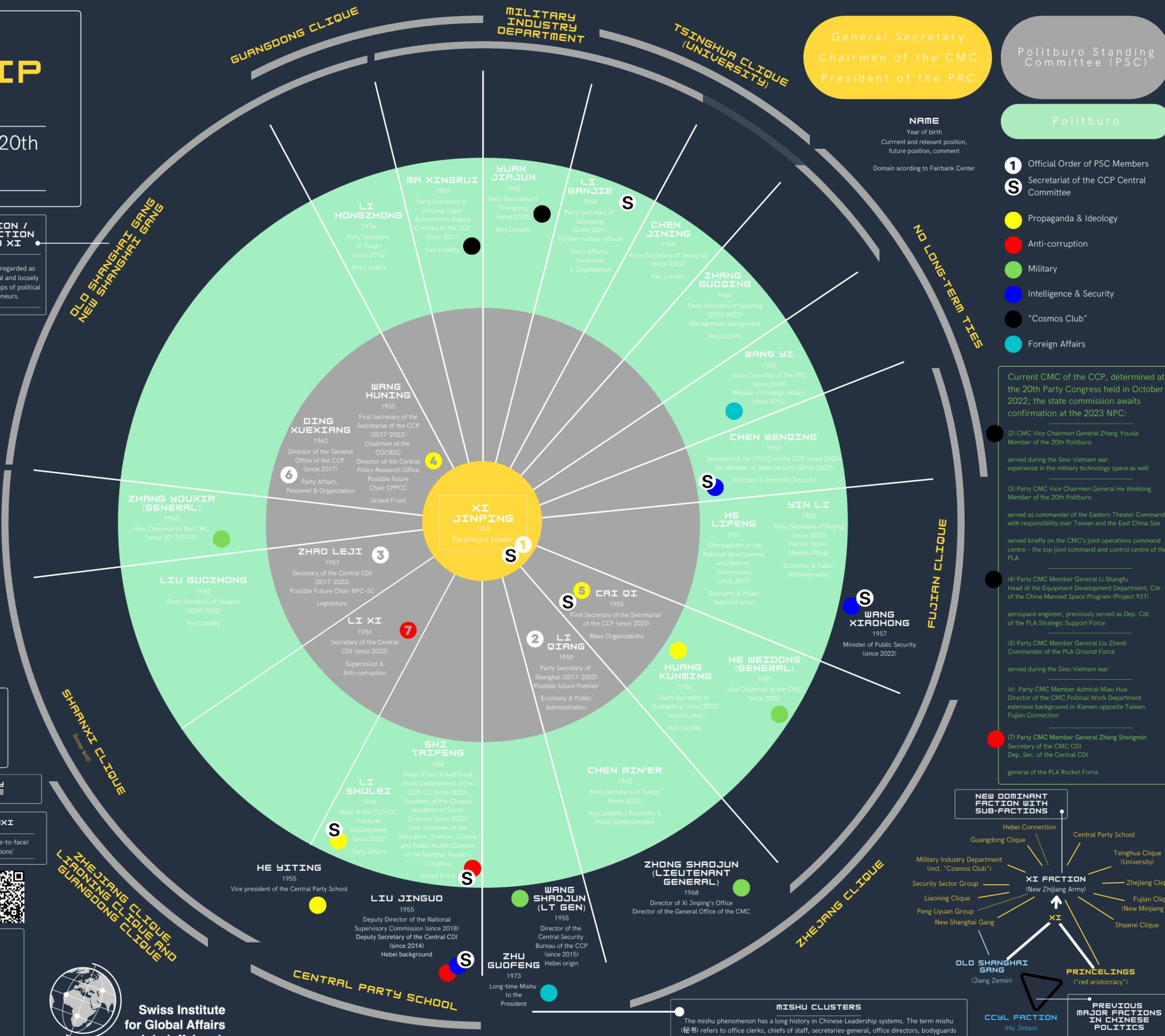


ABBREVIATIONS:

- CCP: Chinese Communist Party
- PRC: People's Republic of China
- CMC: Central Military Commission
- CCP-CC: Central Committee of the CCP
- NPC-SC: National People's Congress Standing Committee
- CPPCC: Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
- CGCBCS: Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization
- CPLAC: Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission
- PLA: People's Liberation Army
- CDI: Commission for Discipline Inspection



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General Secretary
Chairmen of the CMC
President of the PRC

Politburo Standing Committee (PSC)

Politburo

NAME
Year of birth
Current and relevant position, future position, comment
Domain according to Fairbank Center

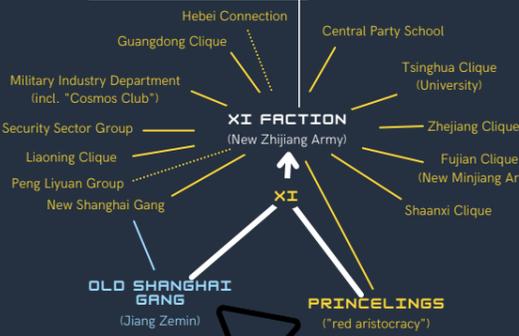
- 1 Official Order of PSC Members
- S Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee

- Propaganda & Ideology
- Anti-corruption
- Military
- Intelligence & Security
- "Cosmos Club"
- Foreign Affairs

Current CMC of the CCP, determined at the 20th Party Congress held in October 2022; the state commission awaits confirmation at the 2023 NPC:

- (2) CMC Vice Chairmen General Zhang Youxia
Member of the 20th Politburo
served during the Sino-Vietnam war experience in the military technology space as well
- (3) Party CMC Vice Chairmen General He Weidong
Member of the 20th Politburo
served as commander of the Eastern Theater Command, with responsibility over Taiwan and the East China Sea
- (4) Party CMC Member General Li Shanguo
Head of the Equipment Development Department, Cdr. of the China Manned Space Program (Project 921)
aerospace engineer, previously served as Dep. Cdr. of the PLA Strategic Support Force
- (5) Party CMC Member General Liu Zhentli
Commander of the PLA Ground Force
served during the Sino-Vietnam war
- (6) Party CMC Member Admiral Miao Hua
Director of the CMC Political Work Department
extensive background in Xiamen opposite Taiwan
Fujian Connection
- (7) Party CMC Member General Zhang Shengmin
Secretary of the CMC CDI
Dep. Sec. of the Central CDI
general of the PLA Rocket Force

NEW DOMINANT FACTION WITH SUB-FACTIONS



CCYL FACTION (Hu Jintao)

PREVIOUS MAJOR FACTIONS IN CHINESE POLITICS

MISHU CLUSTERS

The mishu phenomenon has a long history in Chinese Leadership systems. The term mishu (秘书) refers to office clerks, chiefs of staff, secretaries-general, office directors, bodyguards and office assistants. It is about a Mentor-protégé relationship.