

Survey of Chinese Communist Party provincial-level committees: a quantitative approach

The main objective is to gain knowledge about recruitment patterns into provincial-level committees of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Since the beginning of economic reforms in 1978, the Chinese economic and political influence gradually rose. Nowadays, it is one of two global superpowers, along with the United States. However, contrary to the USA, China's political system is authoritarian, opaque, and without any control of the ruling CCP by the public. Therefore, it leads to concerns regarding the inner-working of the regime, which is changing the international order.

The CCP structure was constructed on Leninist principles. Its most essential bodies are the Central Committee (approximately 370 people), Politburo (25), and Standing Committee of Politburo (7). However, under the central bodies in the institutional hierarchy, almost 250 000 committees are grouping all of 92 million party members. The most important are 31 **provincial-level committees** established in 22 provinces, five autonomous regions, and four municipalities. Every one of them is governing a single highest-level unit of the Chinese four-level administrative division. Many of them on their own have a population and economy of middle-sized power. That gives those committees enormous influence in Chinese politics. Understanding how people are selected will help better to understand the CCP and the whole political system.

The proposed study will be carried out by employment of quantitative methods. During the project, a large-scale quantitative survey of biographical data will be conducted. It will include all members of the provincial-level committees elected during a series of provincial party congresses held between October of 2016 and June of 2017 (3093 people) and those elected in autumn 2021/spring 2022.

As a part of the research, a query of public records (web pages of party committees and state-owned media) will be conducted. Among collected traits of cadres will be: age, birthplace, gender, ethnicity, experience in Communist Youth League, educational background. Next, the descriptive statistics and correlation of selected variables will be employed to analyze the data with specialist software support. The analysis will be conducted on three levels. Firstly, on a global level, among members of all committees, which will give a broad picture of the provincial political elites. Secondly, at a level of each province-level committee, which will show various recruitment patterns among individual committees. Thirdly, at a level of provincial standing committees, i.e., a local equivalent of central Politburo, which typically has 9-13 members. This last level will uncover whether the top elite among provincial committees differs from recruitment patterns from the others.

The project is situated within the tradition of quantitative research on the Chinese political elite, which dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. It builds on earlier studies with an aim to contribute to the existing literature. The impact of the project results on the development of the research field and scientific discipline will be primarily empirical. It will allow concluding on mobility, educational backgrounds, the relevance of the Communist Youth League, and representation of females and ethnic minorities among provincial-level political elites.

Additionally, the project will lead to a better understanding of the mechanism that governs Chinese politics. It will uncover the underlying structure of the provincial elite of the CCP, which engages in a complex relationship with the national government. Finally, it will contribute to a discussion regarding the centralization of power under the regime of Xi Jinping, arguably the most powerful leader of China since Mao Zedong.