

Who Does Xi Jinping Know and How Does He Know Them?

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The consolidation in power as China's top leader of Jiang Zemin in the 1990s and of Hu Jintao since the mid-2000s brought with it the rise to national prominence of leaders linked to them at earlier points in their careers. The leaders associated with Jiang were known as the "Shanghai Gang." Those associated with Hu Jintao are today referred to as the "Youth League clique." This article assays the group of leaders who have worked with Xi Jinping over his career of 25 years as a provincial leader. If Xi succeeds Hu Jintao as China's top leader, some of these leaders may figure strongly in his efforts to consolidate power.

Consolidating Power

Consolidation in power of a paramount leader in the post-Deng period has entailed, among other steps, promotion of leaders into the party leadership who have long associations with him and who may be counted on as supporters. Thus far, the patron-client membership of such power bases has differed in its sources. As its name suggests, Jiang Zemin's "Shanghai Gang" (上海帮) was a largely regional group, drawn heavily from Shanghai, where Jiang served from 1985 to 1989 as mayor and then party chief, and from neighboring coastal provinces. These included: Zeng Qinghong, chief of Jiang's personal staff, who came to Beijing with Jiang in 1989 and directed the sensitive Central Committee General Office from 1993 to 1999; Wu Bangguo, Shanghai party chief in the early 1990s, who was appointed to the party Secretariat in 1994 and who has since 2003 served as chairman of the National People's Congress; Huang Ju, who as Shanghai mayor and then party chief served on the Politburo from 1994 to 2002; Jiang Chunyun, a career Shandong official who was appointed to the Secretariat in 1994; and Jia Qinglin, who was moved from Fujian to take over Beijing's municipal party organization in 1996 and who was first appointed to the Politburo in 1997. Zhu Rongji, whose service as Shanghai mayor in 1987–1991 overlapped with Jiang's tenure as Shanghai party boss and who was appointed vice premier in 1991 and then premier in 1998, should not be counted as part of Jiang's group.

As its name suggests, Hu Jintao's "Youth League clique" (团派) has an organizational rather than regional basis in Hu's leadership of the Communist Youth League (CYL) and the All-China Youth Federation from 1982 to 1985. Key members of Hu's group are: Li Keqiang, presumed successor of Wen Jiabao as premier, who served in CYL and Youth Federation leadership roles with Hu; Li Yuanchao, currently director of the party Organization Department, who served under Hu in the CYL leadership in the mid-1980s; Wang Yang, currently party chief in Guangdong, China's richest province,

who served in the CYL leadership in the mid-1980s in Hu's home province, Anhui; Liu Yandong, currently director of the Central Committee's United Front Work Department, who served with Hu in the CYL Secretariat and as president of the Youth Federation in the 1980s; and Ling Jihua, currently chief of the Central Committee General Office and Hu's personal secretary, who served in the CYL Secretariat immediately after Hu.

If Xi Jinping succeeds Hu Jintao as China's paramount leader in 2012–2015, he would likely attempt to consolidate his power by promoting into the leadership people with whom he has established connections. These may come from at least three groups. First, he may draw from the group called “princelings” (太子), sons and daughters of high-ranking leaders who fought the revolution that established the People's Republic and who dominated its high politics in its first four decades. The “princelings” do not constitute a coherent faction (太子党), as is often implied, any more than the “princelings” Al Gore and George W. Bush did in American politics in the past two decades of American politics. But they do constitute a pool of people who may have associated with each other during the childhood years when their parents held high positions in the Mao era and who may have shared common tribulations during Mao's later years.¹ Personal relationships that Xi established in those early years may therefore be important in his politics as paramount leader.

Second, Xi may draw on connections that he is establishing in his current role in running the party apparatus. Since the 17th Party Congress in 2007, he has served as executive secretary of the Secretariat and as president of the Central Party School. Since 2007, the scope of the Secretariat has been re-focused solely on the operation of the party apparatus, while its previous policy coordination functions through the leading small groups appear to have been shifted to the Politburo Standing Committee.² From this position, Xi has presided over countless conferences and meetings dealing with internal party affairs and coordinated internal study campaigns, including the September 2008–February 2010 campaign to study the “scientific development concept.” As president of the Central Party School, Xi has presided over the succession of the school's classes for up and coming party leaders from all of China's provinces and cities. In both functions, Xi has the opportunity to meet and assess the broader pool of party officials from whom the “fifth and sixth generations” of national leaders will be selected and to establish ties and begin to build networks throughout the party. Managing the party apparatus is the classic route to power in communist systems, as the rise of Stalin and Khrushchev showed in the former USSR and as the rise of Deng Xiaoping—first as secretary general in 1954 and then as general secretary from 1956 through 1966—showed in the PRC. Hu Jintao's power as general secretary after 2002 benefited from his decade of experience running the party apparatus as executive secretary of the Secretariat and as president of the Central Party School from 1992 to 2002.

Finally, Xi's effort to consolidate his power may draw on associates with whom he worked during his career of 25 years as a provincial official preceding his own rise to national prominence. This career included the following postings:

1983–1985: Hebei

- Secretary, Zhengding County CCP Committee

1985–2002: Fujian

- 1985–88: First deputy mayor, Xiamen; member, Xiamen CCP Standing Committee
- 1988–90: Secretary, Ningde Prefecture CCP Committee; secretary, Ningde Sub-Region CCP Committee, Fujian Military District
- 1990–1996: Secretary, Fuzhou CCP Committee; chairman, Fuzhou People’s Congress; first secretary, Fujian Military District CCP Committee
- 1995–2002: Deputy secretary, Fujian CCP Committee
- 1999–2002: Governor, Fujian
- 2001–2002: Member, Fujian CCP Standing Committee

2002–2007: Zhejiang

- 2002: Acting governor; deputy secretary Zhejiang CCP Committee
- 2002–2007: Secretary, Zhejiang CCP Committee

2007: Shanghai

- March–October 2007: Secretary, Shanghai CCP Committee

What follows is a listing of men and women with whom Xi Jinping likely worked during his career as a provincial leader and who have since advanced to prominence at upper levels of provincial government or at national levels. Certainly, there is no reason to expect that Xi and any of these leaders share political outlooks and purposes just because they worked together at some point in the past. But at least some of the people listed below may do so and may, therefore, be leaders to watch if Xi becomes party general secretary in 2012.

Who’s Who among Whom Xi Knows

The roster of people whom Xi Jinping likely knows from his career in provincial politics may be grouped into several clusters currently working on important political and policy sectors. The most important are provincial officials, officials in finance and banking, and those in major businesses.

Provincial Officials

Leaders serving as provincial party chiefs and deputies and as provincial governors and vice governors constitute a major pool of potential appointees to central leadership posts. In addition to officials rising up through provincial ranks into national leadership positions, Beijing throughout the reform era has also sent rising stars in middle-level national posts out to serve in the provinces for seasoning and experience before appointing them to high-level posts back at the center of national politics. The cluster of

officials who worked with Xi in the past and who are currently serving at upper levels of provincial administration thus comprise a network of acquaintances that Xi might draw from as he begins to consolidate his power.

In Tianjin:

- **Huang Xingguo:** Currently mayor of **Tianjin** (since 2008) and an alternate member of the 17th Central Committee, Huang briefly overlapped with Xi Jinping in Zhejiang, where he served as provincial vice governor and as deputy secretary of the provincial CCP committee. Huang was born in 1954 and so is young enough to succeed Zhang Gaoli as Tianjin party chief—normally a post that brings concurrent membership in the Politburo—should Zhang, who is currently 64, be transferred or retire.
- **He Lifeng:** Deputy of the Tianjin CCP Committee since 2009, He graduated from Xiamen University in 1984 after which he served first as deputy director and then director of the Xiamen municipal government's finance bureau, concurrent with Xi Jinping's tenure as deputy party chief and vice mayor of Xiamen. After Xi moved up into Fujian's provincial party and government, He Lifeng served as party chief successively in some of Fujian's most important cities, including Quanzhou, Fuzhou, and, again, Xiamen. He Lifeng was born in 1955, and so, like Huang Xingguo, he is eligible for higher appointment in Tianjin and elsewhere.

In Chongqing:

- **Lin Yueming:** Currently vice mayor of Chongqing, Lin served as deputy director of the Fujian government's General Office from 1996 to 1999. Born in 1962, Lin will be 50 in 2012 and so potentially a rising "sixth generation" leader.
- **Zhou Mubing:** Also a vice mayor of Chongqing, Zhou was general manager of the Fujian branch of the China Industrial and Commercial Bank when Xi was Fujian's governor. Zhou was born in 1957, and so will be 55 in 2012.

In Zhejiang:

Lu Zushan, as governor of Zhejiang since 2003, was the first-ranked deputy provincial party secretary under Xi Jinping across Xi's entire five-year term as party chief in the province. Lu is 64 at present and will likely retire in the next year or two because of the stipulation for retirement of provincial party bosses and governors at 65. However, five of Lu's seven vice governors also worked with Xi Jinping and are young enough to be promoted after 2012. They are as follows:

- **Chen Jiayan:** Vice governor of Zhejiang since 2003, Chen was born in 1953, and so will be 59 in 2012.
- **Mao Linsheng:** Mayor of Hangzhou from 1999 to 2004, Mao has been vice governor since 2004. Mao was born in 1954 and so will be 58 in 2012.
- **Jin Deshui:** Vice governor since 2004, Jin was born 1951 and so will be 61 in 2012.

- **Sheng Changli:** Sheng has served as vice governor since 2002. She was born in 1949 and so will be 63 in 2012.
- **Wang Yongming:** Vice governor since 1999, Wang was born in 1950 and so will be 62 in 2012.
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In Fujian:

Huang Xiaojing, currently an alternate member of the 17th Central Committee, served as Fujian vice governor under Xi Jinping from the mid-1990s until succeeding him as governor in 2004. Born in 1946, he will likely retire in the next year or two. Two of his subordinate vice governors who also worked with Xi are young enough to be promoted. They are:

- **Zhang Changping:** Born in 1954, Zhang will be 58 in 2012. He has been vice governor since 2006. In 2000, Zhang was appointed vice mayor and deputy party chief in Xiamen and then mayor and concurrently party chief in 2002.
- **Yuan Rongxiang:** An alternate member of the 17th Central Committee, Yuan served in the Fujian government finance bureau under Xi in the mid-1990s and thereafter in the city administration of Fuzhou. Since 2005, he has been party chief in Fuzhou and concurrently a member of the standing committee of the Fujian CCP.

Finance and Banking

While working his way up the ladder of party and government in Fujian, Xi Jinping likely crossed paths with three men prominent in China's banks. They are:

- **Li Lihui:** Li has been president and vice chairman of the board of the Bank of China since 2004. Li graduated from Xiamen University's economics department in 1997, and from 1988 to 1994 he served as deputy general manager of the China Industrial and Commercial Bank's Fujian branch. From 1994 to 2002, he was executive vice president of the bank in Beijing. Born in 1952, Li will be 60 in 2012.
- **Liu Mingkang:** An alternate member of the 17th Central Committee, Liu is chairman of the board of directors of the People's Bank of China and chairman of the China Banking Regulation Commission. From 1988 to 1993, Liu was president of the Fujian branch of the People's Bank and from 1993 to 1994 was vice governor of Fujian. Born in 1946, Liu may be eligible to retire in the next year or two.
- **Wang Yongli:** Currently executive assistant president of the Bank of China's Hong Kong branch, Wang was general manager of the Bank of China's Fujian branch during Xi Jinping's last two years as governor in the province. Born in 1964, Wang will be 58 in 2012.

Business

Xi Jinping's years in Fujian and Zhejiang also gave him opportunity to work with several business people who have since emerged as leaders in several of China's largest corporations. These are:

- **Li Zhenqun:** Li has been since 2000 a board member, vice president, and chief operations officer of China Mobile in Hong Kong. China Mobile is the world's largest telecommunications provider, servicing some 360 million accounts in 2010. Li was director general of the Xiamen Municipal Bureau of Post and Telecommunications from 1984 to 1988, when Xi was party chief in Xiamen.
- **Guo Zeli:** Before 2006, Guo was general manager of Xiahua Electronics and since 2006 has served on the corporation's board of directors. Xiahua is a major producer of high-definition televisions and is widely regarded for its innovations.³ Before Xi took up his post as party chief in Xiamen in 1985, Guo served as a PLA representative in the Xiamen special economic zone administration. From 1985 into the 1990s, he worked as deputy general manager of a Xiamen trade company before moving to Xiahua Electronics in 1995.
- **Huang Yongda:** Currently director and president of Huaneng Power International, Inc., Huang was from 2002 to 2004 general manager of the Zhejiang Zhe Da Integration and Control Limited Company, while Xi was Zhejiang party chief. Huang's subordinate vice president, Wang Xiaosong, also managed Zhejiang's power grid from 2002 to 2004.
- **Nan Cunhui:** Since 2003, Nan has been chairman of the board of directors of Zhengtai Group (known internationally as CHINT Group). A major manufacturer of power transmission and distribution hardware and electrical apparatus and equipment, CHINT Group is one of the largest private corporations in China. CHINT is based in Wenzhou, the bastion of aggressive capitalism. Its subsidiary Astroenergy Solar is emerging as a leader in the production of efficient solar panels. Nan serves concurrently as vice chairman of the Zhejiang Federation of Industry and Commerce. He seems a likely successor to the current federation chairman, Niu Shouzhong, who was born in 1925. Nan was born in 1963, so will be 49 in 2012. Chairman of ZFIC is Niu Shouzhong, born 1925.
- **Wang Tianpu:** Since 2004, Wang has been president of SINOPEC's China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation. Wang gained a Ph.D. from Zhejiang University in 2003. He was born in 1962 and will be 50 in 2012.

State Council Ministries and Agencies

At least three officials in the State Council likely know Xi Jinping from his Fujian and Zhejiang years. They are:

- **Zheng Lizhong:** An alternate member of the 17th Central Committee, Zheng has served since 2005 as ranking deputy director of the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office. Zheng's work in that office undoubtedly builds on his long career in Fujian, a province strongly engaged with Taiwan. Zheng served from 1979 to

- 2005 in a variety of roles in finance and mining administration in Fujian, including in Xiamen during Xi's tenure as party chief and later in the Fujian party and government during Xi's service at that level. Born in 1951, he will be 61 in 2012.
- **Jiang Chengkang:** Currently a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information's (MII) party group, Jiang served from 1994 to 2002 as deputy director and, from 2002 to 2008, as director of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration and concurrently as general manager of China National Tobacco Corp (2002–08). In the 2008 State Council shake-up, the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration was merged into the new MII. Tobacco is a major crop in Fujian, and Jiang rose to national leadership in China's tobacco monopoly by climbing the ladder of tobacco administration in that province. Born in 1950, Jiang will be 62 in 2012.
 - **Zhong Shan:** Since serving as vice governor in Zhejiang from 2003, Zhong was appointed vice minister of commerce in 2008. Zhong was born in 1955 and so will be 57 in 2012.

Academics

Xi may also know some of Fujian's and Zhejiang's leading academic administrators. These include:

- **Pan Yunhe:** Since 2006, Pan has served as vice president and deputy party secretary of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Between 1995 and 2006, he was president of Zhejiang University in Hangzhou. He was born in 1946.
- **Yang Wei:** Before becoming president of Zhejiang University in 2006, Yang served two years as dean of the School of Aerospace at Qinghua University, Xi Jinping's alma mater. Yang was born in 1954 and so will be 58 in 2012.
- **Wu Minsheng:** President of Fuzhou University since 2002, Wu taught in Qinghua University's Department of Mechanical Engineering. Xi graduated from Qinghua in the related Department of Chemical Engineering in 1974.

Politburo Connections

Aside from personal connections that may serve Xi in his efforts to consolidate power should he become party general secretary in 2012, his rise to national prominence since 2007 undoubtedly benefited from his experience in the provinces. As vice governor and deputy party secretary on the Fujian CCP Committee in the 1990s, his immediate superior was Jia Qinglin, who served as party chief in the province from 1993 to 1996. Jia was transferred to lead the Beijing CCP Committee in 1996, in the wake of the 1995 Chen Xitong affair, and named to the Politburo at the 15th Party Congress in 1997. Xi likely played an instrumental role in delimiting the taint of the 1999 Yuanbao corruption scandal in Xiamen on Jia and his wife, Lin Youfang.

In the late 1990s, Xi also sat on the Fujian CCP Committee with He Guoqiang, who served as governor of the province from 1996 to 1999; Xi succeeded He in that role in 1999. From 2002 to 2007, He served as head of the party Organization Department and likely facilitated Xi's promotion to party chief in Zhejiang and perhaps in Xi's rise to central party politics in 2007. Politburo member Wang Zhaoguo served as Fujian governor from 1987 to 1990, while Xi was serving in Ningde prefecture. Finally, Xi succeeded Politburo member Zhang Dejiang as Zhejiang party chief when Zhang was appointed party boss in Guangdong in 2003.

During his 2003–2007 tenure as Zhejiang party chief, Xi accompanied several Politburo leaders during their inspection tours of the province. These included: Li Changchun (tour in May 2003); He Guoqiang (also May 2003); Huang Ju (January 2004); Wu Guanzheng (July 2005); Wu Yi (November 2005); Jia Qinglin (December 2005); Zeng Qinghong (April 2006); and Zeng Peiyan (May 2006). In 2001, together with Fujian party chief Song Defu, Xi accompanied retired NPC chairman and former Politburo Standing Committee member Qiao Shi during his Spring Festival stay in Fujian. At the 2005 annual session of the NPC, Xi presided over the Zhejiang provincial delegation's group discussion with Hu Jintao, and at the 2006 session he presided over the delegation's meeting with Premier Wen Jiabao. Finally, in August 2003, Xi led a Zhejiang delegation to Urumqi for a "joint economic and social development forum" between Zhejiang and Xinjiang convened with Wang Lequan, the region's party chief and concurrently a Politburo member.

With respect to old school ties, Xi is a member of the larger contingent of leaders who graduated from Qinghua University. These alumni connections include Hu Jintao, the current National People's Congress Chairman Wu Bangguo, and the current chairman of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission, Wu Guanzheng, all of whom sit on the Politburo Standing Committee. Among regular members of the Politburo, State Councilor and former United Front Work Department chief Liu Yandong and Xi graduated from the same engineering department at Qinghua, Liu in 1970 and Xi four years later.

Notes

¹ One account of Xi's experiences in the Mao period is Wu Ming, 吳鳴, 習近平傳 (*A Biography of Xi Jinping*) (Hong Kong: 香港文藝出版社, 2008), 17–65.

² See "Xi Jinping and the Party Apparatus," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 25 (Summer 2008).

³ Zhang Wenxian & Ilan Alon, *Biographical Dictionary of New Chinese Entrepreneurs and Business Leaders* (Northampton, Mass: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009), 48–49.