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In This Issue:

The New Politburo Standing Committee, Led by Xi Jinping, Emerges

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In a Fortnight

By Peter Mattis

CENTRAL COMMITTEE ROUNDUP

The end of the 18th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) saw the announcement of a new Central Committee, including 205 full members and 171 alternate members (Xinhua, November 15). Although many of the selections can hardly be considered surprising and mostly served to reify what observers already suspected, the 18th Central Committee probably is most interesting for who it did not include and what did not happen.

Deputy Chief of the General Staff Zhang Qinsheng was dropped from the Central Committee lists, suggesting the persistent rumors this year of his clashes with Hu Jintao and senior military brass were true (Xinhua, November 15; *New York Times*, August 7; *South China Morning Post*, March 22; *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], March 7). Moreover, Zhang also reportedly advocated for what the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the CCP call the "three erroneous ideas" of Chinese civil-military relations: "de-politicization, de-party-ification, and nationalization" (*jundui feidanghua*, *feizhengzhihua*, *guojiahua*). Rather than being fired, Zhang probably will serve until he reaches his PLA rank and grade's retirement age, which will arrive in roughly another year.

Also in the PLA, political commissars General Zhang Haiyang and General Liu Yuan may have been prevented from rising to the Central Military Commission

because of their links to the disgraced former Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai (*Ming Pao*, October 24). Zhang and Luo, however, survived and retained their Central Committee positions presumably for another five years.

Former President Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" allowed businessmen into the CCP, co-opting the group of influential citizens most likely to have wherewithal and the eventual motivation to challenge the party's domination. It always may have been a distant possibility; however, none of the high-flying business leaders participating in the congress claimed a seat on the Central Committee ("18th Party Congress to Showcase Rising Status of Private Business," *China Brief*, October 19).

By the numbers, women and ethnic minorities' representation has fallen from the 17th Central Committee. Previously, 13 women and 15 minorities were full members. The 18th Central Committee has ten and ten. Two women, however, did rise to the Politburo—State Councilor Liu Yandong and Fujian Party Secretary Sun Chunlan—putting more women in that decision-making body since the Cultural Revolution (Xinhua, November 15).

ZHUHAI AIR SHOW HIGHLIGHTS BURGEONING AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

The biennial Airshow China, better known as the Zhuhai Air Show, began its ninth rendition on Wednesday and the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) officially unveiled 44 new aerospace aircraft products for the first time out of a total of roughly 150 products on display (*South China Morning Post*, November 14). The air show also demonstrates the rapid progress of China's technical expertise in the defense industries, particularly in the last two decades.

One of the more interesting revelations in state media coverage was related to China's second stealth fighter, the J-31, which recently performed a test flight (*Want China Times*, November 2). Although attendees of the air show will only see a scale model of the plane, the J-31 may soon be available for greater scrutiny. The former deputy editor of Aviation World said "Currently the only fifth generation fighter available for sale is the F-35 by the [United States]. The J-31 will offer an alternative for non-traditional allies of the [United States]," suggesting the aircraft eventually will be available for international sale (Xinhua, November 13; *Global Times*, November 12).

AVIC also unveiled the Wing Loong (*yilong*) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), which resembles the U.S. MQ-9 Reaper, based on pictures published in state media. The UAV also carries intelligence sensors and is capable of carrying air-to-ground missiles (China News Service, November 10). This is the latest development to come out of China's robust UAV development program and appears to be one of the more advanced models of the roughly 40 that are under development ("Civilian UAV Production as a Window to the PLA's Unmanned Fleet," *China Brief*, February 21).

As impressive as some of China's technical progress has been in aerospace—the transformation of the PLA Air Force from an air defense force to a modern air force is testament to this—AVIC and related organizations still lag in key areas. For example, China's new aircraft engine, WS-10A Taihang, still may not have displaced Chinese reliance on Russian engines, according to defense expert Andrei Chang (*South China Morning Post*, November 14). Lastly, if China is incorporating stolen foreign technology in its stealth fighters, UAVs and the also-debuting WZ-10 attack helicopter, then the baseline expertise of China's engineers is closing rapidly with that of their foreign counterparts.

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18th Party Congress Showcases Stunning Setback to Reform

By Willy Lam

The most pertinent message of the just-ended 18th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress has perhaps come from Premier Wen Jiabao. This is despite the fact outgoing General Secretary Hu Jintao's 101-minute Political Report to the 18th Party Congress (hereafter Report) has dominated Chinese and international media coverage of the seven-day mega-event. "We must strengthen and improve the leadership

of the Party," Wen said while talking to members of the Tianjin delegation to the Congress, "In particular, we must push forward the reform of the leadership system of the party and state" (Xinhua, November 9). It is true that Hu, who remains state president until next March, has devoted a good part of his Report to political and institutional reforms. Yet the most important function of the Congress—picking a new slate of Fifth Generation leaders—has been dominated by old-fashioned, non-transparent factional intrigue as well as the resurgence of the influence of long-retired party elders.

That the choice of the members of the 18th Politburo and its seven-member Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), China's supreme ruling council, was the result of backroom skullduggery and horse-trading was evident from the first few minutes of the Congress's opening ceremony at the Great Hall of the People. First to appear before the cameras was the 69-year-old Hu, who was followed closely by the 86-year-old ex-President Jiang Zemin. A distance of several meters separated these two putative "cores," respectively, of the Third- and Fourth-Generation leadership collectives on the one hand, and two other groups on the other: the out-going members of the 17th PBSC and long-retired PBSC members. The oldest member of the latter group was Song Ping, 95, the one-time CCP organization czar who left the PBSC 20 years ago (*Wen Wei Po* [Hong Kong], November 9; *Apple Daily* [Hong Kong], November 9).

The appearance of the octogenarian and nonagenarian cadres was not just a symbolic gesture to demonstrate party unity. At least a couple of these past state leaders have played the role of kingmaker in the choice of PBSC members this year. For example, three of the seven members of the 18th PBSC are believed to be protégés of Jiang, who still heads the Shanghai Faction in party politics. They are new General Secretary Xi Jinping, who owed his promotion to the PBSC in 2007 to Jiang's nomination; the soon-to-be-named Chairman of the National People's Congress Chairman Zhang Dejiang; and the Executive Secretary of the Central Committee Secretariat Liu Yunshan. Jiang and former Premier Li Peng, 84, were instrumental in preventing two of Hu's cronies, Li Yuanchao and Wang Yang, from making it to the PBSC. Both Li and Wang, who have reformist reputations, have managed only to hang on to their Politburo seats. Wang, age 57, the outgoing Party Secretary of Guangdong Province, is set to become a vice premier in March (*Hong Kong Economic Journal*, November 8; *Sing Tao Daily* [Hong Kong], November 8).

As in his Political Report to the 17th Party Congress of 2007, President Hu last Thursday, November 8, devoted two long paragraphs to "democracy within the party" (*dangnei minzhu*) as well as reforming the party's personnel system—particularly fairer and more transparent ways for picking leaders. For example, Hu said the authorities must substantiate party members' "right to know, right to take part [in party deliberations], electoral rights and supervisory rights." Regarding the selection of senior cadres, Hu indicated the party must "comprehensively and correctly implement democratic, open, competitive and meritorious" goals. While discussing the issues of leadership five years ago, President Hu, however, laid emphasis on systems of "democratic centralism and collective leadership" and indicated the party must "oppose and prevent dictatorial [practices] by individuals or a minority [of leaders]." There were no more references to the dictatorial practices of strongman-like figures in this year's report (Xinhua, November 8; *People's Daily*, October 25, 2007). Hu's failure to lash out at the apparent resumption of Mao-style "rule of personality" could reflect his frustration at the machinations of the likes of Jiang Zemin in the past few months.

It is in this context that Wen's comment on the "reform of the leadership system of the party and state" seems as timely as it is hard hitting. Although Wen has in the past two to three years made dozens of appeals to speeding up political reform, including upholding the late patriarch Deng Xiaoping's edicts on the subject, this was the first time that he made an indirect, but obvious, reference to one of the most celebrated speeches of the chief architect of reform. In a 1980 address entitled "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership," Deng cited the following daunting obstacles to political and institutional liberalization: "bureaucracy, over-concentration of power, patriarchal methods, life tenure in leading posts and privileges of various kinds." Deng had this to say about the party's "patriarchal" traditions: "Besides leading to over-concentration of power in the hands of individuals, patriarchal ways within the revolutionary ranks place individuals above the organization, which then becomes a tool in their hands" (*People's Daily*, August 18, 1980). While there is no concrete evidence to show that Wen was

zeroing in on the recent activities of patriarchs such as Jiang, his comments made to Tianjin Congress deputies were omitted inexplicably from CCTV's evening news last Thursday. Xinhua News Agency also only reported his remarks one day later. Remarks made by other PBSC members during group discussions of provincial or municipal delegates, however, were publicized within hours by the official media (*Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], November 10; *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, November 10; CCTV News, November 8).

Fighting graft is another area where the Hu report seems to have fallen short. Hu echoed warnings sounded by ex-president Jiang in the late 1990s that the party's failure to eradicate endemic corruption could "deal a body blow to the party and even lead to the collapse of the party and country." "We must never slacken in fighting graft and in building clean governance," he warned, "The alarm bells must be rung unceasingly." Yet Hu has failed to introduce new measures such as party regulations requiring all senior cadres to publicize the assets of their close relatives—and to disclose whether the latter have foreign residency status. It is also significant that while reading out his speech, Hu omitted this clause that was in the printed version: "Senior cadres must not only discipline themselves stringently but also strengthen the education of and constraints over their relatives and close associates" (Xinhua, November 8; CableTV News [Hong Kong], November 8).

In the run-up to the Party Congress, Bloomberg and the *New York Times* have published detailed reports about the business activities of the relatives of Vice President Xi and Premier Wen. Despite immediate action taken by state censors to block these articles from Chinese cyberspace, millions of netizens are believed to have read them. While Hu's warnings about the exacerbation of graft could be the party's answer to growing criticisms about greed in high places, no investigations are believed to have been launched on the well-publicized business activities of the close kin of top officials. This is despite the fact that while participating in discussions among provincial and municipal deputies to the Congress, top cadres such as Wang Yang and Shanghai Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng claimed effective steps had been taken to prevent their relatives from improperly making money (IFeng.com [Beijing], November 9; *Hong Kong Economic Times*, November 9).

In the Report, Hu also touched upon ways to restructure the economy. Reiterating that China's growth had been "unbalanced, uncoordinated and unsustainable," the president vowed to "comprehensively deepen the reform of the economic structure." He called on party cadres to pay more attention to indigenous innovation and, in particular, to boost consumer spending as a new pillar of GDP expansion. Perhaps due to the conviction that the CCP's status as "perennial ruling party" is contingent upon the party-state apparatus' tight control over major chunks of the economy, Hu indicated Beijing must "unwaveringly consolidate and develop the public sector of the economy." Hu went further, adding "[We should] invest more state capital in major industries in key fields that comprise the lifeline of the economy and are vital to national security." The Report contradicts the concerns of renowned economists, such as Mao Yushi of Beijing's Unirule Research Institute, who have deplored the trend of "the state sector advances even as the private sector retreats" (*guojin mintui*) (Sohu.com [Beijing], November 1; Sina.com [Beijing], July 12). Moreover, Premier Wen recently had pledged to give more support to embattled private companies: "We must complete and implement policies and measures aimed at promoting the development of the non-state economy, break [state] monopolies and lower industry thresholds for new entrants" (*People's Daily*, November 1; China News Service, July 16).

On the eve of the Congress, observers speculated the Hu-led leadership might signal its willingness to contemplate liberalization by removing Mao Zedong Thought, which is synonymous with conservatism, from the CCP Constitution. After all, it seems almost certain that disgraced Politburo member Bo Xilai, who spearheaded a vigorous campaign to revive Maoism, will be given a stiff prison term after his recent expulsion from the party. The only major constitutional revision approved by the Congress, however, was to elevate the "Scientific Development Concept" (*kexue fazhan guan*) which is Hu Jintao's contribution to CCP canon, to the status of "guiding principle" of the party and state. This has put the "Scientific Development Concept" on the same level as ex-President Jiang's "Important Thinking of the Three Represents" (*san ge daibiao zhongyao sixiang*) (*Ming Pao*, November 8).

In his Report, Hu urged party cadres and members to work harder at "innovation of the implementation [of policies], theoretical innovations, and the innovation of institutions." Yet he also repeated this same point that he made five years ago: "While [the party] will not go down the old road of ossification, it will also avoid devious paths that will change the flag and standard [of socialist orthodoxy]." Given the predominance of conservatism in the Report—and the Byzantine fashion in which the new corps of leaders has been chosen—it seems unlikely that the leadership under General Secretary Xi Jinping will push reformist goals and policies in the foreseeable future.

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A Bump in the Road for Taiwan and Japan but Little More

By J. Michael Cole

Although its voice is often ignored in the escalating spat over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, Taiwan reacted with uncharacteristic bombast to the Japanese government's purchase of three islets in the disputed island chain in September. The response reached unprecedented levels with a high-profile "sea protest" involving dozens of Taiwanese fishing vessels, accompanied by several Coast Guard Administration ships, during which CGA officers engaged in a water cannon battle with their Japanese counterparts (*Taipei Times*, September 26). The sequence of events, combined with the hardened rhetoric in Taipei, has raised fears of souring relations between Taiwan and Japan, and attracted speculation about possible co-operation between Taipei and Beijing in "defending" territory they both claim as their own. A closer look at Taiwan's idiosyncratic role in the triumvirate, however, shows that, rather than clearly taking sides, Taipei is playing a difficult, and perhaps perilous, balancing act.

Even at its height, Taiwan's reaction to Japan's purchase of Uotsurijima, Kita-Kojima and Minami-Kojima on September 11 never descended into the sometimes-violent mobilization seen across China, nor did Taipei threaten to use force against Japan to defend its sovereignty claims. Aside from the sea protest on September 25, which involved about 40 fishing vessels and eight CGA ships , a rally was held in downtown Taipei two days earlier , followed by a smaller one in Toucheng Township, Yilan County, on September 30 (*Taipei Times*, October 1; Reuters, September 25; *China Post*, September 23). Meanwhile, the inscription "the Diaoyutai Islands belong to us" in Chinese characters on an Mk-82 500lb bomb carried by an F-16 aircraft taking part in a bombing exercise received some media attention, but the matter was downplayed by the Ministry of National Defense and was soon forgotten (*Liberty Times*, September 19). At the diplomatic level, Taiwan's actions were limited to the summoning of the Japanese representative in Taipei by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the temporary recall of Taipei's representative in Tokyo. Since then, relations have returned to near normalcy, and both governments appear to have agreed to resume talks on fishing rights near the Senkakus before the end of the year (*Taipei Times*, October 8) [1].

Despite his administration's insistence on the sovereignty aspects of the dispute, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou has been severely constrained in his ability to protest at the perceived change in the status quo caused by Japan's purchase of the islets. Some of the main constraining factors include the lack of interest in the dispute among general Taiwanese and a muted nationalist sentiment in stark contrast with that seen in China, which fueled the large protests. Attempts by the Taipei City Government to rally Taiwanese to the cause during National Day celebrations on October 10 backfired when participants showed little enthusiasm for the subject beyond collecting stickers proclaiming the Republic of China's sovereignty over the islets.

Another crucial element limiting Ma's room to maneuver has been Beijing's insistence that the two sides of the

Taiwan Strait work together to counter Japan's claims in the East China Sea. Among other things, the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office has stated Chinese marine surveillance vessels, which have been conducting regular "law enforcement" patrols near the islets, will provide protection to Taiwanese fishermen in surrounding waters (CCTV, September 26). China's complex relationship with Taiwan has forced the Ma administration to play its card carefully lest it appear to be cooperating with Beijing—a development that would risk alienating Japan, the United States and the majority of Taiwanese, who remain wary of any sign of political rapprochement with China. This point was driven home during the rally in Taipei on September 23, where approximately 1,500 people converged on the Japanese Interchange Association, Taipei, Tokyo's mission in the absence of official diplomatic ties between the two countries. Ma's Kuomintang (KMT) stayed clear of the protest and immediately distanced itself from the organizers, some of whom belonged to minor parties supporting unification with China, such as the People First Party and fringe groups calling for cooperation on the Diaoyu islands [2]. Divisions also emerged among the protesters, who clashed on whether Taiwan and China should cooperate on the issue or whether it was proper for some of the protesters to carry the flag of the People's Republic of China (*Taipei Times*, September 24). Facing this, the Ma administration has denied repeatedly it has any intention to cooperate with China on the dispute.

Within local fishing communities in Yilan County, officials from both Ma's KMT and the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have acted in support of fishermen's right to fish in waters near the islands, highlighting the possibility of practical considerations behind the protests rather than political ideology or anti-Japanese sentiment. For them, the resumption of fisheries talks between Taipei and Tokyo, and ultimately the signing of a code of conduct, is essential to protect Taiwanese fishermen from continued harassment by Japanese ships in waters off the islets.

Those constraints notwithstanding, Ma, whose public approval level dropped to 15.2 percent in October—its lowest since the beginning of his first term in May 2008—has led the charge in emphasizing the political aspects of the dispute, often against the wishes of other senior members of his cabinet. Consequently, the extent of Taiwan's pragmatic approach to the 17th round of talks with Japan will be contingent on how much latitude Taiwanese negotiators are given by Ma.

The tug of war between Ma and senior officials has already become apparent with Foreign Minister David Lin announcing a proposal whereby Taiwan and Japan would jointly control an area off the Senkaku and allow fishermen from both countries to fish in each other's overlapping Economic Exclusion Zones (EEZ). The proposal has reportedly received a "very positive" and "flexible" response from Tokyo (*Kyodo News*, November 7).

Conversely, the Ma government has signaled it could emphasize Taiwan's claims of ownership of the islets at the expense of achieving a fisheries agreement prior to the resumption of negotiations with Japan, which could undermine efforts to resolve the dispute or abort the talks altogether (*Asahi Shimbun*, November 7). "There will be no fishing rights without sovereignty over the islands," Ma said during an interview on local television, comments that would appear to contradict his East China Sea Peace Initiative announced earlier this year under which all sides would be called upon to agree to shelve disputes and establish a mechanism for cooperation on exploring and developing resources (*Taiwan Today*, August 28). Japan, which contends that the islands have long been part of its territory, denies a dispute exists. Taipei's rationale for emphasizing the sovereignty aspect of the dispute seems to be that it risks being sidelined should a bilateral agreement on fisheries be reached with Japan, leaving the sovereignty dispute to China and Japan. By keeping the sovereignty issue alive, Taipei may hope to ensure it can retain its seat at the table.

Despite his stance on the Diaoyutai, Ma has rejected the feasibility of landing on the islets to settle the matter, which he admits are not under Taiwan's control (*Focus Taiwan*, November 9). Taiwan's president has said a plan by former premier Hau Pei-tsun to dispatch a team of commandos to the islets in the 1990s, which was cancelled subsequently by then-President Lee Teng-hui, would have left the problem "unresolved" (*Want China Times*, November 4).

Intentionally or not, the Ma administration's decision to focus solely on Japan in the sovereignty dispute has helped

fuel speculation that Taipei and Beijing may be planning to work together against Japan (*Taipei Times*, November 12; *Daily Yomiuri*, September 27;). Since Ma came into office, there have been 13 incidents involving CGA and Japanese coast guard ships. Conversely, the CGA has never attempted to chase off Chinese ships entering the area, which *prima facie* seems to strengthen the theory that the "two Chinas" are cooperating to counter Japan.

The context of the dispute along with the nature of the antagonists, however, could help debunk that theory. Two key aspects stand out. First, the Ma government is in the process of improving relations between Taiwan and China, and since 2008 there have been several instances where Taipei chose to downplay or ignore belligerent action by Beijing, such as its continued military buildup targeting the island. For strategic considerations, Taipei may have decided that ensuring the continued development of cross-Strait ties is far more important than sovereignty over the islets—abundant fish resources and possible natural gas notwithstanding—even if this temporarily causes strains in its otherwise stable relations with Tokyo. The second and related factor is the fact that Japan poses no military threat to Taiwan's security, while China has the capabilities and perhaps the intent to use force against the island. As such, Taipei may have concluded it can get away with the occasional, albeit calculated, saber rattling toward Japan without risk of a sharp deterioration in bilateral relations. Left unmentioned in the criticism against Ma is that the CGA was involved in five incidents with Japanese coast guard vessels during Chen Shui-bian's DPP administration from 2000 to 2008. Consequently, prior minor clashes between Taiwanese and Japanese vessels created a precedent along with a blueprint on how to deescalate the situation. How clashes between Taiwanese and Chinese vessels would turn out remain in the realm of speculation, and it is hard to imagine how skirmishes at sea would affect overall cross-Strait relations.

Fears of worsening relations between Taiwan and Japan as a result of the dispute therefore may be premature. Although an unexpected 1.18-percent drop in tourist arrivals from Japan in September may be attributed to the crisis, relations between the two people remain cordial with Japanese tourism to Taiwan up 15.75 percent from 2011 (*Focus Taiwan*, November 6). Unlike China, where there were several instances of violent attacks on Japanese nationals and firms, Japanese face no such threat in Taiwan—a fact that points both to the favorable perception of Japanese citizens among Taiwanese and the failure of the dispute to awaken nationalist sentiment in Taiwan. A case in point: The general hostility in China has prompted Japanese firms to seek friendlier investment destinations, leading to a marked increase in cooperation between Japanese and Taiwanese small- and medium-sized enterprises in the past nine months (China Economic News Service, November 9). Ultimately, historical ties with Japan and disinterest among Taiwanese in the Diaoyutai issue will make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the Ma administration, which faces growing discontent over a moribund economy and important seven-in-one elections in 2014, to take a course of action that threatens to harm the relationship.

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Notes:

1. Since 1996, Taipei and Tokyo have held 16 rounds of talks on the issue with little success in resolving the dispute.
2. Author's on-site observation of the protest and subsequent interview with a senior advisor to the KMT.

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New CMC Vice Chairmen Strong Advocates for Joint, Modern Chinese Military

By Oriana Skylar Mastro, Michael S. Chase and Benjamin S. Purser, III

As the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) underwent its once-a-decade leadership transition at the 18th Party Congress this week, it also made a series of major changes to the top echelon of its military leadership. This turnover among the top brass included the elevation

of new People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and Second Artillery commanders, heads of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) powerful four general departments (General Staff, General Political, General Logistics and General Armaments) and a corresponding membership turnover in the Central Military Commission (CMC)—the powerful Party body that controls China's rapidly modernizing armed forces. Among the most important changes was the promotion last week of two senior officers—former Jinan Military Region (MR) Commander General Fan Changlong and former PLAAF Commander General Xu Qiliang—to serve as the new military vice chairmen of the CMC (Xinhua, November 4). As China's highest-ranking military officers, Generals Fan and Xu will be responsible for key aspects of the direction of PLA modernization, including China's quest to enhance the military's "jointness."

An artilleryman by training, General Fan Changlong, age 65, has served in the PLA since 1969 when he joined at age 22. Fan initially served in the Shenyang MR's 16th Corps' artillery regiment for three years as an enlisted soldier and then fourteen years as a staff officer [1]. From 1985 to 1990, he served in the 16th Group Army (GA), consecutively, as the 48th Division chief of staff, 16th GA chief of staff and, finally, as the GA commander (Xinhua, November 4). With four armored divisions and multiple brigades, the 16th GA is one of the Shenyang MR's largest elements. After leading the 16th GA for five years, Fan was promoted to major general and, five years after that, was promoted to chief of staff for the Shenyang MR, in 2000. In 2002, he was promoted to lieutenant general and then appointed as one of the assistants to the chief of the PLA general staff in 2003. The following year, he became the commander of the Jinan MR—a position he held until his recent elevation to the CMC.

As Jinan MR commander, he successfully oversaw years of major, international exercises: Sino-Russian Peace Mission 2005, Queshan 2007, Iron Fist 2009 and Vanguard 2011 (*Ta Kung Pao*, November 5). Under Fan's leadership—and in response to personal tasking from Hu Jintao— the Jinan MR effectively carried out a pilot project for reforming the largest joint logistics system in the PLA. Fan thus developed an unparalleled track record for planning and executing advanced, joint logistics. He proved that ability in 2008 when he led a major contingent of the forces that responded to the massive Sichuan earthquake as part of Jinan MR's mission of emergency management (*South China Morning Post*, October 22). Such successes supplemented Fan's service as the general with the most time leading an MR and help explain his completely unprecedented promotion from MR commander directly to CMC vice chair without having had to serve on the CMC as a regular member first (*Ta Kung Pao*, November 5).

General Xu Qiliang is the first Air Force general in the history of the People's Republic of China to be appointed a vice chairman of the CMC, a body traditionally dominated by the ground forces. Xu, who was born in 1950, joined the PLAAF in 1967 and graduated from the 8th Aviation School in 1969 as a fighter pilot. At age 34, he became the youngest corps deputy commander (corps deputy leader grade) of the PLA in 1984 and then, as the commander of the 8th Air Corps in Fuzhou, became the youngest corps commander (corps leader grade) at age 40 in 1990. He served the commander of the Shenyang Military Region Air Force (MRAF) and as a concurrent MR deputy commander (MR deputy leader grade) before becoming one of the deputy chiefs of the general staff (MR leader grade) in 2004 and then commander of the PLAAF (MR leader grade), which he held from 2007 to 2012 [2]. Over the past 40 years, Xu has built for himself an impeccable military record that culminated in receiving his three-star rank in July 2007 and becoming a CMC member (CMC member grade) in October of that year (Xinhua, November 4). Given the expected retirement age of 70, Xu and Fan probably will complete their service as vice chairmen to Xi Jinping at the 19th Party Congress in 2017.

Fan's promotion was a surprise to some observers as he skipped the CMC member grade, but Xu's appointment is probably more significant for two reasons. First, General Xu is widely known for his strong advocacy of air and space power, suggesting the promotion could enable Xu to realize his vision of a more modern and capable PLAAF. As PLAAF commander, Xu presided over a period of transition from a traditional focus on air defense to a broader outlook encompassing more integrated offensive and defensive operations and emphasizing the increasing role of space power. Xu has stated the PLAAF must forge "a sharp sword and shield capable of winning peace" to help protect China's interests (*PLA Daily*, November

1, 2009). This includes not only more modern combat aircraft like the J-20 stealth aircraft China unveiled in January 2011 and a second stealth fighter that is now undergoing flight testing, but also advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), early warning, air defense and strategic airlift capabilities (*Wall Street Journal*, November 3) [3].

If Xu's controversial comments about the inevitability of greater military competition in space are any indication, China's sword and shield also encompasses anti-satellite and other space control capabilities as well as the objective of ensuring China's own ability to use space for military purposes and limit or deny an adversary's ability to do likewise. As Xu stated in a November 2009 interview:

> "The air and space era and information era have arrived at the same time, and the domain of information and domain of space and air have become the new commanding height for international strategic competition. Considering the global trend of a new revolution in military affairs, competition among armed forces is moving toward the air and space domain and is extending from the aviation domain to near space and even deep space. Such a 'shift' represents an irresistible trend, such an 'expansion' is historically inevitable, and such development is irreversible. In a certain sense, having control of air and space means having control of the ground, oceans, and the electromagnetic space, which also means having the strategic initiative in one's hands" (*PLA Daily*, November 1, 2009).

Moreover, Xu's advocacy for the PLAAF's role in space operations probably reflects internal competition over which part of the PLA will have primary responsibility for an increasingly critical mission—one that Chinese strategists see as potentially decisive in future wars. Second, Xu is the first Air Force general to be appointed a vice chairman of the CMC, a body traditionally dominant by the PLA's ground force officers. Xu's promotion could thus reflect a growing desire in the military to pursue western-style joint operations and perhaps greater strategic relevance and influence for the PLAAF, PLA Navy (PLAN) and Second Artillery.

General Xu's appointment as a CMC vice chair in particular reflects a broader trend toward greater representation for non-ground force services at the top. Since 2004, more PLAAF, PLAN and Second Artillery officers have served in important military leadership posts than ever before. These have included the Academy of Military Science (AMS) and National Defense University (NDU) commandants and the NDU political commissar. This is the result of China's longstanding efforts to promote the PLA's joint operations capabilities—a challenging endeavor in what has historically been a highly ground force–centric military establishment. Indeed, as of this party congress, there are no PLAAF deputies in any of the General Departments, highlighting that this is a work in progress. Nonetheless, given Xu's background, many predict that PLAAF interests will be better represented than in the past, especially because Xu is not the only air force officer on the CMC. As the new PLAAF commander, General Ma Xiaotian also will be on the CMC to promote the vision and interests of the air force. The fact that two air force officers have secured a place on China's highest military body along with the rising fortunes of the PLAN and Second Artillery probably foreshadows the loosening of the ground force's sixty-year-long grip on the levers of military power.

Nonetheless, a true equalization of power and influence among the ground forces, PLAN, PLAAF and Second Artillery necessary to conduct Western-style joint operations is still a distant possibility. First, as a CMC vice chairman, Xu is not in a position to advocate for the PLAAF in the same way he did when he served as PLAAF commander. At the top of the system, service parochialism is supposed to be mitigated by party identity and the need to represent the interests of all parts of the armed forces. Presumably, in his new role, General Xu would not want to be perceived as favoring his service at the expense of the rest of the PLA.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, the ground forces still dominate the system in some important respects. The ground forces' dominance is shown not only by their leadership of the four general departments—which is a function of the fact that the four general departments serve as the ground forces' headquarters more than as a joint headquarters—but also by the structure of the PLA itself. Only ground force officers have commanded the PLA's powerful, geographically-based MRs, even in

the Nanjing and Guangzhou MRs that focus on conflict scenarios involving possible sea and air fights over Taiwan and in the East and South China Seas. Accordingly, major organizational changes would likely be required if the PLA were making a stronger push toward complete jointness, consistent with what an important article marking the PLA's 85th anniversary described as the objective of promoting the transition from "coordinated joint operations with one service as the main force to integrated joint operations of multiple services and arms" (*PLA Daily*, July 30).

Three indicators in the form of organizational changes would signal a changing tide toward greater jointness. First, China would move to restructure or replace the MRs with theater commands (warzones) to simplify command structures for daily peacetime training as well as wartime operations. For example, a cross-strait conflict with Taiwan primarily would involve the Nanjing and Guangzhou MRs, which means the ground force, PLAN, PLAAF and Second Artillery would not only need to integrate command vertically but also coordinate horizontally across the MRs, potentially reducing real-time combat readiness. Second, China could start rotating officers from PLAAF, PLAN, Second Artillery as well as the ground forces through the top positions of the four general departments. Lastly, to ensure the ground forces are on equal standing with the PLAN, PLAAF and Second Artillery, the Chinese could create a PLA ground forces headquarters on par with PLAAF, PLAN and Second Artillery Headquarters and even upgrade the Second Artillery to a service instead of its current status as an independent branch.

The restructuring or replacement of the MR system has been rumored off and on in recent years, but thus far has failed to materialize. The creation of a separate army headquarters and elevation of non-ground force officers to head the four general departments would be major developments as well. Should this come to pass, it would not only symbolize that the ground force is the peer of the other services but also would indicate that the four general departments no longer play the role of ground force headquarters, but rather would function as a real joint staff organization. Bureaucratic interests and organizational culture, however, are likely to remain formidable obstacles to such major organizational changes, suggesting the PLA will continue to face challenges to its ability to effectively conduct joint operations despite important changes at the top of the command system.

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Notes:

1. Online Chinese wikis provide some of the sourcing for tracking Fan and Xu's careers, including <http://baike.baidu.com> and <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki>.
2. You Ji, "Meeting the Challenge of the Upcoming PLAAF Leadership Reshuffle," in Richard P. Hallion, Roger Cliff, and Philip C. Saunders, eds., *The Chinese Air Force: Evolving Concepts, Roles, and Capabilities*, Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012, pp. 216–218.
3. For a comprehensive analysis, see, Hallion et al, eds., *The Chinese Air Force: Evolving Concepts, Roles, and Capabilities*, available online at <http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/books/chinese-air-force.pdf>.

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Parsing the Selection of China's New High Command

By Daniel Tobin, Kim Fassler and Justin Godby

In choosing the ten uniformed officers who make up China's new Central Military Commission (CMC)—seven new appointments and three incumbents, two of whom have moved to more senior positions—Beijing has charted a decidedly middle course. It is crucial to examine not only how the new lineup's career experiences differ or resemble their predecessors, but also the implications of the alternative selections that did not occur. Given both the pool of candidates technically eligible and rumors in the Hong Kong and international press over the past

two years about the identity of the leading candidates, Beijing chose against several scenarios that would have had different implications for the future of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The slates of outgoing and newly appointed CMC members share some common characteristics. Like their predecessors, the majority of the new CMC have held operational commands at the forefront of the PLA's efforts to train for high-tech war. Several probably caught the attention of senior military and civilian leaders while serving in high-profile roles in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief efforts, which increasingly serve as proxies for combat experience [1]. Some fought in China's brief clashes with Vietnam in 1979 and/or the 1980s. With the revival of professional military education (PME) in the 1980s after the Cultural Revolution, almost all have received PME and in some cases held senior positions at PME institutions.

There, however, are differences. China's new CMC lineup has slightly greater diversity of experience across China's seven military regions than the outgoing group, who were appointed between 1999 and 2007. Significantly, with former PLA Air Force (PLAAF) Commander Xu Qiliang's promotion to a CMC vice chairman—the highest position held by an air force officer in the post-Mao era—and his replacement with another PLAAF officer, non-ground force officers now hold four of the ten uniformed seats on the CMC.

Nevertheless, the new lineup as a whole suggests incremental rather than wholesale change. Though this is not startling, it is interesting that Beijing did not opt for one of several other scenarios debated by PLA watchers over the past two years. One possibility included non-ground force officers making up half of the new CMC and two out of the three most senior uniformed positions [2]. Such a scenario, if combined, with the appointment of reform-minded ground force officers, might have generated momentum to reform the PLA's ground-centric command structure. At the other end of a spectrum, one "wild card scenario"—embodied in some purported CMC lineups circulating on the Chinese-language Internet earlier this year—was a highly political CMC, packed with political commissars. Such a CMC might have been focused narrowly on preserving party rule in the face of concerns about political stability in the wake of the Arab Spring, fears of a slowing economy and several high-level political scandals over the past year, including the fall of Politburo member Bo Xilai. In such a scenario, Xu Qiliang might have been passed over for a vice chairman position in favor of a career political officer.

There were, however, a few surprises even in the middle-of-the-road outcome that materialized. One was the new CMC lineup's early emergence on November 4—with the appointment of two new CMC vice chairmen at the final meeting (or "plenum") of the outgoing 17th Central Committee rather than the 1st Plenum of the 18th Central Committee on November 15. Another was Beijing's selection of Jinan Military Region (MR) Commander Fan Changlong, age 65, as the senior uniformed vice chairman over General Armament Department (GAD) Director Chang Wanquan, age 63. Chang had long been expected to become vice chairman, and his promotion would have followed the pattern of only elevating existing CMC members to that body's top posts. Instead, Fan not only leapt over Chang, but also skipped a military grade, which is extremely rare [3]. Fan is eminently qualified, having served in senior positions in two MRs and in the General Staff Department (GSD) in Beijing. Though preparations began before his tenure, since 2004, the Jinan MR he led has conducted crucial experiments in joint logistics, command structures and training methods (*PLA Daily,* December 16, 2008; November 11, 2008). Fan will be past the mandatory retirement age at the next party congress and is therefore likely to serve only one five-year term.

PLAAF Commander Xu Qiliang's elevation to vice chairman expands the number of service officers on the CMC from three to four of ten uniformed members. Xu, a former fighter pilot, who has served in two military regions, as chief of staff of the PLAAF, and commander of the Shenyang MR's air force, also served as a deputy chief of the GSD. Already a PLAAF deputy chief of staff in the early 1990s, General Xu has witnessed firsthand his service's extraordinary transformation in the subsequent two decades from a poorly-trained, technologically-backward service into an air force with the world's third highest number of advanced, fourth-generation fighters [5]. His appointment as a CMC vice chairman testifies to the increasing prominence of the missions of the services at the expense of the

traditionally dominant ground force. Nevertheless, Beijing also unexpectedly retained PLAN Commander Wu Shengli in his post rather than promoting him to a more senior CMC position. Observers had tapped Wu to become Minister of National Defense or even a vice chairman. The new lineup is therefore less "joint" than it might have been if Wu also had ascended and another naval officer replaced him as PLAN commander as many speculated, bringing the total number of service officers to five of ten uniformed CMC members.

Wu had seemed a natural fit for Minister of National Defense owing to his considerable foreign engagement experience as PLAN commander (*South China Morning Post*, October 20). The defense minister is the PLA's third-most senior uniformed officer and manages its relationship with China's state bureaucracies and foreign militaries, though he holds no operational control of forces in the field [6]. As the PLA moves incrementally in the direction of a more "joint" force, naming a navy officer defense minister also would have been a less radical departure from precedent than if Wu had been promoted to head, for example, one of the four general departments.

Instead, Chang Wanquan will become defense minister at the National People's Congress in the spring. Chang may have received the defense minister post as a consolation prize, crowding out Wu's promotion. There is a remote chance, however, that Chang's new position represents an effort to make use of his experience leading the GAD, which has primary responsibility for weapons design, development, procurement and maintenance and manages China's space and nuclear weapons programs. Outgoing President Hu Jintao made "civil-military integration," particularly in the defense industrial sector, a high priority ("Civil-Military Integration Theme Marks PLA Day Coverage," *China Brief*, August 12, 2011; *Qiushi*, August 1, 2011). China's defense minister appears to be a senior CMC official who works with staff in different offices throughout the PLA's four general departments, but the current setup for the Ministry of National Defense lacks the bureaucratic presence of the 1950s-era, Soviet-style Chinese defense ministry that had additional responsibilities over the defense industry. If those responsibilities are returned, Chang's experience would be invaluable.

The two new service chiefs appointed to the CMC, Ma Xiaotian, age 63, as PLAAF commander, and Wei Fenghe, age 58, as commander of the Second Artillery, both had been serving as deputy chiefs of the GSD. These positions gave them experience managing issues for the entire PLA and positioned them in the right grade for promotion to the CMC, whose membership since 2004 has included the heads of the PLAN, PLAAF and Second Artillery. Wei, who previously served as chief of staff of the Second Artillery and commanded one of the Second Artillery's bases—a career path very similar to his predecessor Jing Zhiyuan—is young enough to serve two five-year terms. General Ma, who at one point competed with Xu Qiliang to lead the PLAAF (both were appointed full members of the Central Committee when only deputy MR-leader grade officers in 2002), is only eligible for one term. His resume, however, exemplifies the diversity of command, staff and higher education experiences the PLA seeks for its senior officers. Ma served in two MRs and was the first air force officer to head the National Defense University before becoming the deputy chief of the GSD in charge of foreign affairs and intelligence (*China Leadership Monitor*, No. 24, November 11, 2007).

One other important observation is that Beijing did not feel the need to follow the precedent of having one operational track officer and one political track officer fill the CMC's number one and number two uniformed positions, respectively [7]. With the exception of 2002–2004, since the early 1990s, one of the CMC's uniformed vice chairs has been a career political officer. Chinese leaders evidently did not think departing from this trend was destabilizing enough to hold back Xu Qiliang's appointment as a vice chairman.

Heightened concerns about political reliability, however, may have played out in other appointments. The only new career political officer named to the CMC is the former Guangzhou MR Political Commissar Zhang Yang, age 61, as director of the General Political Department (GPD). Zhang's youth makes him eligible for two terms, and he hails from an increasingly important military region with responsibilities for possible contingencies in Taiwan, the South China Sea and China's land border with Vietnam. His most important characteristic, however, may have been his quiet contrast to several of the outspoken generals most familiar to PLA watchers, especially those associated with particular policy positions or with

cross-cutting family ties to civilian elites, who were not appointed to the CMC.

Three military "princelings" (or children of former high-level officials) all surnamed Liu (no relation among them), for example, who were widely rumored in the international press to be contenders for the CMC, will instead remain in their posts [8]. Liu Yuan, political commissar of the General Logistics Department (GLD) and son of former President Liu Shaoqi, delivered an unusually blunt anti-corruption speech in January and then toppled a GLD deputy director (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 10; *South China Morning Post*, February 1). This may have given other senior military leaders pause about their security should Liu be appointed to higher office. He also had penned the introduction to a prominent public intellectual's book advocating a particular domestic reform direction (*Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 2011). More explicitly, Liu Yazhou, political commissar of the National Defense University and son-in-law of former President Li Xiannian, has advocated openly for democratization and other controversial positions (*Want China Times*, August 1; *South China Morning Post* , August 1; *Qiushi*, August 16, 2004). Finally, PLAN Political Commissar Liu Xiaojiang is the son-in-law of the late reformist party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, whose funeral ceremony sparked the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations. Although Liu has not openly advocated reform, he has worked to honor Hu's memory—something now implicitly linked to political reforms [9].

In contrast, two of the new CMC selectees, former Beijing MR Commander Fang Fenghui and former Shenyang MR Commander Zhang Youxia, were long-considered almost certain to be appointed to the CMC. Both have served in multiple MRs. Both are young enough to serve two five-year terms. Both also are politically well-connected. Fang is presumably a protégé of outgoing CMC Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong under whom he served in the Lanzhou MR. Fang also orchestrated the PLA's role in China's 60th anniversary parade in 2009 (*South China Morning Post*, November 8). Zhang is the son of former GLD Director Zhang Zongxun, who served with incoming Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's father in the headquarters of the First Field Army in the 1940s. The younger Zhang is a veteran of both China's 1979 conflict with Vietnam and early 1980s border clashes.

Neither Fang nor Zhang, however, were considered the most likely choice to lead the GSD until early this year, when the leading candidate, executive deputy chief of the GSD Zhang Qinsheng, age 64, (no relation to Zhang Youxia) reportedly clashed publicly with his colleagues at a holiday banquet, torpedoing his career (*New York Times*, August 7). Zhang—a prominent defense intellectual and early enthusiast among the PLA officer corps of the way information technology was transforming modern warfare—had been director of the Campaign Teaching and Research Office and then Dean of Studies at China's National Defense University (*China Leadership Monitor*, No. 17, January 30, 2006). He had served as director of the GSD's Operations Department and later as assistant to the chief of the GSD in charge of intelligence and foreign affairs before being given command of the Guangzhou MR in 2007—presumably to give him the operational command experience requisite for higher office. Had Zhang been selected, he would have brought considerable diversity in terms of staff and higher education experience to the new lineup, despite being limited to one term. Instead, Zhang's collapse opened the way for Fang to become chief of the GSD. Zhang Youxia became director of the GAD. Zhao Keshi, age 65, commander of the Nanjing MR, who would have otherwise been forced to retire, became director of the GLD. Zhao's experience in the Nanjing MR—which is responsible primarily for Taiwan contingencies—may have figured in his selection; however, the necessarily limited number of senior ground officers eligible for this promotion probably assisted in his rise.

Zhao Keshi and Fan Changlong's appointments at their advanced age also assures that the CMC will experience another significant turnover—of half its uniformed members—in five years. In 2017, at least the senior CMC vice chairman, director of the General Logistics Department, Minister of National Defense, and commanders of the PLAN and PLAAF are likely to retire. Beijing will then have another opportunity for either more thorough reform or retrenchment.

Daniel Tobin, Kim Fassler and Justin Godby are analysts with the Department of Defense. The views expressed here are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Department of Defense or any other entity within the U.S. Government.

Sourcing Note: Judgments about the comparative career attributes of the incoming and outgoing CMC lineups are derived from data on their individual careers found in three places apart from official curricula vitae that have been cross-checked. The sources are as follows:

(1) Online Chinese wikis with entries on individual CMC members, including <http://baike.baidu.com> and <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/>;

(2) Hong Kong journalism, primarily several collective biographies of China's military leaders, including the following: Xu Santong, *Junzhong Shaozhuangpai Zhangwo Zhongguo Bingquan* [Up-and-Coming Generals Take Over China's Military Leadership], Hong Kong: Haye Chubanshe, 2009; Yu Shiping, *Xin Taizi Jun: Fubei Da Jiangshan, Women Bao Jiangshang* [The New Princeling Military: Our Fathers' Generation Took Power, We Will Protect It], Hong Kong: Mingjing Chubanshe, 2010; and Jin Qianli, *Diwudai Jiangxing: Zhonggong Dui Tai Zuozhang Zhongjian Renwu* [The Fifth Generation's Military Stars: The Chinese Communist Party's Crucial Figures in a War with Taiwan], Hong Kong: Xiafeier, 2006, in addition to profiles of individual military leaders that have appeared in the Hong Kong magazine *Chien Shao* [Frontline] over the past decade.

(3) Biographical details contained in scholarly analysis of the last major CMC turnover in 2002 from, especially, Dean Cheng, Ken Gause, Maryanne Kivlehan-Wise, James Mulvenon and David Shambaugh.

Notes:

1. According to the Hong Kong press, for example, Liang Guanglie and Fan Changlong drew the attention of senior leaders (including then-Vice President Hu Jintao) during flood fighting efforts in 1998. See the chapter on Fan in Jin Qianli cited above, pp. 300–314.
2. If both Xu Qiliang and Wu Shengli had been promoted to more senior CMC positions, their presence combined with their replacements as air force and navy commanders, along with the presence of the commander of the Second Artillery Corps, would have made for five of ten uniformed officers on the CMC not hailing from the ground force. This was the most favored scenario by many China leadership watchers.
3. Our understanding of the crucial role of the PLA grade structure in determining the eligibility of CMC candidates is based upon the published and unpublished work of Kenneth Allen. Any errors, however, are the authors' own. See, for example, "Assessing the PLA's Promotion Ladder to CMC Member Based on Grades vs. Ranks – Part 1" *China Brief*, July 22, 2010, and "Assessing the PLA's Promotion Ladder to CMC Member Based on Grades vs. Ranks – Part 2," *China Brief*, August 5, 2010.
4. Guo Boxiong had been promoted to the CMC in 1999 as a deputy chief of the GSD. This, like Fan's promotion directly into a vice chairman position, was a violation of the PLA's rules regarding military grade (deputy chief of the GSD is not a CMC-member grade position), but it at least gave Guo experience on the CMC that Fan lacks. And Guo was likely chosen for this promotion precisely because he was young enough to serve too terms.
5. The PLA's terminology refers to these as "third generation" rather than the Western "fourth generation." For the scope of this transformation, see, for example, David Shlapak, "Equipping the PLAAF: The Long March to Modernity" in Richard P. Hallion, Roger Cliff, and Phillip C. Saunders, eds., *The Chinese Air Force: Evolving Concepts, Roles, and Capabilities*, Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012, pp. 191–211.
6. For a discussion of the role of the Ministry of National Defense see Dennis J. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century*, Second Edition, New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 36–37. Based on the defense minister's public appearances in official state media, however, we think the defense minister's responsibilities are broader, including civil-military integration, defense education, defense legislation before the National People's Congress and the peacetime, preparatory aspects of coordination with civilian officials on defense mobilization issues.
7. In the outgoing CMC, for example, Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong was an operational track officer and Vice Chairman Xu Caihou was a

political track officer.

8. Another prominent "princeling," political commissar of the Second Artillery corps and former political commissar of the Chengdu MR, Zhang Haiyang, who is the son of former CMC Vice Chairman Zhang Zhen, may have been disqualified owing to close ties with fallen Politburo member Bo Xilai.
9. See the account provided in the chapter on Liu Xiaojiang in Yu Shiping, cited above, pp. 255–297.

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