Leadership Successions and Patterns of Power Sharing in China

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Abstract

Power sharing is essential for the longevity of authoritarian regimes, but how authoritarian elites actually share power still remains inadequately understood. This article examines the patterns of power sharing within the top echelon of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Contrary to the conventional wisdom that power sharing in single-party regimes is institutionalized through formal, deliberative institutions, we argue that informal cleavages and coalitions created by leadership successions played a much more fundamental role in shaping the balance of power among the high-level party elites. Leveraging a new biographical database, we estimate the distribution of power within the CCP leadership during the post-Tiananmen era as measured by elites’ influence over high-level appointments. We find that the allocation of appointment power exhibits a clear intergenerational divide, with the former and current paramount leaders being the most important players in the power sharing bargain. We also show that the while the power of the successor is most constrained when he is faced with a cohesive group of countering elites united under a single former leader, the absence of such a dominant coalition leader and the presence of multiple power centers can both produce opportunities for power consolidation.

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1 Introduction

Power sharing is indispensable for the longevity of authoritarian regimes. To stay in power, dictators need to share political and economic spoils with other elites in exchange for their support and services. A growing body of scholarship has been devoted to understanding both the challenges to credible power sharing in autocracies and their implications for those regimes’ political and institutional developments.¹ However, many important theoretical and empirical questions about the dynamics of authoritarian power sharing still remain inadequately answered: For instance, who are the main players in power sharing bargains? What determines the balance of power within the elites? And why is it that, even under the same political regime, some dictators have been able to accumulate more personal power than others?

In this article, we tackle these questions by studying power sharing within the top echelon of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The case of China is not only practically important, given its rising influence on a global scale, but also theoretically puzzling. China during the post-Tiananmen era (1989 ~ the present) is widely viewed as one of a few exemplary cases of highly stable and institutionalized power sharing under a single-party authoritarian regime. The common perception about Chinese politics during this period is that the CCP has been undergoing a process of continuous institutionalization. This process is characterized by the development of both formal rules and tacit norms that regulate key aspects of elite interactions, and culminated in the creation of the so-called collective leadership, which effectively perpetuates the power sharing arrangement among the ruling elites.² According to this view, the personal authority of the paramount leader will be increasingly constrained by the established rules and procedures and there will be an equalizing tendency in power distribution between the dictator and other members of the collective leadership (especially the Politburo Standing Committee, PSC hereafter), which serves as the foundation of the CCP’s resilience.³

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¹For challenges to credible power sharing, see Magaloni 2008; Svolik 2012. Several studies also argue that a dictator’s desire to sustain credible power sharing arrangements with the elites can result in the development of formal political institutions. See Boix and Svolik 2013; Dal Bo and Powell 2009.
²See Nathan and Gilley 2003.
³For examples of such arguments, see Svolik 2012, chapter 4; Nathan 2003; Wang and Vangeli 2016; Zheng 2015.
However, several important phenomena in Chinese politics during this period cast serious doubt on this conventional wisdom that power sharing under the CCP has become increasingly institutionalized. First, despite the development of an elaborate set of rules and procedures to govern elite exits, the influence of retired leaders remains a critical and enduring feature of Chinese politics that has not been significantly weakened by the institutionalization process. Ample anecdotes suggest that paramount party leaders often continued to wield substantial influence behind the scene long after they gave up all their formal positions (e.g., Deng Xiaoping after 1989 and Jiang Zemin after 2004). Second, in contrast to the view that formal institutions will become progressively stronger in constraining the incumbent’s power, we have witnessed in the past two decades marked fluctuations in the personal authority of individual paramount leaders that are inconsistent with a linear view of institutionalization. For example, Jiang Zemin (party general secretary, 1989-2002) was very much constrained by his senior PSC colleagues at the beginning of his term as general secretary, but became a much more dominant figure toward the end of his term, when the institutions were supposed to be more developed. More recently, after a decade of seemingly institutionalized politics under Hu Jintao (general secretary, 2002-2012), the current general secretary, Xi Jinping, has defied the widely-held belief that he would just be another weak leader with limited power, by achieving a degree of personal authority that is almost on par with earlier revolutionary leaders like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. If power sharing in China has indeed been highly institutionalized, how do we then account for both the persistence of non-institutional elements in elite politics and the considerable variations in incumbents’ personal power?

To explain these puzzling phenomena, we offer in this article a new theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of authoritarian power sharing by highlighting the role of a crucial but often overlooked political process—leadership succession. Our framework departs from the existing literature’s common focus on formal institutions and emphasizes instead the role of information sharing.

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4Tien and Zhu 2000.
5For example, Milan Svolik predicts that “Xi Jinping, the presumptive successor to Hu Jintao as the ‘paramount’ leader of China, will assume that post with an authority that may appear curiously circumscribed for a dictator.” See Svolik 2012, 85. For another example of such predictions, see Li 2012.
6See Vogel 2015.
\textit{mal} intergenerational factors in shaping the distribution of power in dictatorships. Specifically, we argue that in order to mitigate the tremendous uncertainties associated with the transfer of raw political power, a dictator who plans to pass down the mantle of leadership to the next generation will often have to undertake measures that will simultaneously empower and constrain his designated successor. Such measures usually involve, among other things, fostering an informal coalition of elites in the incoming leadership to share power with the successor and counterbalance his influence. As a result, in systems where the succession considerations are salient, we expect power sharing to take place primarily between the incumbent dictator and the informal coalition led by the former patriarch. We further argue that structural features of the elite coalition produced by the succession process are critical determinants of the stability of the power sharing arrangement: When elites in the countering coalition are united and focused, they can usually sustain a balanced distribution of power by imposing effective collective constraints on the incumbent. By contrast, fragmentation within the countering coalition may weaken elites’ ability to hold the incumbent at bay, and pave the way for the rise of a powerful autocrat.

To empirically assess the patterns of authoritarian power sharing is a challenging task because the distribution of power within elites is typically difficult to measure quantitatively, especially for autocracies where politics is highly secretive in nature. We overcome this challenge by focusing on one crucial aspect of political power: the ability to place people into powerful offices. Using a new database that provides to our knowledge the most fine-grained coverage of political biographies of Chinese elites in the past two decades, we estimate how the authority to appoint close associates to the Politburo—the CCP’s highest decision-making body—is distributed within the top leadership. Consistent with the main argument, we find that overall the distribution of power in the top echelon of the CCP elites during the post-Tiananmen era exhibits a clear intergenerational divide, whereby the most important players in the power sharing bargain are the current and the former paramount leaders. In particular, we show that while the incumbent dictator typically enjoys a noticeable advantage in placing his lieutenants into important positions, the former paramount leader’s influence is equally visible—and especially large during major leadership reshuffles and over the
most powerful senior leadership positions in the Standing Committee. We also demonstrate that this intergenerational model provides better statistical than a wide range of models with alternative formulations of top-level elite alignments.

In addition to uncovering a common pattern of power sharing among the top CCP elites, we also analyze how this pattern changed over time. We demonstrate that there have been significant temporal variations in the relative power of paramount leaders vis-à-vis other ruling elites during the period analyzed, and that these variations corresponded closely with the structural characteristics of elite coalitions produced by prior succession dynamics: while an incumbent’s power is most constrained under a bipolar structure—in which he was confronted with a united countering coalitions led by a single healthy and active former patriarch—significant power expansion by the incumbent typically occurred following the death of the former leader or in an environment where multiple conflicting predecessors were present.

By highlighting the central role of intergenerational power transfer in shaping the balance of power within the elites, this study helps bring together two important strands of literature on authoritarian politics—the literature on power sharing and that on leadership succession. Although succession is widely recognized as one of the most important political processes for nondemocratic systems, its full impact on substantive political and policy outcomes in authoritarian regimes has so far still remained underappreciated. Joining a growing body of research that examines how different succession institutions and leadership turnover in general affect political stability and economic growth in dictatorships, we demonstrate in this article that succession dynamics also cast a long shadow over intra-elite power balance: retiring paramount leaders who are concerned with protecting their political legacy and personal security may deliberately try to manipulate the coalition structure in the subsequent leadership in order to protect their post-tenure interests, and these strategic maneuvers often have direct consequences for the relative degree of power that the successor could enjoy vis-à-vis other elites. Bringing leadership succession into the analysis

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8For the effect of succession institutions on political stability and regime survival, see Frantz and Stein 2016; Kokkonen and Sundell 2014. For the effects of leadership turnover in general, see Chiozza and Goemans 2011; Jones and Olken 2005; Treisman 2015.
of power sharing also suggests a possible way to endogenize the key parameter of initial power balance within the ruling coalition, which is currently being treated as largely exogenous in most game-theoretic models on authoritarian politics.9

Moreover, this study also extends the long-standing literature on factionalism and patronage politics in China.10 While a number of prior studies have shown that personal ties with top leaders are an important determinant of political promotions for Chinese officials,11 we take this fact as given and provide to our knowledge the first systematic study on the distribution of power among the top CCP elites. Unlike most of the promotion-centered studies, which are preoccupied with identifying individual-level predictors for career outcomes, our analyses pay special attention to the system-level power dynamics and develop a new framework for thinking about both the fundamental source of tension within the CCP’s top leadership and the causes for the ebbs and flows of paramount leaders’ personal power over time. Moreover, our empirical results also challenge the conventional view that power sharing in China has become a highly formal, institutionalized process12 by demonstrating that the ultimate constraints on the incumbent top leader’s power come not from his peers within the formal institution of collective leadership, but rather from the informal prowess of the former paramount leader, who often resides outside the formal ruling body.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. In the next section, we offer a general theoretical discussion of the central role of leadership succession in authoritarian power sharing, focusing on the competing imperatives that autocratic leaders face in managing smooth power transitions. Section 3 places the discussion in the context of contemporary China. Sections 4 and 5 discuss the main data source, measurement, and estimation framework. We present the empirical results in Sections 6 and 7 and offer some concluding remarks on the generalizability and implications of our findings in the final section.

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9 For examples, see Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin 2008; Svolik 2009.
12 For examples of such a view, see Hu 2014; Nathan 2003; Svolik 2012, chapter 4.
2 Leadership Succession and Power Sharing in Authoritarian Regimes

Our main theoretical contention is that leadership succession is central for understanding power sharing dynamics in authoritarian regimes. This contention lies above all in the fact that the transfer of raw political power is a highly risky and contentious process both for the regime as a whole and for the departing leader personally. As a result, smooth autocratic successions typically do not happen automatically, but instead involve careful planning and deliberate manipulation of both the formal institutions and the informal coalitions among the elites. These measures will in turn have long-lasting effects on the balance of power in the system for years to come.

To the extent that all humans are mortal, the transfer of sovereign power from one generation to the next is an inevitable issue that all political systems need to grapple with. Compared to democracies, where leadership turnovers are institutionalized through regular, competitive elections, autocracies typically have a much harder time in dealing with the transfer of power. Samuel Huntington regards succession as one of the “the gravest threat[s] to stability” in modern autocracies. Similarly, Diana Spearman argues that the uncertainties involved in nondemocratic succession are “one of the main disadvantages of dictatorship.” Comprehensive data on authoritarian leadership confirm the impressions of the early scholarship: most dictators who came to power after the end of World War II left their offices involuntarily due to coups initiated by regime insiders, and the majority of authoritarian regimes failed to conduct even a single peaceful leadership transition throughout their entire reigns.

Stated in most general terms, leadership successions in authoritarian regimes face two interrelated challenges. To begin with, stable successions can be disrupted by ambitious elites who wish to take advantage of the temporary power vacuum created by power transition and claim the crown.

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13 According to Joseph Schumpeter (1942), this is a definitional feature of democracy.
14 Huntington 1970.
15 Spearman 1939.
16 See Brownlee 2007b and table 1 of Svolik 2012.
17 Authors’ calculations based on data from Brownlee 2007b.
for themselves. To prevent such destabilizing power struggles from happening, a successor usually needs to be designated in advance and given sufficient authority to rule on his own upon the predecessor’s eventual departure. However, if a successor accumulates too much power too quickly, he may himself become a major threat to the dictator. In one classical form of the problem known as the crown-prince dilemma, a capable but impatient heir may try to stage a coup against the dictator and take over early. After the successor formally assumes power, he may also develop incentives to change his predecessor preferred policies in order to make his own mark in history. Sometimes, the need to establish one’s own reputation and authority may even motivate the new leader to stage direct attacks against the predecessor and his associates.

In light of these challenges, a dictator who wishes to pass down his power safely and smoothly thus often faces two potentially conflicting imperatives: On the one hand, he has to strengthen the successor’s position vis-à-vis other elites in order to deter unwanted challenges. On the other hand, however, he also needs to place certain limits the successor’s authority so that the successor is not free to act against the interests of his predecessor. Sometimes, a series of institutional arrangements would be made to reaffirm the successor’s status but also to clarify the scope and boundaries of his authority. However, these institutions can only remain functional when the successor is not too powerful to rewrite the rules. In order to make the institutional constraints binding, therefore, a much more important aspect of the dictator’s succession arrangement is to undertake measures that directly alter the distribution of power within the next leadership. Instead of passing all his power to the designated heir at once, for example, the departing leader might choose to bestow part of his power to a different group of elites and use them to disperse and limit successor’s power.

19 Both Saddam Hussein and Leonid Brezhnev, for example, took office by deposing their autocratic patron while serving as the heir apparent (see Karsh and Rautsi 1991; Taubman 2004). In Mexico, the period of maximato for president Plutarco Calles ended when he was ousted by Lazaro Cardenas, who was elevated to the presidency by Calles himself (see Krauze 1998). For general discussion, see Herz 1952; Tullock 1987.
20 Such an incentive exists for both democratic and autocratic successors, see Bunce 2014.
21 For example, Mao Zedong’s successor, Hua Guofeng, took forceful measures to remove several of Mao’s loyalists, including Mao’s widow, from important positions quickly after he took power. Similarly, in the Soviet Union, for example, Andropov undertook a systematic effort to clear the remaining influence of Brezhnev after he acceded to power. See Dittmer 1990 for Hua’s case and Clark 1993 for the Soviet case.
These countering elites, usually drawn from the departing leader’s personal networks, would serve as the eyes, ears, and hands of their patron, helping him to take control over essential positions, keep close track on the successor’s behaviors, and implement counterbalancing measures when necessary. Stalin, for example, brought in first Zhdanov and then Khrushchev in his later years to act as counterweights against Malenkov, who was his preferred heir. Similarly, after making Liu Shaoqi his designated successor and the second most powerful figure in the CCP, Mao Zedong also deliberately placed several of his protégés and close allies into the top leadership in order to check Liu’s growing influence.

With these political maneuvers geared towards preventing a successor from becoming too dominant, a de facto power sharing arrangement would arise between the successor and the countering coalition backed by the former paramount leader. From the former leader’s perspective, an ideal power structure that he would like to maintain is one in which the successor possesses greater power than any individual elites in the countering coalition, but is somewhat weaker than the coalition’s combined power. Such a balance would ensure both that the successor is strong enough to withstand challenges from any individual elite (or some subsets of them) and that the former leader, as the only person who has access to the entire network of countering elites, retains sufficient power to sanction and even overthrow the successor in times of necessity.

The stability of this power sharing arrangement, however, should not be taken as a fixed fact, because the successor often has strong incentive to use his prominent position to disrupt the status quo and grab more power at the expense of other ruling elites. While a dictator’s attempts to grab power can never be perfectly prevented, there are certain situations where such attempts are less likely to succeed than others. More specifically, we argue that the balance of power is most likely to persist under a bipolar coalition structure, under which the successor is faced by a strong and unified countering coalition. Power bargain under such a structure is typically zero-sum in nature, as the successor’s gain necessarily implies the countering coalition’s loss and vice versa. When the cost and benefits of balancing are fully internalized, each side thus has strong

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23 Rush 1965.
24 See MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006.
incentives to devote its full attention to monitor the other side’s behaviors and to respond promptly to signs of opportunism with countermeasures. From the successor’s perspective, in particular, a bipolar structure makes it very difficult to expand power without being detected, because his moves are being constantly and closely watched by an alerted predecessor and his associates. Moreover, when the countering elites are united, their combined strength will often allow them to impose on the successor significant sanctions that can more than offset the expected benefits from opportunistic actions. Both the high probability of ex ante detection and the severity of ex post punishment are therefore likely to discourage the successor from attempting to grab power beyond the agreed limits.

Alternatively, opportunities for the successor’s power consolidation may arise when the underlying coalition structure is altered by contingent or structural forces, some of which are inherent to the succession process. The death or incapacitation of the former patriarch, for example, poses one of the greatest challenges to the unity of the countering coalition. Without a common patron to resolve disputes and coordinate actions, the rest of the coalition members will have a much harder time in remaining united. In many cases, the former leader might have even deliberately kept his associates distant from each other as a way to secure his own central position in the coalition, and this would further reduce the likelihood that those associates will remain as a cohesive block after the former leader is gone.

In addition to the passing of the former leader, another situation under which the constraints on the successor may be weakened is when there are more than two major power holders in the system. This situation, again, may arise endogenously with the succession process as multiple prior rounds of leadership reshuffles produced several living predecessors, each with an independent power base of his own. Such a multipolar structure may, paradoxically, imply weaker constraints on the
successor for several reasons. First, the countering coalition that each power holder can build on his own is likely to be smaller and weaker when multiple power centers coexist. Also, to the extent that imposing effective constraints on the successor can have positive externalities that benefit elites outside one’s own coalition (i.e., a weaker incumbent could mean a greater share of the pie for everyone), coalition leaders may prefer to free ride on other’s counterbalancing measures rather than undertaking such costly actions on their own. This implies that the total level of effort devoted to balancing is likely to be lower under the multipower structure than if the rest of the elites were united. In some cases, major coalition leaders may even have intense disputes among themselves and perceive each other, rather than the successor, as the greater threat that needs to be contained. When cleavages and conflicts exist within the countering elites, a tactically savvy successor can exploit this situation to his own advantage by playing one side off against another.28 Although there is no guarantee that his attempted power grab will always succeed, an environment with a fragmented coalition structure and complicated elite rivalries does offer the successor more room for strategic maneuvering than one in which the countering elites are united and fixated on the successor himself.

3 Succession Politics and Intergenerational Power Sharing in China

Throughout history, the considerations of succession have figured prominently in Chinese politics. During most of the imperial era, succession was a central matter that preoccupied emperors as well as their cocubines, princes, and ministers and generals, and have produced numerous bloody tragedies that often resulted in the decline or collapse of dynasties. Under the CCP’s reign, leadership succession also “loomed unusually large as an occasion for elite strife.”29 Compared to other

28In the Soviet Union, for example, Stalin’s early attempts to tighten his grip over the party machine received little attention from the party elites because other major factions at that time were preoccupied with checking the influence of Trotsky, who was a much more prominent figure and Lenin’s heir presumptive. See Deutscher 1990.

29Dittmer 1990.
autocracies, successions under the CCP are especially sensitive and conflict prone because the top party leaders are “distinctive in the strength of their attachment to pre-mortem succession arrangements.” The presence of one, or sometimes several, living predecessors in pre-mortem transitions is often a major source of conflicts and needs to be handled with delicate political arrangements. Almost all paramount party leaders have adopted the practice of intergenerational power sharing in managing the succession process, albeit with different degrees of success. According to Dittmer, this process

...approximates that of a monarchical regency: the incumbent announces a wish to retire, designates an heir apparent, and invests this princeling with plenary powers. The incumbent then steps into the wings to think about more profound matters, ready however to reappear if needed.

The primary means for the former leader to preserve influence after retirement is through tight control over personnel matters. Prior to his retirement, the departing paramount leader would often elevate a number of his loyal lieutenants to powerful political and military positions in the system. Through the services of these loyal followers, the old patriarch would be able to retain control over some of the key power positions after retirement and continue to wield influence from behind the scene.

Although the specific definition of critical positions varies over time, it is generally agreed that during the post-Tiananmen era the nerve center of the regime is located in the Politburo and its Standing Committee. As the de jure highest decision-making body for the party, the Politburo meets monthly to deliberate the most important political and policy matters in the country. When the Politburo is not in session, its responsibilities are delegated to the Standing Committee, which consists of seven to nine most senior members of the Politburo who meet on a weekly basis. The decision made by the Politburo and its Standing Committee often carry the authority of law. Within the Politburo, decision-making is allegedly based on consensus, with extensive consultation and formal voting on the most important matters. Given the primary importance of this leadership body, power sharing between the former and current paramount leaders is ultimately about control.
over the Politburo seats.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that top leaders who were about to leave power have actively tried to pack the Politburo—especially the Standing Committee—with their preferred candidates before they stepped down from office. During the transition from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin at the 14th Party Congress (1992), for example, Deng handpicked five of the seven Standing Committee members who would be governing with Jiang in the next five years, including a deputy premier known for his bold pro-reform stance (Zhu Rongji), a seasoned general and long-term subordinate to Deng in the army (Liu Huaqing), and a young official who was apparently the heir apparent that Deng had chosen for Jiang (Hu Jintao). Similarly, when Jiang passed the mantle of party leadership to Hu Jintao in 2002, he not only expanded the size of the Standing Committee from seven to nine and placed additional candidates, who were his former colleagues from both Shanghai Municipality and the Machinery Ministry, in this enlarged group as a way to check Hu’s power.

Although these anecdotal observations provide suggestive evidence that power sharing in China is strongly shaped by the dynamics of intergenerational power transfer, they themselves do not constitute the most definitive evidence for this claim. For instance, those who advanced to the top might have also shared other career-enhancing attributes, such as political experience, seniority, or education, in addition to their putative connections with certain political figures, and the measured influence, if any, may reflect elites’ political goals other than coping with leadership succession. To more rigorously test our hypotheses, we develop in the next section a systematic way to gauge the distribution of power within the CCP’s top leadership and use it to examine how successions shape elite power sharing.

4 Data and Measurement

While power in authoritarian regimes is a complex, multi-faceted object, in this article we focus specifically on its manifestation in the personnel dimension; that is, the ability to appoint followers to important political positions. Because of the high visibility of appointments and the substantive
influence that political offices wield, the division of control over key appointments is widely regarded as a quintessential element in power sharing arrangements in most authoritarian regimes.\textsuperscript{30}

We gauge a top leader’s personal power by estimating how effective he is in promoting their lower-level associates to the Politburo or its Standing Committee. We construct an original database that records the career mobility of political elites spanning China’s three recent major leadership successions. Our primary data source is the Chinese Political Elite Database (CPED), which is a new biographical database that contains standardized, machine-readable information on the demographic and professional backgrounds of over 4,000 Chinese elites since late the 1980s. The full database includes complete career records (to the resolution of month) for all full and alternate Central Committee members (about 1600+ individuals) as well as provincial standing committee members, city mayors, and city secretaries since 2000 (~2500+ individuals).

For the analysis below, we focus specifically on the full and alternate Central Committee members (CC and ACC) between the 13th to the 17th Party Congresses (1987–2007). As in many other communist regimes, the Central Committee of the CCP is the main elite body in China,\textsuperscript{31} comprised of senior officials who concurrently hold key positions in the party, government, and military. This group of officials constitutes the primary pool of candidates for the top party leadership posts. (Figure 1 illustrates the political hierarchy in China.) Virtually all Politburo and Standing Committee members during this period were drawn from the CC or the ACC. We exclude from the sample sitting Standing Committee members, who are already at the very top of the system and therefore face no possibility of further promotion. The full sample consists of 945 distinct officials and 1623 official-congress observations.

To measure informal ties between top leaders and their associates, we follow the conventional approach by coding two individuals as connected if they have overlapping work experiences prior to their advancement to the top leadership.\textsuperscript{32} This measure is motivated by the observation that

\textsuperscript{30}See Geddes 2003, 72; Magaloni 2008. Most seasoned observers of Chinese politics also use changes in political appointments to monitor and infer political dynamics within the elites.

\textsuperscript{31}There are approximately 200 full CC members and 150 ACC members for each party congress.

\textsuperscript{32}For similar measures, see Jia, Kudamatsu and Seim 2015; Shih, Adolph and Liu 2012.
Chinese politicians often use their positions in formal organizations to recruit followers and expand their informal power bases. While we are fully aware that overlapping work experience itself may not always produce patron-client ties, a substantive reading of the coding results and cross-validation with expert sources suggest that this coding strategy serves as a good approximation for elite relations at least at the central committee level. A recent study also shows that work-based connection measures significantly outperform measures based on shared school and hometown backgrounds in predicting political promotions. More specifically, we adopt the following formal definition:

**Definition 1.** A lower-level official C is connected to a higher-level patron P if and only if C had overlapping work experience with P or one of P’s key political allies in the PSC (prior to their advancement to the top leadership posts).  

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33 Dittmer 1978.
34 See Keller 2016. We do recognize that personal ties can too be built upon shared ascriptive attributes, but such ties would typically also manifest in overlapping work experiences, as the client gets transferred to the patron’s current organization or moves with the patron along the hierarchy. Therefore, work overlap can be thought of as a sufficient statistics for the existence of other types of informal ties.
35 A top leadership position is defined as one at the Politburo level or above. We also exclude overlapping experience in extremely general/terminal career organizations, such as the Politburo and Standing Committee (政治局及常委
One key methodological departure from the existing studies is that our connection measure incorporates ties with both the top leader himself and his PSC allies. This treatment is justified because the political influence of a senior leader typically affects not only people who are directly connected to him, but on many occasions also those affiliated with his factional allies. Stalin, for example, had in his later years extended patronage primarily through promoting clients of his loyal protégés. Chinese leaders have also been found to frequently use intermediaries in recruiting followers—especially those from a much younger generation. The specific procedures for constructing the connection measure are as follows: First, we run the algorithm to determine whether a CC or ACC member is connected to any PSC member or the current or the former paramount leaders themselves. Second, we collapse these connections by “factions” based on the PSC members’ own connections with the paramount leaders. Political affiliations of the PSC members are coded manually based on a wide range of expert sources (for details of the coding and a list of references consulted, see the online appendix). The manual coding task is relatively easy because the total number of PSC members is quite small (under twenty during the period of interest) and there is extensive coverage on their personal and political backgrounds in both academic and journalistic sources. The detailed factional breakdown is provided in Table 1. The final products we obtain are indicators for whether a given CC or ACC member is connected to either the departing/former leader’s faction or the incoming/current leader’s faction.

### Notes

会), State Council (国务院), Secretariat (中央书记处), the Central Military Commission (中央军委), the People’s Congress (人大), and People’s Consultative Conference (政协). For Deng Xiaoping, who was much more senior than his clients by the end of the 1980s, we also draw qualitative information provided by Huang Jing to supplement the indicators generated by our automatic method. For details, see Huang 2000, 364 and 384.
Table 1: Factional Alignment in the Top Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Congress</th>
<th>Departing/former Leader’s Faction</th>
<th>Incoming/current Leader’s Faction</th>
<th>Reshuffle type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13th to 14th (1992)</td>
<td>Deng Xiaoping</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th to 16th (2002)</td>
<td>Jiang Zemin, Li Lanqing</td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th to 18th (2012)</td>
<td>Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, Li Keqiang</td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table shows the factional breakdown among the top CCP leaders (PSC members and retired paramount leaders) since the 14th Party Congress. Individuals belonging to the same faction are indicated with the same color. The main patrons’ names (faction leader) are underlined.

5 Estimation Framework

We estimate the influence of different factions using logistic regressions with the following specification:

\[
\text{Prob(Promoted to PB/PSC}_{i,t}) = \logit^{-1}\left(\delta_1\text{Departing/former leader’s faction}_{it} + \delta_2\text{Incoming/current leader’s faction}_{it} + \delta_3\text{Other factions}_{it} \right) + X_i\beta 
\]

where \(i\) indexes the individual officials and \(t\) the party congress. The dependent variable takes a value of 1 if a subject in the sample entered the Politburo (for ACC and CC members) or its Stand-
ing Committee (for ACC, CC, and Politburo members) at the next party congress.\textsuperscript{36} Since the same individual can appear in multiple party congresses, the standard errors are clustered at the official level to account for the possibility that unobserved factors that affect promotion might be correlated within an individual across multiple party congresses.

The two key independent variables are binary indicators for being connected to the departing/former leader’s faction and the incoming/current leaders’ faction, respectively. In addition to the two main connection variables, we also include in all models a binary variable, Other factions, to indicate whether the subject has connection with any sitting PSC member who does not belong to either of the two major factions.

$X$ is a vector of control variables that may simultaneously affect the promotion probability and the likelihood of getting connected to prominent factions. We include a set of party congress dummies to remove any systematic difference in the overall rate of promotion across time,\textsuperscript{37} and a number of standard demographic controls, such gender, ethnicity, and education. Furthermore, we also control for whether a subject previously worked as a provincial secretary (Former Provincial Secretary) or had a parent or parent-in-law who was a former CC member (Princeling), because both attributes are likely to be associated with greater prospects of political advancement and their distributions may vary systematically across different factions.\textsuperscript{38}

We take special care to account for the effect of political seniority, which can be one of the most important confounders for our analysis. Since those who are connected to the departing leaders tend to be on average older and more senior, they may be promoted to high-level positions more frequently simply because of their seniority rather than connections with the former leader per se. Our faction-based measure of connection partly mitigates this problem by including indirect connections with the retired leader through his current PSC allies, who are usually in the same age

\textsuperscript{36}One potential concern is that because of the small size of the Politburo (~20), the Stable Unit Treatment Assumption may be violated because incidences of promotion are not i.i.d. However, it should be noted that the overall size of the Politburo (and its Standing Committee) is not fixed but often a result of extensive bargaining among the top elites. Powerful leaders can manage to alter the size of the Politburo to their own advantages.

\textsuperscript{37}For instance, there are typically more promotions in the major reshuffle years (1992, 2002, and 2012) than minor reshuffle years (1997, 2007).

\textsuperscript{38}Cheng Li, for example, notes that Jiang Zemin’s faction tends to disproportionately recruit members from the elite families. See Li 2012.
cohort as the successor. To further address this issue, we also include in the regression model a categorical variable indicating each subject’s party rank in the previous congress (i.e., ACC vs. CC vs. Politburo), as well as two sets of third-order polynomials to flexibly control for the effects of age and time spent in the Central Committee.

6 Pooled Analysis: Intergenerational Power Sharing within the CCP, 1992-2012

6.1 Baseline Results

Table 2 presents the main results on the respective influences of the departing and incoming leaders’ factions on the promotions to the Politburo or its Standing Committee, pooling observations from all five party congresses. Model 1 uses the most parsimonious specification with only the three connection variables. Through Model 2 to 4, we incrementally add the duration polynomials, the dummies for initial ranks, and a set of additional covariates for demographic and political backgrounds. The main results are fairly consistent throughout the different models: Both the incoming/current leader and departing/former leader appear to wield large and statistically significant influence over the selection of Politburo members, and the point estimate in fact somewhat larger for the departing leader’s effect than that of the successor’s. To appreciate the substantive significance of these coefficients, we present in column 5 the marginal effects when all other covariates in Model 4 are set at medium. All else being equal, connections with the departing leader’s and incoming leaders’ factions increase the probability of being promoted to the Politburo or its Standing Committee by 5 and 4.6 percentage points, respectively. Since the average rate of promotion in the sample is only about 4.7 percent, these effects represent a 106 percent and a 98 percent increase from the baseline probability, respectively.

We also note an interesting pattern in the effect of connections with other incumbent Standing Committee members who did not belong to either of the two major camps (Other factions). The
estimated effects are quite strong in the parsimonious models, but become much smaller once the initial party ranks and other more covariates are controlled for. In other words, PSC members who belonged to neither of the two major factions did not appear to enjoy much *extra* influence over high-level appointments except for the fact that they tended to have more senior followers who were likely to be eligible candidates for those positions. Therefore, contrary to the prevailing view that the Standing Committee is the primary institution for power sharing under the CCP, this result suggests that not everyone in the PSC enjoyed equal or independent influence over personnel matters. The real influence over high-level appointments seems to be ultimately due to affiliations with the former or current paramount leaders, rather than formal membership in the collective leadership body.

6.2 Comparing the Goodness of Fit across Models

Does this intergenerational model of power sharing represent a more accurate depiction of the reality of elite politics in China than other possible formulations? To address this question, we experiment with several other ways of coding the top-level elite alignment and compare them with the original model in terms of statistical fit. The results are presented in Table 3. In the first two permutations, we remove one of the indicators for affiliations with the departing and incoming paramount leaders’ factions, respectively. Models 4 and 5 test two “big man” models by only including a dummy for being *directly* connected to the departing or the incoming leaders themselves. Models 6 through 10 further test five different forms of alignments based on the formal rankings within the PSC. Finally, Model 11 represents the scenario where all PSC members matter equally by using a single dummy to indicate connection with any of the incumbent PSC members.39 (We provide a more detailed discussion of each of the coding strategies in the online appendix.) For each model, we provide fit statistics in the form of both conventional R-square style measures (McFadden’s $R^2$, Tjur’s $D$) and measures based on information criteria (AIC, BIC). Across all measures, our original coding provides consistently the best statistical fit for explaining

39 For details on the alternative coding strategies, see the online appendix.
the promotion patterns in the sample. Based on Raftery’s rule-of-thumb criterion that a difference of 6 or above in BIC scores indicates a strong difference in model performance,\textsuperscript{40} our original model indeed outperforms all the alternative models by a substantial margin.

\textsuperscript{40}Raftery 1995.
Table 2: Overall Patterns of Power Sharing: 14th–18th Party Congresses (1992-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV: Promotion to Politburo or Standing Committee</th>
<th>(1) Model 1</th>
<th>(2) Model 2</th>
<th>(3) Model 3</th>
<th>(4) Model 4</th>
<th>Marginal effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departing/former leader’s faction</td>
<td>1.631***</td>
<td>1.583***</td>
<td>1.362***</td>
<td>1.327***</td>
<td>0.051***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.237)</td>
<td>(0.258)</td>
<td>(0.289)</td>
<td>(0.296)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming/current leader’s faction</td>
<td>1.045***</td>
<td>1.115***</td>
<td>1.200***</td>
<td>1.214***</td>
<td>0.046***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.284)</td>
<td>(0.283)</td>
<td>(0.284)</td>
<td>(0.285)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factions</td>
<td>0.776**</td>
<td>0.833**</td>
<td>0.689*</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.327)</td>
<td>(0.325)</td>
<td>(0.368)</td>
<td>(0.375)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full CC</td>
<td>1.636***</td>
<td>1.352***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.042***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.369)</td>
<td>(0.376)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politburo</td>
<td>2.520***</td>
<td>1.852***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.072**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.510)</td>
<td>(0.556)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.772</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.586)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>-2.151**</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.082**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.854)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College education</td>
<td>1.505</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.103)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former provincial secretary</td>
<td>0.619*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.024*</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.333)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeling</td>
<td>0.918**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.035**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.442)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The first three columns report the coefficient estimates from logistic regression with duration polynomials. The forth column reports the marginal effects based on Model 3. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level are reported in parentheses. 
*p < 0.1, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01 (two-tailed test)
Table 3: Comparison of Fit with Other Ways to Code Factional Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Original</th>
<th>(2) Only departing leader’s faction</th>
<th>(3) Only incoming leader’s faction</th>
<th>(4) Only departing leader</th>
<th>(5) Only incoming leader</th>
<th>(6) Top 2</th>
<th>(7) Top 2 vs. rest</th>
<th>(8) Top 3</th>
<th>(9) Top 3 vs. rest</th>
<th>(10) Top 2 vs. Middle vs. Bottom 2</th>
<th>(11) Equal Influence within PSC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-237.86</td>
<td>-244.65</td>
<td>-249.34</td>
<td>-255.24</td>
<td>-250.41</td>
<td>-248.53</td>
<td>-242.53</td>
<td>-246.37</td>
<td>-244.80</td>
<td>-244.27</td>
<td>-252.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McFadden’s $R^2$</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tjur’s D</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>507.72</td>
<td>519.29</td>
<td>528.68</td>
<td>540.47</td>
<td>530.82</td>
<td>527.06</td>
<td>517.07</td>
<td>522.73</td>
<td>521.60</td>
<td>522.54</td>
<td>534.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>593.99</td>
<td>600.17</td>
<td>609.56</td>
<td>621.35</td>
<td>611.70</td>
<td>607.94</td>
<td>603.34</td>
<td>603.61</td>
<td>607.88</td>
<td>614.21</td>
<td>614.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: In each row, bold figures indicate the model with the best fit (i.e., highest $R^2$/Log Likelihood or lowest AIC/BIC)
6.3 Differentiated Control over Politburo Seats

We next investigate how the former and current paramount leaders divided their influence over Politburo seats with different levels of importance. As discussed above, the more important seats within the Politburo are those in the Standing Committee (PSC), which enjoys the predominant authority over national policy making and high-level personnel selection. Given the importance of this smaller leadership body in national politics, a departing leader who is concerned with limiting the power of his successor will naturally want to ensure that his own followers will enjoy a greater presence in the next PSC than successor’s. Empirically, this implies that connections with the former leader will have a greater impact than connections with the successor on promotions to these powerful PSC seats. To test this implication, we estimate a multinomial logit model with three possible outcomes: (1) not promoted, (2) promoted to the Politburo (but not the PSC), and (3) promoted to the PSC.\(^{41}\) To facilitate interpretation, we present in Table 4 marginal effects of the main coefficients for the two promotion outcomes (with not promoted being the base). Consistent with the expectation, we find that while the former and current leaders commanded comparable influences over promoting an ACC/CC member to the Politburo, the former leader indeed enjoyed a substantial advantage over his successor when it comes to appointments at the PSC level. The difference in influence at the PSC-level is not only statistically significant at the 90% level (\(p\) value from one-tailed test= 0.074) but also substantively large: the effect of connection with the departing/former leader’s faction is more than two times greater than that with the incoming/current leader, and the difference is as large as the baseline probability itself.

7 Analyses by Successions

The pooled analysis shows that power sharing in China has a clear, intergenerational divide, in which the current paramount leader’s power is balanced first and foremost by that of his predeces-

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\(^{41}\) We also perform various tests of the assumption of the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA). Both the Hausman and Small-Hsiao tests fail to reject the null that the choice between two outcomes is independent of the other alternative for all pairs of outcomes.
### Table 4: Variations across Positions of Different Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline: NOT promoted to PB or PSC</th>
<th>DV: Promoted to Politburo or Standing Committee</th>
<th>(1) Outcome: Promoted to PB</th>
<th>(2) Outcome: Promoted to PSC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departing/former leader’s faction</td>
<td>0.033***</td>
<td>0.020***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming/current leader’s faction</td>
<td>0.042***</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous rank: CC</td>
<td>0.054***</td>
<td>-0.018***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.121***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>-0.123***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College education</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.114***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former provincial secretary</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.016***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeling</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration: CC1−3 and age1−3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline probability</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of individuals</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1623</td>
<td>1623</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** This table reports marginal effects from multinomial logistic regressions. The baseline outcome is not promoted to Politburo. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level are reported in parentheses.

" $p < 0.1$, " $p < 0.05$, " $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test)

In this section, we analyze in detail the power dynamics in each of the CCP’s three major leadership transitions to show how the succession process produced changing coalition structures that led to variations in power sharing patterns. We run separate regressions for each of the five party congresses, using the same specification as Model 4 in Table 2. Figure 2 visually displays the quantitative results up to the 17th Party Congress. Each row represents a full round of succession, which includes both a major leadership reshuffle (i.e., change of top leader) and a minor reshuffle that took place five years later.

Several important observations follow. First, we note that the patterns of power sharing in
the first two major leadership reshuffles (1992 and 2002) are quite similar: While both the departing and incoming paramount leaders appeared to command significant influence over top-level appointments, the incoming leader’s influence was clearly overshadowed by his predecessor. In both cases, the estimated effects of the departing paramount leader more than double those of their successors’. This is consistent with both our theoretical expectation that a countering coalition is being created prior to a paramount leader’s imminent retirement and the anecdotes that both Jiang and Deng tried to pack the high-leadership with their preferred candidates before they formally stepped down.

Turning to the minor reshuffles five years later, however, we observe two diverging patterns. Comparing these two minor reshuffles allows us to gain insights as to both the conditions under which a balance of power can be maintained and the great uncertainties inherent in such a balance. One critical difference between these two reshuffles was the personal condition of the former leader: In the 1997 reshuffle, Deng Xiaoping passed away just a few months before the party congress convened. Deng’s passing was a major blow to the unity of the countering coalition that he put together in 1992. Now facing a leaderless coalition of politicians with different, and sometimes conflicting goals and priorities, Jiang Zemin, Deng’s successor, was able to exploit this unique opportunity and effectively divide-and-conquer this group by forming alliances with some while alienating others.\footnote{Most notably, Jiang was able to force one of his major rivals at that time, Qiao Shi, a close protégé of Deng Xiaoping’s, into retirement. Jiang’s oust of Qiao was supported by several senior leaders who formerly belonged to Deng’s coalition but nonetheless decided to side with Jiang on this issue because of their own goals and ambitions. For related discussion, see Nathan and Gilley 2003, chapter 6.} The 15th Party Congress thus turned out to be a major victory for Jiang: as illustrated in the top-right corner of Figure 2, Jiang’s faction was the only one that enjoyed a significant advantage in promoting followers in 1997, whereas Deng’s PSC appointees on average had no additional influence over high-level appointments.

By contrast, the 2007 reshuffle represents a scenario where a former patriarch used the countering coalition to deliberately balance the influence of his successor. At the 17th Party Congress, the retired general secretary, Jiang Zemin, was still quite healthy and politically active. With the backing of Jiang, the countering coalition remained strong and cohesive, and this ensured that
the allocation of powerful seats did not skew disproportionately in favor of the incumbent general secretary, Hu Jintao. As evidenced in the quantitative results, the distribution of personnel at the 17th Party Congress shows an almost exact balance between Hu’s faction and the countering coalition led by Jiang.

Taken together, this sharp contrast between the power sharing patterns in 1997 and 2007 provides additional evidence as to where the real center of power lies within the CCP’s top leadership. Contrary to the conventional view, our results suggest that the ultimate constraints on the incumbent paramount leader come not from his peers in the collective leadership body, but rather from the former paramount leader who is typically outside the formal ruling coalition. Without an influential predecessor to provide support and coordinate actions, it would be rather difficult for the rest of the ruling elites to effectively counter the incumbent’s strategic maneuvering simply on their own.

Finally, we turn to the most recent transition from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. Readers who are familiar with recent developments in China may note that Xi has managed to grab more power within a much shorter period than both of his predecessors. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of personnel power at the 18th Party Congress and confirms the general impression that Xi was gaining an upper hand: the point estimate for Xi’s influence over top-level appointments is in fact much larger than both of his predecessors—a pattern that never existed in earlier major reshuffles.

What then explains Xi’s quick and surprising consolidation of power? We argue that, like the 1997 case, it is a result of the lack of a unified countering coalition. Unlike the 1997 case, however, the source of disunity is not the absence of an influential former leader, but rather the presence of multiple major power holders with conflicting interests. On the eve of the 2012 transition, the configuration of elite coalitions within the CCP features a unique multipolar structure in which

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43 The process of this deliberate balancing can be well illustrated by the following case: In September 2006, Chen Liangyu, then the party secretary of Shanghai and a close confidant of Jiang, was abruptly removed from his position under the charge of corruption, as a result of his lack of respect for the new administration under Hu Jintao. After Chen was sacked, however, Jiang and his associates acted immediately to control the damage by first blocking Hu’s nominations for Chen’s replacement and then ensuring that China’s wealthiest municipality would remain under their control. As a result, even though this removal caused some temporary disruptions, Hu’s attempt to expand his power failed to materialize in tangible political gains. See Li 2007.
a rising successor was faced with two, instead of one, predecessors. In addition to Hu Jintao, the immediate predecessor, Hu’s own predecessor, Jiang Zemin, was also alive and remained an influential player from behind the scene. As discussed above, a multipolar structure could lead to weaker constraints on the successor if these power holders are primarily concerned with containing each other’s influence rather than collectively balancing the successor’s. Given that Jiang had played an instrumental role in repeatedly limiting Hu’s power throughout the latter’s tenure, we have many reasons to believe that the relationship between the two was anything but friendly.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the period leading up to the 2012 transition, there were intense conflicts between the two former patriarchs, which Xi was able to exploit to his own advantage. Xi first secured his position as the heir apparent by currying favors with not only several important figures in Jiang Zemin’s faction but also Jiang himself. However, when Hu Jintao moved against Bo Xilai, an influential politician who had close ties with Jiang and one of the leading contenders for the PSC seats, Xi allied himself with Hu and cast a decisive vote that led to the arrest of Bo, thereby precluding a major potential challenger from entering his administration. Later, when Ling Jinhua, one of Hu’s closest aides, was found to have attempted to cover up a car accident that caused the death of Ling’s son, Xi sided with several senior members of the Jiang faction in precipitating Ling’s demotion (and later investigation). As Ling was transferred away from his position as the director of the CCP General Office (an equivalent of the White House chief of staff in the U.S.), Xi had the opportunity to fill the vacancy with one of his most trusted friends, and thereby place the party headquarters under his direct control. The intense and continuous conflicts between the two predecessors’ coalitions thus unintentionally created a propitious condition for Xi’s unexpected rise to preeminence.

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44For example, Xi worked under Jiang Qinglin, a key member of the Jiang faction, during his time in Fujian province. He also allegedly had a close relationship with Zeng Qinghong, another close aide to Jiang. As one of most conspicuous displays of his close ties with the Jiang faction at that time, during his visit to Germany as the vice president in October 2009, Xi handed to Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, two books written by Jiang. See Lam 2015, 57-60.

45See South China Morning Post 2012.

46The replacement was Li Zhanshu, who was a long-term friend of Xi since his early years. See Li 2014.
8 Concluding Remarks

A key lesson to be learned from this study is that leadership succession plays a vital role in shaping patterns of authoritarian power sharing by creating salient cleavages and coalitions within the ruling elites. Focusing on China during the post-Tiananmen era, we show that in a system where succession is the central issue, power sharing exhibits a clear intergenerational pattern that reflects the dual influence of both the current and former paramount leaders. We further demonstrate that the incumbent top leader’s power is most constrained when he is faced with a countering coalition united under a healthy and active predecessor, and that power consolidation typically arises in an environment where there are structural difficulties preventing elites from forming such a cohesive block.

While the empirical evidence is drawn from China, the central insight that succession matters for power sharing can be readily extended to understand political dynamics in other autocracies, especially those that have just embarked on, but have not yet achieved, fully institutionalized leadership transitions. One such example is contemporary Vietnam, another Communist regime that has managed to abolish lifelong tenure and initiate regular leadership reshuffles in the late 1980s. According to Tuong Vu,47 a crucial ingredient in the succession bargain made during Vietnam’s early transitions was that the retired top leaders would continue to enjoy substantial influence over the selection of the subsequent leadership in return for their agreement to step down. At the Sixth Party Congress in 1986, for example, several senior leaders (Truong Chinh, Van Dong, and Le Duc Tho) stepped down from the Central Committee but remained influential from behind the scene through lieutenants they appointed to the incoming Politburo. Similarly, when Nguyen Van Linh, the architect of economic reform in Vietnam, voluntarily gave up the post of party general secretary at the 7th Party Congress in 1991, he appointed a number of his allies from the south to key leadership positions in the Politburo to ensure the continuation of his reform policy.

As in Vietnam, Mexican political elites in the 1940s also appear to have adopted a similar intergenerational power sharing arrangement to ensure the stable and smooth passage of power.

47See Vu 2014.
When Lazaro Cardenas stepped down as the Mexican president after a single presidential term in 1940 (thereby establishing the first precedent of no presidential reelection), he left behind a full entourage of followers in the cabinet and other important sectors to contain the influence of his successor and ensure the continuation of his preferred policies. Cardenas’ successor, Avila Camacho, therefore had to rule for many years with a cabinet packed by people closely associated with the former president—a situation not entirely different from what Hu or Jiang faced when they first assumed office.

The evidence presented in this article has implications for our understanding of both authoritarian politics in general and Chinese politics in particular. For authoritarian politics, this study offers an important counterpoint to the current literature’s almost exclusive focus on the formal institutions. While we do not dispute the current literature’s central finding that formal institutions contribute to more credible power sharing by reducing information asymmetry and facilitating collective actions, the analysis presented here suggests that even in China—one of the stereotypical cases of institutionalized autocracies—the informal factors still play a much more important role than the formal institutions in determining how power is distributed among the elites. Not only do some of the most important figures in power sharing pacts often reside outside the ambit of the formal institutions of collective leadership, but the degree of constraints that these formal institutions can have on the incumbent also depends critically on the strength of the informal coalitions within the high leadership. Therefore, rather than being a lasting phenomenon, the seemingly institutionalized authoritarian politics—like what we have observed in China since the late 1980s and up until the rise of Xi—might simply be a mirage of temporary intergenerational power balance, a surface of otherwise informal political bargaining, and a short-term equilibrium in a political system where the uncertainties about succession are intrinsically and inherently embedded.

The point that imposing credible constraints on the incumbents requires a certain configura-

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48Niblo 2000.
49For example, see Brownlee 2007a; Gandhi 2008; Geddes 2003; Wright 2008.
50For a more systematic critique, see Pepinsky 2014. More broadly, recent research on institutionalism has also developed concepts such as institutional drift and conversion to account for uncertainties in institutionalization. See Mahoney and Thelen 2015.
tion of the elite coalition structure also bears general relevance for understanding the conditions under which personalized dictators arise. While conventional wisdom tends to attribute a dictator’s success in power consolidation to either luck or tactics (i.e., either contingency or agency), our analysis suggests that how much room the dictator can have for strategic maneuvering also depends on the structural features of the political environment—most importantly those that affect other elites’ ability to form effective coalitions to counterbalance the dictator’s power. While a systematic test of this claim would require a stand-alone cross-country analysis, numerous examples seem to suggest that, at least in single-party regimes, episodes of significant personalization of power—such as those by Nicolae Ceausescu, Daniel arap Moi, or Joseph Stalin—indeed often took place in an environment where the most dominant figure from the early generation has deceased. In another widely noted example of quick power consolidation, Mahathir Mohamad, the former prime minister of Malaysia, similarly only faced a predecessor whose health had significantly deteriorated by the time Mahathir assumed office. In all these cases, the incumbent—like Jiang in 1997 or Xi in 2012—enjoyed a relatively free hand in carrying out his political maneuvers, without having to face significant constraints from a powerful and active former patriarch.

For Chinese politics, this study provides suggestive evidence for both why China has been able to gradually institutionalize power transitions in the past two decades and why such institutionalization is still fragile. In contrast to the prevailing view that institutional development in China is largely permanent and linearly progressing, our findings suggest that institutionalization hinges critically on elites’ ability to develop an informal power sharing arrangement that is incentive-compatible to all major power holders in the system, both current and retired. When the underlying power sharing arrangement is disrupted, however, there is no guarantee that the

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51 As one prominent example of this “luck” view, Milan Svolik (2012, 62) uses a formal model to characterize the strategic interaction between a dictator and his ruling coalition, in which he argues that a dictator’s path from a first-among-equals to an invincible autocrat is primarily “a result of opportunism and luck.” For an example of the “tactic” view, Dan Slater (2003) explains the significant personalization of power under the former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad by Mahathir’s tactics—rigging, packing, and circumventing.

52 Milne and Mauzy 1999.

53 See, for example, Ma 2016; Nathan and Gilley 2003; Wang and Vangeli 2016; Zheng 2015.

54 Note that this pattern is also consistent with recent studies on rural Chinese societies, wherein some senior clan leaders retained important, albeit informal power in managing communal affairs. This suggests that the pattern we have observed at the elite-level has a robust social foundation. See Mattingly 2016.
formal institutions will continue to function the way they are, and, in all likelihood, they might be weakened, altered, or even reversed in the new political equilibrium. Xi’s recent personalization of power, for example, has created major uncertainties about the viability of many political institutions developed in the past decades.⁵⁵ To the extent that many of these institutions were designed with the purpose of limiting the power of the successor, Xi is likely to try to undo a significant number of them in order to exercise power without constraints.⁵⁶ Such attempts, of course, may not necessarily succeed. But as our theory implies, if there are going to be significant countermeasures against Xi, they will most likely to be coming from a united coalition organized by both of his predecessors, rather than from within the formal collective leadership body, which Xi already has dominant control over.

One critical strength of democracy is that it offers a peaceful and legitimate solution to the problem of transferring the sovereign power. For nondemocracies, leadership succession is always a fundamental threat to their stability and longevity. Given the enormous influence of leadership succession on power sharing, which has been systematically evaluated in this article, we expect succession-related matters to continue to serve as the main driver for political change in China in the near future.

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⁵⁵For a speculation, see Minzer 2016.
⁵⁶For instance, based on the age profiles of the current Politburo and Standing Committee, if Xi is to follow the rules, in the incoming party congress (2017) he would have to retire some of his key allies in the current PSC who will be above the age ceiling at that time, admit a number of his predecessor’s associates to the Standing Committee, and install an heir apparent who was picked by his predecessor. A powerful Xi is unlikely to consent to all these arrangements.
Figure 2: Variations in Power Sharing Patterns, 1992-2007

Note: This figure shows the marginal effects of former and current leaders’ factions during the first two full power transitions (Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin and Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao). The circles represent the estimated marginal effects, and vertical bars indicate 90% confidence intervals. Major reshuffles are party congresses where change of the paramount leader occurred.
Figure 3: Power Sharing at the 2012 Transition

Note: This figure shows the marginal effects of former and current leaders’ factions at the 18th Party Congress. The circles represent the estimated marginal effects, and vertical bars indicate 90% confidence intervals.
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Online Appendix (Not for Publication)

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A  Details of the CPED Database

The Chinese Political Elite Database (CPED) is a comprehensive biographical database of Chinese political leaders from multiple levels. Currently it contains extensive and systematically coded information of career information for all civilian leaders who belong to one of the following categories:

- City secretaries and Mayors since January 1, 2000.
- Members of the provincial standing committee since January 1, 2000.
- Provincial secretaries and governors since January 1, 1995.
- Other full and alternate Central Committee members: 13th~18th party congresses (1987-2012)

To construct the database, we first develop a list of officials serving in those relevant positions. The name list for sub-national leaders are based compiled from government websites, provincial and city yearbooks, and other authoritative internet sources. We also cross-check the name list several times with the actual records in the CVs after the completion of the database.

We then collect the detailed career information of leaders from the list using the following sources:

- Baidu Encyclopedia (*baidu baike*) [www.baike.com](http://www.baike.com)
- The Database on Local Party and Government Leaders (*difang dangzheng lingdao renwu shuju*) [http://district.ce.cn/zt/rwk/](http://district.ce.cn/zt/rwk/)
- Provincial Yearbooks for relevant years and provinces.
A “raw” CV from these sources contains the basic demographic information of the official and the past appointments that he/she has served, in a fairly standard fashion. Figure A.1 is an example of a entry of Mr. Sun Yongchun, a formerly city secretary in Shandong but now a member of the provincial standing committee in Guizhou, on Baidu encyclopedia.
孙永春

孙永春，男，汉族，1957年5月生，山东寿光人。1976年7月加入中国共产党，1976年12月参加工作，中央党校在职研究生学历，工商管理硕士学位。现任中共贵州省委常委、省委组织部部长、省委党校校长（兼）。

| 中文名 | 孙永春 |
| 职业 | 中共贵州省委常委、组织部部长 |
| 国籍 | 中华人民共和国 |
| 出生地 | 山东寿光 |
| 出生日期 | 1957年6月12日 |
| 入党日期 | 1976年7月6日 |
| 参加工作日期 | 1976年12月10日 |

1 人物履历

1974.06—1976.12，山东省盈县盈县大胆村团支部书记，农教团支书，公社团委副书记；

1976.12—1978.03，山东省盈县农大队工作队组长；

1978.03—1978.10，山东省盈县乡公社团委书记；

1978.10—1980.06，共青团山东省盈县委书记；

1980.06—1984.08，共青团山东省委书记，副部长；


1997.12—2001.01，山东省德州市委副书记；

2001.01—2001.02，山东省德州市委副书记、代市长；

2001.02—2006.03，山东省德州市委副书记、市长；

2006.03—2006.10，山东省烟台市委副书记、市长；

2006.10—2007.01，山东省烟台市委书记；

2007.01—2011.04，山东省烟台市委书记、市人大常委会主任；

2011.04—，贵州省委常委，省委组织部部长、省委党校校长（兼）。
While such information is easily accessible through human eyes, they are unstandardized and therefore unsuitable for automated analysis at a larger scale. To address this problem, a team of research assistants (RAs) are hired to transcribe the raw CV to an excel file. The primary task for the RAs is to decompose and reorganize the career entries in the CV in a way that is friendly to systematic, computer-based analysis. Among other things, RAs are required to record the time, place, main organization associated with job and the administrative ranks according to the coding manual. To standardize the content of input across RAs in face of the vast heterogeneity in our subjects’ political careers, we maintain a bank of area, job and school codes, which is continuously updated as new areas and organizations arise during the data collection process. Along the process, we also merge effectively identical jobs and areas that for historical reasons have somewhat different nomenclature, based on consultation with expert opinions.¹

After compiling a full set of standardized CV in excel files, we import them into a SQL database. The final output from the database, shown in Figure A.2, contains two separate tables on the official’s time-invariant attributes and time-varying career information.

¹For example some prefectures are later converted to cities, with the suffix of the name changed from diqu to shi. We use the same underlying code for the same territorial unit before and after the conversion.
### Figure A.2: Standardized CV as Exported from the SQL database

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<td>男</td>
<td>汉族</td>
<td>4/1/2011</td>
<td>贵州省</td>
<td>长顺县</td>
<td>紫云县</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>党委常委会</td>
<td>副书记</td>
<td>副处</td>
<td>学校</td>
<td>硕士</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B  Explanations for Manual Coding of Top Factions

In this section we provide a brief explanation for the rationales behind the manual coding of factional alignment for PSC members. The references are provided at the end. To be conservative, we do not consider an individual as belonging to a paramount leader’s faction unless there is concrete, verifiable evidence of close relationship. Such evidence may include fast and repeated promotions under the leader or frequent co-appearance in public but non-official settings. Overall, both our own assessment and the expert accounts available are highly consistent in terms of the factional alignment of top PSC members.

Deng Xiaoping Faction

- Qiao Shi worked with Deng Xiaoping and his associates (e.g., Hu Yaobang) for an extended period of time. Deng even considered use Qiao to replace Jiang after he became dissatisfied with Jiang’s policy on economic reform.\(^2\)

- Li Ruihuan was Deng’s preferred candidates for general secretary of the CCP.\(^3\)

- Zhu Rongji developed a good relationship with Deng when he visited Shanghai in late 80s and early 90s. As a fervent supporter of economic reform, Zhu was promoted by Deng into the PSC from an alternate member of the Central Committee.\(^4\)

- Hu Jintao was handpicked by Deng to be the youngest member in the PSC in 1992. Hu was the only non-family member who was present when Deng’s ashes were scattered into the sea.\(^5\)

Jiang Zemin Faction

- Li Lanqing worked with Jiang in the First Automobile Factory in Changchun, Jilin, during the 1950s. Both he and Jiang have a common hobby of playing/listening to classical music, which is rare among senior CCP cadres.\(^6\)

- Wu Bangguo worked under Jiang in Shanghai municipality. He was made the party secretary of Shanghai after Jiang became the general secretary.\(^7\)

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\(^2\)See Huang 2000.
\(^3\)See Huang 2000; Nathan and Gilley 2003.
\(^4\)ibid.
\(^5\)ibid.
\(^6\)This is documented even in official media, see Meng 2016.
\(^7\)See Nathan and Gilley 2003.
• Zeng Qinghong worked as Jiang’s aide in Shanghai municipality and was one of the few individuals that Jiang first brought to Beijing after made the general secretary. Zeng had allegedly played an instrumental role in helping Jiang consolidate his power, and was promoted to be the alternate member of Politburo without serving as either a full or an alternate member in the Central Committee.8

• Jia Qinglin was an old-time colleague of Jiang in the First Machinery Ministry. Jia was allegedly protected by Jiang from corruption scandals that broke out in Fujian province, where he used to serve as the provincial secretary. Jia was later transferred to Beijing to help Jiang consolidate his power after the removal of Chen Xitong, the former party secretary of Beijing and a Politburo member.9

• Huang Ju was an old colleague of Jiang in Shanghai municipality. Huang was promoted to executive deputy mayor of Shanghai when Jiang was the party secretary of Shanghai. Later he was promoted the party secretary of Shanghai after Wu Bangguo left to take up a position in the central government.10

• Li Changchun became a close supporter of Jiang in the 1990s and was promoted to become the party secretary of Guangdong to help Jiang control a province that was long considered to be independent-minded.11

Hu Jintao Faction

• Wen Jiabao shared with Hu a common patron (Song Ping) and common provincial work experience (in Gansu). He became a close (and rare) ally of Hu in the PSC when Hu first came to power.12

• Li Keqiang was a colleague of Hu when Hu was serving as the Chinese Communist Youth League in the 1980s. Li was promoted first to the governor (and later party secretary) of Henan province and then to the party secretary of Liaoning province. Li was widely considered to be one of the core member of Hu’s Youth League faction (tuanpai). Hu was initially planning to make Li Keqiang his heir apparent, but was blocked by Jiang and his associates.13

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8See Nathan and Gilley 2003.
9See Dotson 2014a; Li 2002b; Nathan 2003
10See Li 2002b.
12See Dotson 2014b; Li 2009; Nathan and Gilley 2003.
13See Li 2002a, 2009
References


Meng, Yaxu. 2016. “Pandian Jiang Zemin Li Lanqing Tongkuang Wangshi: Ceng Yiqi Tuiqiao Shichuan Geci (Jiang Zemin and Li Lanqing Studied Lost Lyrics Together).”.

URL: http://news.china.com.cn/2016-03/29/content_38131317.htm


C Permutations on Coding of Factions: Using the 16th PSC as an Example

In this section, we illustrate the eight different coding strategies using the 16th Politburo Standing Committee as an example. (Note: these variable are used to predict promotion outcomes in the 17th Central Committee.) The formal ranking of the 16th PSC is as follows (from highest to lowest): Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, Li Changchun, Luo Gan.
Strategy 1: Original

Two dummies. Connected to Outgoing Leader/Predecessor takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Wu Bangguo, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, or Li Changchun, and 0 otherwise. Connected to Incoming Leader/Successor takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao or Wen Jiabao and 0 otherwise.

Strategy 2: Only to Outgoing Faction

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to any of the following individuals and 0 otherwise: Wu Bangguo, Zeng Qinghong, Jia Qinglin, Huang Ju, and Li Changchun.

Strategy 3: Only to Incoming Faction

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to any of the following individuals and 0 otherwise: Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao

Strategy 4: Only to the Former Leader

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Jiang Zemin

Strategy 5: Only to the Current Leader

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao

Strategy 6: Top 2

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao or Wu Bangguo, and 0 otherwise.

Strategy 7: Top 2 vs. the Rest

Two dummies. Top 2 takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao or Wu Bangguo, and 0 otherwise. Not Top 2 takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, Wu Guanzheng, Li Changchun, or Luo Gan, and 0 otherwise.
Strategy 8: Top 3

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo or Wen Jiabao, and 0 otherwise.

Strategy 9: Top 3 vs. the Rest

Two dummies. Top 3 takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo or Wen Jiabao, and 0 otherwise. Not Top 3 takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, Wu Guanzheng, Li Changchun, or Luo Gan, and 0 otherwise.

Strategy 10: Top 2 vs. Middle vs. Bottom 2

Three dummies. Top 2 takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Hu Jintao or Wu Bangguo and 0 otherwise. Bottom 2 takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Li Changchun or Luo Gan (the two lowest ranking member) and 0 otherwise. Middle takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to the rest of the middle-ranking PSC members.

Strategy 11: Equal Influence

A dummy that takes the value of 1 if an official is connected any PSC member and 0 otherwise.

D  Numerical Results for Analysis by Successions
Table A.1: Numerical Results for Variations in Power Balance: 13-16 Party Congresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major Reshuffles</th>
<th>Minor Reshuffles</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) 13 to 14</td>
<td>(2) 15 to 16</td>
<td>(3) 14 to 15</td>
<td>(4) 16 to 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departing/former leader’s faction</td>
<td>0.227*** (0.061)</td>
<td>0.176*** (0.040)</td>
<td>0.003 (0.024)</td>
<td>0.047** (0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming/current leader’s faction</td>
<td>0.054* (0.031)</td>
<td>0.046* (0.024)</td>
<td>0.043* (0.024)</td>
<td>0.041* (0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factions</td>
<td>0.014 (0.027)</td>
<td>-0.072** (0.034)</td>
<td>0.029 (0.031)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration: CC$^{1-3}$ and age$^{1-3}$</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each column reports the estimated marginal effects from logistic regression with duration polynomials (holding other continuous covariates mean and discrete covariates at median). The specification is based on Model 4 of Table 2. * $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test)
Table A.2: Power Balance at the 2012 Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>17 to 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected to Jiang Zemin Faction</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected to Hu Jintao Faction</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected to Xi Jinping</td>
<td>0.095**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration: CC$^{1-3}$ and age$^{1-3}$</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The column reports the estimated marginal effects from logistic regression with duration polynomials (holding other continuous covariates mean and discrete covariates at median). The specification is based on Model 4 of Table 2. **Connected to Jiang Zemin Faction** takes the value of 1 if an official is connected to Wu Bangguo, Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, Zhou Yongkang, or He Guoqiang and 0 otherwise; **Connected to Hu Jintao Faction** takes the value of 1 if one is connected to Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, or Li Keqiang and 0 otherwise; **Connected to Xi Jinping** takes the value of 1 if one is connected to Xi Jinping and 0 otherwise.

* $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test)