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Rejuvenating Communism

*The Communist Youth League as a Political Promotion
Channel in Post-Mao China*

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Notes on Translation, Capitalization and Mandarin

Unless specified, and besides the names of State's laws and administrations, all translations from French and Chinese to English are the author's.

Besides common rules regarding proper nouns, locales and titles, the names of specific institutions and positions are capitalized. Capitalization occurs only when referring to a single specific institution (for example: *Peking University Student Union*, by opposition to *universities' student unions*) or position (for example: *Central Party Committee General Secretary*, by opposition to *Party secretaries*).

Simplified characters are used for Chinese terms, unless it quotes a source from Taiwan or Hong Kong using traditional characters. To the exception of commonly used nouns, such as *Kuomintang*, the *Pinyin* system is used for the Romanization of Chinese terms.

List of Acronyms

ACFTU: All-China Federation of Trade-Unions (*Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui*, 中华全国总工会)

ACYF: All-China Youth Federation (*Zhonghua qinglian lianhehui*, 中华青年联合会)

CCP: Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang*, 中国共产党)

CYL: Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan*, 共产主义青年团)

KMT: Kuomintang (国民党)

PLA: People's Liberation Army (*Jiefang jun*, 解放军)

PRC: People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo*, 中华人民共和国)

SYL: Socialist Youth League (*Shehui zhuyi qingniantuan*, 社会主义青年团)

Introduction

A - Elite cohesion and renewal in communist regimes

“The Soviet bureaucracy is like all ruling classes in that it is ready to shut its eyes to the crudest mistakes of its leaders in the sphere of general politics, provided in return they show an unconditional fidelity in the defense of its privileges.”¹ Trotsky depicted in 1936 the Soviet bureaucracy as a clientelist and cohesive elite. Only 14 years after the establishment of the USSR in 1922, the cadres were already pictured as cynical and self-interested rather than ideologically motivated.

In light of this configuration, one is led to wonder how elite cohesion is able to last overtime. Coming back to Trotsky’s quote, how to make sure that a bureaucrat’s personal interests remain in line with the organization’s in an evolving society? Once the revolutionary generation gone (who built strong personal ties during years of military struggle), how do communist regimes maintain unity among a renewed political elite? How do the surviving communist systems manage to attract new recruits and guarantee their lifelong loyalty? These questions are at the heart of my research. They are particularly relevant in investigating evolving communist systems, such as post-Mao China, where the revolutionary ideology no longer functions as a key structuring element and where a liberalized employment market provides young people with a number of attractive career options beyond the bureaucracy.² While numerous studies have described the flexibility and transformation patterns of communist regimes, the issues of elite renewal and cohesion remain highly understudied.

¹ Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, trans. Max Eastman (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004), 206.

² On the decreasingly structuring role of ideology, see : Kalpana Misra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism: The Erosion of Official Ideology in Deng’s China* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Martin K Dimitrov, “Understanding Communist Collapse and Resilience,” in *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe*, ed. Martin K Dimitrov, 2013, 3–39.

1) The transformation of communist systems

Against the transitology literature, which argued for a necessary and linear evolution of communist regimes towards liberal democracy,³ Jowitt developed one of the most comprehensive accounts of the transformation of communist party-states.⁴ He described three different phases that communist regimes tend to go through overtime in their relation with society. First, a *transformation* phase, during which the Party takes over and destroys the old order. Second, a *consolidation* phase, which leads to the establishment of a new regime with a new leader and ideology. The *consolidation*, for Jowitt, goes together with a tendency towards isolation of the Party from a threatening society which is controlled through coercion. Third, the Party develops *inclusive* dispositions. It reaches the limits of its domination strategy and progressively integrates itself with the growing plurality of the non-official sectors of society, without losing the monopoly over political decision-making.

For Jowitt, this evolution of the communist party-states implies a transformation of the Party leadership. According to him, the communist Party first switches from recruiting revolutionary cadres – risk-taking leaders capable of attracting political support and who are key for the transformation of the old society – to cultivating apparatchiks. The apparatchiks tend then to isolate themselves from society in order to better control it. This is part of the Party's *consolidation* strategy, with the view of maximizing obedience within its ranks.⁵ Second, the *inclusive* tendencies of the Party imply both the extension of Party membership to groups previously politically excluded, as well as a professionalization of the Party leadership itself. This professionalization implies “a shift away from command, arbitrary, and dogmatic modes of action and organization, and a move towards leadership, procedural, and empirically oriented modes.”⁶ While Jowitt underlined interesting patterns which are common across communist regimes, the mechanisms undergirding the transformations of the political elite and allowing it to maintain its cohesion, remain unspecified.

³ See for example : Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York; Toronto; New York: Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992). For an argumentative criticism of the transitology literature, see: Michel Dobry, “Les voies incertaines de la transitologie : choix stratégiques, séquences historiques, bifurcations et processus de path dependence [Uncertain paths of transitology : strategic choices, historical sequences, bifurcations and path dependence processes],” *Revue française de science politique* 50, no. 4 (2000): 585–614.

⁴ Kenneth Jowitt, “Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes,” *World Politics* 28, no. 01 (1975): 69–96; Kenneth Jowitt, *New World Disorder. the Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁵ Jowitt, *New World Disorder. the Leninist Extinction*, 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

Focusing mainly on the USSR and Eastern European Leninist systems, Jowitt presented the inclusive tendencies of communist regimes as the beginning of the end. According to him, the communist parties base their charismatic legitimacy on a combat tension, directed towards external or internal class enemies and vital to subordinate the elite members' particular interests to the organization's ones. But the inclusion phase implies the progressive end of this combat tension as the Party does not retrench itself from a threatening society anymore, and has officially defeated the internal class enemy. For Jowitt, it becomes hard, without this tension, to guarantee the commitment of the political elite to the Party's general goals. All in all, it leads to a corrupt routinization of the organization and its subsequent decay.⁷ Yet, after witnessing the survival of different communist regimes, such as in China or Vietnam,⁸ decades after the initiation of reforms characteristic of inclusive tendencies, I argue that Jowitt's deterministic account should be questioned.

A more recent study by Jean-François Bayart on what he called "Thermidorian situations," strikes me as an interesting new take on the inclusive tendencies of communist regimes.⁹ Bayart drew a parallel between the contemporary situations that can be observed in different bureaucratized revolutionary regimes and the conservative turn the French Revolution took in 1794 during the month of *Thermidor*,¹⁰ leading to the downfall of Robespierre and the establishment of a new regime, the "Directory" (1795-1799). The concept of "Thermidor" which emerged from these events, has taken various meanings depending on authors' perspectives. Trotsky, in particular, accused Stalin of embodying the "Soviet Thermidor."¹¹ For him, Stalin's regime exemplified the end of the revolutionary impetus and the "triumph of the bureaucracy over the masses."¹² He therefore condemned it as the rise of a new ruling class.

Bayart's concept of Thermidorian situation contrasts with Trotsky's normative approach and also focuses on a different historical configuration, including the bureaucratization of the regime as rules are developed regarding political selection and succession, but also the liberalization of its economic policies, such as in contemporary China or Vietnam, by opposition to central planning under Stalin. Bayart sums it up as follows: "Contemporary

⁷ Kenneth Jowitt, "Soviet Neotraditionalism: The Political Corruption of a Leninist Regime," *Soviet Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 1983): 275–97.

⁸ Dimitrov, "Understanding Communist Collapse and Resilience."

⁹ Jean-François Bayart, "Le Concept de situation thermidorienne: régimes néo-révolutionnaires et libéralisation économique [The Concept of Thermidorian Situation: Neo-Revolutionary Regimes and Economic Liberalization]," *Questions de recherche* 24 (March 2008): 1–76.

¹⁰ Thermidor was the eleventh month of the revolutionary calendar, used in France from 1793 to 1805.

¹¹ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 66.

¹² *Ibid.*, 80.

“Thermidorism” [...] is found all along revolutionary trajectories, whether communist or other, when the ruling class becomes professionalized, passes from the register of mobilizing utopia to managerial reason, and aims to reproduce itself as a ruling class by resorting to the ambiguous strategy of opening itself up to the capitalist world economy, indulging in the primitive accumulation of capital, and also in perpetuating a revolutionary ideology, vocabulary and *imaginaire*.¹³

Bayart’s concept shares numerous common features with Jowitt’s inclusive tendencies, but it is also more specific in two main ways. First, it does not merely offer a description of the strategies developed by revolutionary regimes in order to survive, but identifies a specific *situation*, characterized by the interaction between a social context and the regime’s strategies. The regimes’ strategies are presented as both causes to the evolutions of society and reactions to them. Focusing on the interaction itself allows the author to take a step back from an approach purely focused on the survival of political systems, thereby avoiding a certain determinism. Second, the situation Bayart focused on is different and more specific than the context of the inclusive tendencies developed by Jowitt. While Jowitt had in mind the coming to power of Khrushchev after Stalin and the decades that followed, Bayart used the examples of contemporary Cambodia and Iran to describe the ways in which a revolutionary regime deals with a liberalizing economy and the socioeconomic changes it implies. He described a very different context, in which the revolutionary Party does not rule the economy through central planning nor has a complete control over social mobility anymore. In this context, Bayart stressed the ideological flexibility and overall adaptability of the bureaucratized revolutionary regimes.

The political elites described by Bayart are adapting to a liberalizing socioeconomic context. Using a variety of methods, they try to remain in power by making the most out of the new situation that they contributed to shape. In fact, the concept of Thermidorian situation implies that while the socioeconomic context changes drastically, the political system and its elite remain largely the same. However, as developed by Andrew Walder, departure from central planning has deep political consequences: it creates alternatives to the reward and career paths

¹³ Bayart, “Le Concept de situation thermidorienne: régimes néo-révolutionnaires et libéralisation économique [The Concept of Thermidorian Situation: Neo-Revolutionary Regimes and Economic Liberalization],” 58. Translated and quoted by: Françoise Mengin, *Fragments of an Unfinished War: Taiwanese Entrepreneurs and the Partition of China* (London: Hurst and Oxford University Press, 2015), 83.

formerly controlled by the Party organizations.¹⁴ In the Chinese case for instance, it implied the end of the job placement system managed by the Party-State.¹⁵ In this context, and in particular when new lucrative career opportunities open up, how does the party keep attracting young educated recruits and guarantee their loyalty? Like in Jowitt's work, the mechanisms explaining elite renewal and cohesion, and therefore the sustainability of the regime overtime in a changing context, remain to be explored.

Building on the sociology of elites, I argue that the issue of elite renewal and cohesion, and how it is maintained overtime, must be at the heart of a study of revolutionary regimes' evolutions.¹⁶ I, however, do not study the Party-State's political elite as a homogeneous "ruling class"¹⁷ or "new class".¹⁸ While this approach can yield interesting results in stressing the importance of elite cohesion for regime survival, the focus on the elite's social background and homogeneity often obscures the organizational mechanisms through which it renews itself in light of a changing situation. In line with the approach developed by Suleiman in his study of contemporary French elites, I focus instead on the structures through which the political elite, understood as the officials employed by the Party-State, is recruited and trained.¹⁹ While other elite groups might emerge in a Thermidorian situation and the liberalizing economy which goes with it, the ruling elite in a communist regime remains the Party-State officials and this is the group I focus on.

In order to shed light on the specific mechanisms which allow a revolutionary party to stay in power by renewing its elite and maintaining its cohesion, it appears fruitful to focus on a single case. By opposition to the wide cross-national databases often used in elite studies,²⁰ it allows to get into the details of the mechanisms allowing elite renewal in a specific setting. post-Mao China offers an ideal setting to study elite renewal in a Thermidorian context. In

¹⁴ Andrew G Walder, "The Decline of Communist Power: Elements of a Theory of Institutional Change," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 2 (1994): 297–323.

¹⁵ On the direct job placement system and its liberalization, see : Yanjie Bian, "Guanxi and the Allocation of Urban Jobs in China," *China Quarterly*, no. 140 (1994): 971–99.

¹⁶ Elite theory has long emphasized the importance of elite renewal in order to prevent the decline of a ruling elite. The main idea is that a political elite which transforms itself continually, by absorbing talented individuals from other sectors of society, can survive indefinitely (Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class (Elementi Di Scienza Politica)*, trans. Arthur Livingston (New York; London: McGraw-Hill book company, inc., 1939); Vilfredo Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of the Elites; an Application of Theoretical Sociology*. (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Mosca, *The Ruling Class (Elementi Di Scienza Politica)*.

¹⁸ Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

¹⁹ On this issue, see : Ezra N Suleiman, *Elites in French Society: The Politics of Survival* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 9–10.

²⁰ See in particular : Robert D Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976); Joel D Aberbach, Robert D Putnam, and Bert A Rockman, *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

contrast to Jowitt's statement that "the persistence of Leninist rule in China rests on the continued presence of old Bolsheviks,"²¹ the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been able to outlive the first revolutionary generation of cadres. The CCP remained in power while pursuing economic reforms characteristic of a Thermidorian situation, as well as promoting a whole new generation of Party cadres.

2) The Chinese case

According to Cheng Li, the Chinese Communist party has, since the 1980s, underwent the "most massive, rapid change of elites within any regime in human history."²² It has been stressed that the CCP implemented a uniquely strict rejuvenation strategy, with no equivalent among other communist regimes, leading to a relatively peaceful elite change at every level of the Party-State hierarchy.²³ If the uniqueness of the Chinese elite's transformation is often put forward, so far no study has shed light on the specific mechanisms which made it possible.

In line with Jowitt's legacy, the literature on the inclusive tendencies of the Chinese Party-State focuses on the extension of the CCP membership and the ideological innovations allowing it to coopt new elite groups. Bruce Dickson and Kellee Tsai, in particular, analyzed how the cooptation of entrepreneurs by the Chinese Party-State started in the 1980s and was officially recognized in Jiang Zemin's theory of the "three represents" (*sange daibiao*, 三个代表), first introduced in 2000.²⁴ They both showed that this Party strategy ensured the political support of entrepreneurs by giving them a stake in the regime's survival and preventing them from organizing against it.²⁵ Dickson showed that while only around 5% of the population was part of the Party in 2000, the proportion of Party members among entrepreneurs was then around 20%.²⁶ In parallel, the concept of Thermidorian situation has also been applied to the Chinese

²¹ Jowitt, *New World Disorder. the Leninist Extinction*, 314.

²² Cheng Li, *China's Leaders: The New Generation* (Lanham, [Md.]: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 34.

²³ Mingming Shen, "A Policy-Driven Elite Transformation and Its Outcomes a Case Study of the New Local Elites in China." (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1994), 10.

²⁴ The "three represents" is a political theory introduced by Jiang Zemin in 2000. According to this theory, the CCP "must always represent the requirements for developing China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people" ("Jiang Zemin's Report at the 16th Party Congress," *Xinhua*, November 18, 2002; http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-11/18/content_633685.htm, consulted on 2 December 2015). In putting forward the necessity to represent the country's "advanced productive forces" and the "majority of the Chinese people," the theory led to a major shift in the Party's recruitment policy, expanding it to businessmen from the private sector. On the "three represents," see Joseph Fewsmith, "Studying the Three Represents," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 8 (October 2003).

²⁵ Bruce J Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China the Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Kellee S Tsai, *Capitalism without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²⁶ Bruce J Dickson, "Threats to Party Supremacy," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003): 27–35.

context in studies by Françoise Mengin, as well as Jean-Louis Rocca. Comparing the evolution of the KMT Regime in Taiwan and of post-Mao PRC, Mengin showed how from a similar revolutionary matrix they both evolved and survived through economic liberalization and elite bureaucratization.²⁷ In parallel, Rocca highlighted the evolution of the regime towards state capitalism as well as less references to ideological principles, and the cultivation of a political elite which legitimizes itself through technical expertise.²⁸

These different studies have been very informative regarding the CCP's ability to extend its control over a changing society. But focusing on other aspects of the revolutionary regime's transformation, they only briefly touched upon the question of political elite renewal and cohesion. The cooptation of entrepreneurs – who by definition keep their professional status and are not employed by the Party-State – among the CCP's 88 million members,²⁹ has very little impact on the transformation of the Party-State's political elite, constituted of 500,000 leading cadres.³⁰ In a structured communist system such as China, the possession of an official position is what defines political elite status.³¹ While it is symptomatic of the regime's evolutions, the cooptation of entrepreneurs should therefore not overshadow the evolution of recruitment mechanisms allowing the transformation of the actual ruling elite. In a nutshell, while several studies have noted that, after the revolutionary generation left power, the Party renewed its elite and recruited officials with more diverse experiences, they often fall short in explaining how elite cohesion has been maintained throughout all these years.³²

The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to the literature on communist regimes' inclusive strategies by placing the issue of the communist core elite's renewal and cohesion at the center of the picture. Through an analysis of the evolution of the Party's youth organizations since the beginning of the reform era in 1978, I unveil the key mechanisms that allow the Party

²⁷ Mengin, *Fragments of an Unfinished War: Taiwanese Entrepreneurs and the Partition of China*, 71–146.

²⁸ Jean-Louis Rocca, *A Sociology of Modern China* (S.l.: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2014), 105–132.

²⁹ “China's Communist Party Now Larger than the Population of Germany,” *South China Morning Post*, June 30, 2015.

³⁰ This figure dates from 2013 and includes the leading cadres from the county level up. I develop later in the Introduction the concept of leading cadre. Source: Jean-Pierre Cabestan, *Le système politique chinois: un nouvel équilibre autoritaire [The Chinese political system: a new authoritarian equilibrium]* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2014), 403.

³¹ On this issue, see in particular : Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, “Cadre and Personnel Management in the CPC,” *China: An International Journal* 10, no. 2 (August 2012): 69–83.

³² On this issue, see in particular : Cheng Li, “Jiang Zemin's Successors: The Rise of the Fourth Generation of Leaders in the PRC,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 161 (March 2000): 1–40; Stéphanie Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 300; Joseph Fewsmith, “Elite Politics: The Struggle for Normality,” in *China Today, China Tomorrow: Domestic Politics, Economy, and Society*, ed. Joseph Fewsmith (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 149–64.

to remain attractive for young educated recruits and maintain an overall cohesion of the cadre corps, while navigating a liberalizing economy in which it no longer holds a monopoly over social mobility, since alternative valuable career options have become available for ambitious young individuals.

In this introductory chapter, I first review the literature on the recruitment and management of Party-State officials. Second, I introduce the theoretical instruments I intend to apply to the Chinese case in order to fill gaps in the literature. Third, I explain why focusing on youth organizations and their recruitment function is the best choice to further my theoretical approach. Finally, I put forward three hypotheses regarding the evolution of the youth organization's recruitment function in post-Mao China, and describe the research methods used to test them.

B - Literature review: beyond formal and informal politics

The literature on political elites in post-Mao China is divided in two broad categories. A first branch focuses on the Party's institutionalization processes, understood as the routinization of political behaviors along commonly accepted rules and practices.³³ A second branch of research puts forward the limits of this institutionalization and emphasizes the role played by so-called *informal* practices in the selection and promotion of Chinese officials. I now turn to an overview of these two branches and their subdivisions. I decided to endorse the distinction made between *formal* and *informal* politics in my literature review in order to best show how artificial this distinction is. Indeed, these two faces of Chinese politics are far from clearly separated from one another, and I suggest instead that they are fundamentally consubstantial. I argue that we have to go beyond the picture of the Chinese Party-State as an imperfect Weberian bureaucracy and take its political features seriously, i.e. what is often seen as informal. Finally, I also stress that the best way to do so is by changing our research perspective, giving more weight to the individuals themselves and how they are transformed by, but also transform the organization.

³³ Regarding this definition of institutionalization see: Steven Levitsky, "Institutionalization and Peronism: The Concept, the Case and the Case for Unpacking the Concept," *Party Politics Party Politics* 4, no. 1 (1998): 77–92.

1) *Formal politics in post-Mao China*

a) *The limited institutionalization of the Party under Mao*

For analysts focusing on communist regimes' national leaders, China has been depicted until the late 1970s as an outlier in terms of elite renewal and Party institutionalization. While in the USSR and in Eastern Europe younger and better educated cadres were getting promoted, the Chinese revolutionary generation remained in the top Party positions for a very long period of time.³⁴ However, tendencies towards the institutionalization of bureaucratic rules have been noticed at the local level since the 1950s. Oksenberg in particular has shown that, during what he called the *bureaucratic phases* of Mao's era – that occurred in between major political campaigns such as the anti-rightist campaign (1957), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) or the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) – political recruitment grew more codified and educational background became a more important selection criterion relatively to class background.³⁵ In the 1960s Vogel examined the regularization of commonly understood standards to evaluate cadres and train them, through a network of party schools.³⁶ As a result of this process, Barnett argued that in the late 1960s, China's cadre management practices had developed into a system in which performance was more important than personal factors in determining career advancement.³⁷

This initial phase of Party institutionalization, which stopped with the Cultural Revolution, can be understood as a transformation of Chinese officials *from revolutionaries to semi-bureaucrats*, to paraphrase Ezra Vogel's title.³⁸ The Chinese cadre corps gradually became, after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, an organized bureaucracy with a structured ranking and wage system. In 1977, soon after Mao's death, the number of cadres, understood as the bureaucrats in Party-State administrations but also in public service units and state-owned enterprises, attained 16 million.³⁹

³⁴ This was also true of the Cuban case. Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, 201–202.

³⁵ Michel Oksenberg, "The Institutionalisation of the Chinese Communist Revolution: The Ladder of Success on the Eve of the Cultural Revolution," *The China Quarterly*, no. 36 (1968): 61–92.

³⁶ Ezra F Vogel, "From Revolutionary to Semi-Bureaucrat: The 'Regularisation' of Cadres," *The China Quarterly* 29 (1967): 36–60.

³⁷ Arthur Doak Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China* (London; New York: Columbia university press, 1967), 45.

³⁸ Vogel, "From Revolutionary to Semi-Bureaucrat: The 'Regularisation' of Cadres."

³⁹ Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," in *Bringing the Party Back in: How China Is Governed*, ed. Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Yongnian Zheng (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004), 60.

b) The invention of Weberian bureaucrats in post-Mao China

After Mao's death and the reforms that followed, a whole branch of literature emerged regarding the institutionalization of cadre recruitment in China. It demonstrated how, starting in 1980 with Deng Xiaoping's call for a "four-way transformation" (*sihua*, 四化), the cadres' corps was transformed through the promotion of individuals who were "revolutionary, younger, more educated, and more technically specialized" (*geminghua, nianqinghua, zhishihua he zhuanqiyehua*, 革命化、年轻化、知识化和专业化).⁴⁰ Among the main changes identified were the fact that the CCP stopped relying on class background as a criterion for political selection and that new rules were developed in the 1980s regarding cadres' recruitment, training and promotion.⁴¹ Numerous scholars have explored the effect of these new regulations on Chinese cadres' corps.

Various studies, and in particular Melanie Manion's work, first stressed the role played by new retirement regulations on the transformation of the regime's elite. From ministerial positions downward, new rules regarding retirement age and age limits were promulgated in 1982 for every level. It was the end of the life-tenure system. For instance, the age limit for holding a ministerial level position was put at 65 years old.⁴² Parallel to these new rules, some studies have shown that unwritten norms were gradually established regarding the retirement of national party leaders. At the 15th Party Congress in 1997, an unwritten age limit of 70 was first applied to the election of Politburo members.⁴³ Several authors stressed how these new rules led to a generational change in the cadre corps.⁴⁴ According to national data, the overall ratio of cadres below 35 years old rose from 28,6% to 49,5% between 1979 and 1998.⁴⁵

Beyond retirement regulations, several scholars have examined the role played by emerging rules regarding term limits and step-by-step promotions in making the promotion of

⁴⁰ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 170.

⁴¹ On this process, see in particular : Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 193.

⁴² Melanie Manion, *Retirement of Revolutionaries in China: Public Policies, Social Norms, Private Interests* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁴³ Gang Lin, "Leadership Transition, Intra-Party Democracy and Institution Building in China," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 2 (2004): 255–75; Chien-Wen Kou and Xiaowei Zang, "Informal Politics Embedded in Institutional Contexts," in *Choosing China's Leaders*, ed. Chien-Wen Kou and Xiaowei Zang (London ; New York: Routledge, 2014), 1–21.

⁴⁴ See for example: Shen, "A Policy-Driven Elite Transformation and Its Outcomes a Case Study of the New Local Elites in China," 32; Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 262.

⁴⁵ Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 66.

Chinese officials more stable and predictable.⁴⁶ Finally, the CCP's policy of promoting better educated cadres has been remarked for its impact on elite renewal in post-Mao China. In 1984, 80% of the cadres promoted had a college degree and the ratio of college educated officials at the provincial and central levels grew from 43% in 1980 to 60% in 1986.⁴⁷ According to Andrew Walder, such a rapid and fundamental change cannot only be explained by the increase in education at the national level of education. Rather, it indicates a real leadership transformation.⁴⁸

As a whole, these scholars emphasize the impact of these reforms on Chinese cadres' corps, and points to the overall elite renewal process initiated by the CCP. Cheng Li and Lynn White noted that, from 1980 to 1986, more than 1,370,000 cadres recruited before 1949 retired while 469,000 college educated young cadres were appointed above the county level.⁴⁹

The branch of literature regarding the institutionalization of cadres' recruitment and promotion reflects well the major elite change that took place in China from the 1980s onwards. It is also extremely informative about the new rules and procedures that governed this change. Yet, a major weakness of this literature is that by focusing on age and education as meritocratic criteria for the promotion of the new elite, it tends to forget that, from the CCP's point of view, the issue of political reliability remains key. Numerous China experts have in fact argued that, as a result of this rejuvenation policy, the CCP cadre corps took a technocratic turn.⁵⁰ Defining a technocrat based on one's university training in applied science, Cheng Li shows that 76% of the CCP Central Committee members were technocrats in 2002.⁵¹ According to Hong Yung Lee, the Chinese officials went from being *revolutionary cadres to Party technocrats*,⁵² hence one step beyond Vogel's assessment in 1967.

⁴⁶ Kou and Zang, "Informal Politics Embedded in Institutional Contexts"; Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China."

⁴⁷ Xiaowei Zang, *Elite Dualism and Leadership Selection in China* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 61.

⁴⁸ Andrew G Walder, "The Party Elite and China's Trajectory of Change," in *The Chinese Communist Party in Reform*, ed. Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Yongnian Zheng (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 15–32.

⁴⁹ Cheng Li and Lynn White, "Elite Transformation and Modern Change in Mainland China and Taiwan: Empirical Data and the Theory of Technocracy," *The China Quarterly* 121 (March 1990): 1–35.

⁵⁰ See on the topic of Chinese technocracy: Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*; Cheng Li, "The Rise of Technocracy: Elite Transformation and Ideological Change in Post-Mao China" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1992); Gongqin Xiao, "The Rise of the Technocrats," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003): 60–65; Joseph Fewsmith, *Elite Politics in Contemporary China: Joseph Fewsmith*. (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 2000).

⁵¹ Cheng Li, "The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38, no. 3 (October 2009): 13–33.

⁵² Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*.

Indeed, for the institutionalization literature, the CCP is developing meritocratic procedures to recruit its officials, who are progressively turning themselves into apolitical Weberian bureaucrats.⁵³ This assessment is highly criticized by Andrew Walder, for whom “a rise in emphasis on expertise and professional training does not mean, either logically or in practice, that the scope of political selection criteria is correspondingly diminished.”⁵⁴ Walder highlighted that loyalty, though less public, is still fundamental in officials’ recruitment and promotion in post-Mao China. He argued that an “ascriptive” form of political loyalty, based on class background or family ties, has been gradually replaced by a “behavioral” one, referring to the behavior and attitudes individuals display in their work.⁵⁵ As demonstrated by Bruce Dickson, the Party constantly tries to find ways to prevent adverse selection in an environment with limited information. According to him, the CCP strives to avoid what happened in Hungary or Taiwan where the cooptation of reformist elements led to a revolution from within and to the ruling Party losing power.⁵⁶ Following this idea, a sub-branch of the institutionalization literature has focused on the mechanisms through which the CCP keeps political control over its cadres and ensures that they follow orders.

c) The Party’s control over its cadres

Unsatisfied with the literature presenting the institutionalization of the CCP as a linear path towards meritocracy, several authors have focused on the transformation of cadres’ management since the late 1980s and explored the techniques used by the Party-State to better control its officials. In line with the idea that ideology itself is not a key constraint to cadres’ behavior, these scholars examine both the maintenance of the overall *nomenklatura* system as well as the reforms aiming at making it more efficient.

As analyzed by Brødsgaard, Burns and Manion in particular, the basis of the Party’s control over its cadres is the *nomenklatura* system inherited from the USSR. Party committees at every level have authority over a list of leadership positions. They control the appointment, promotion and dismissal of senior personnel, and the lower level is accountable to the next level

⁵³ For Max Weber, the bureaucrat is in theory apolitical, as “bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through knowledge” (Max Weber, *Economy and Society; an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 225.

⁵⁴ Andrew G Walder, “The Political Dimension of Social Mobility in Communist States: China and the Soviet Union,” *Research in Political Sociology* 1 (1985): 103.

⁵⁵ Walder, “The Political Dimension of Social Mobility in Communist States: China and the Soviet Union.”

⁵⁶ Bruce J Dickson, “Cooptation and Corporatism in China: The Logic of Party Adaptation,” in *China’s Deep Reform: Domestic Politics in Transition*, ed. Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 119–43.

up. Parallel to the *nomenklatura*,⁵⁷ the *bianzhi* (编织) system delimits the authorized number of personnel in every Party-State administration or public sector units. Whereas the *nomenklatura* is a control tool over the leaders at every level, the *bianzhi* system includes all personnel on the State's payroll.⁵⁸

As stressed by this branch of the literature, the State's control over officials was further standardized through the development of a civil service system from the 1990s onwards.⁵⁹ It included more specifically the establishment of a decentralized system of civil service examinations (*gongwuyuan kaoshi*, 公务员考试), starting in 1993.⁶⁰ Dedicated exams are now put in place for the specific positions advertised by various central and local administrations.⁶¹

The civil service system also clarified the dualism between basic official and leaders that transpired from the distinction between the *nomenklatura* and the *bianzhi* system. According to Maria Edin, one of the most important developments of the new civil service system implemented since 1993 is the separation between the management of leading cadres (*lingdao ganbu*, 领导干部) and that of non-leading cadres (*feilingdao ganbu*, 非领导干部). The leading cadres are the leading Party-State figures at every level of the polity, and within public sector units. The distinction between leading and non-leading cadre takes form within a structured ranking system. Leading cadres ranks start at the section leadership level (*keji*, 科级), the equivalent of a township leader or a department director in a county level government, and go all the way to the State leadership level (*guoji*, 国级).⁶² The leading cadres are managed through the *nomenklatura* system under the control of the Party's Organization Department.

⁵⁷ In Chinese: *ganbu zhiwu mingchengbiao* (干部职务名称表).

⁵⁸ John P Burns, "Strengthening Central CCP Control of Leadership Selection: The 1990 Nomenklatura," *The China Quarterly*, no. 138 (1994): 458–91; Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, "Institutional Reform and the Bianzhi System in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 170 (2002): 345–60; Melanie Manion, "The Cadre Management System, Post-Mao: The Appointment, Promotion, Transfer and Removal of Party and State Leaders," *The China Quarterly*, no. 102 (1985): 203–33.

⁵⁹ See in particular : John P Burns and Xiaoqi Wang, "Civil Service Reform in China: Impacts on Civil Servants' Behaviour," *The China Quarterly*, no. 201 (2010): 58–78; Brødsgaard, "Cadre and Personnel Management in the CPC," August 2012, 69–83.

⁶⁰ Following the Temporary regulation regarding civil servants of 1993, a system of civil service exam was implemented ("Temporary Regulation Regarding Civil Servants (*Guojia gongwuyuan zanxing tiaoli*, 国家公务员暂行条例)," State Council, August 1993). The civil servant exam system was further developed by the "Civil Servant Law" of 2005 ("Civil Servant Law of the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongwuyuan fa*, 中华人民共和国公务员法)," National People's Congress, 27 April 2005).

⁶¹ Regarding the implementation of the civil servant exam, see: Frank N Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 166.

⁶² I come back to the ranking of leading cadres in Chapter Two. See: Maria Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective," *The China Quarterly* 173 (2003): 35–52; *Ibid.*, 31.

The Party's control is therefore mainly exerted on them. They are also recruited following different procedures than the non-leading cadres who take the civil servant exam.⁶³ According to Brødsgaard, in 1998, 8% of the seven million cadres working in Party-State administrations were leading cadres.⁶⁴

The leading cadres are held responsible for the performance of their unit, on which they are evaluated.⁶⁵ The literature on the cadres' management system has stressed the development of precise guidelines to evaluate cadres based on specific performance criteria.⁶⁶ Several studies at the county and township levels underlined the Party-State's capacity to maintain control over its agents through a system of evaluation, exams, punishment and rewards.⁶⁷ A group of researchers tested this idea statistically and showed that economic performance is now a key factor explaining the promotion of local leading cadres.⁶⁸ This view regarding the personnel management capacity of the local Party-State is shared by Pierre Landry who highlighted the importance of cadres control in what he described as a *de facto* highly decentralized polity.⁶⁹ According to Landry: "the party may no longer be the revolutionary instrument of mass mobilization of the Maoist era, its cadres may no longer be strongly committed to its official ideology, yet the *institutions* of the party operate as powerful filtering devices that help perpetuate the CCP's political leadership."⁷⁰

Political control is therefore particularly focused on leading cadres. For Edin, contrary to the idea that Chinese officials have become apolitical, it means that the CCP has established a *de facto* separation between two career tracks: a political one for leading cadres and an

⁶³ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 166.

⁶⁴ Brødsgaard only included the leading cadres from the county level up (Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 67).

⁶⁵ Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective," 38.

⁶⁶ Brødsgaard, "Cadre and Personnel Management in the CPC," August 2012; Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective."

⁶⁷ Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective"; Stig Thøgersen, "Frontline Soldiers of the CCP: The Selection of China's Township Leaders," *The China Quarterly*, no. 194 (2008): 414–23; Susan H Whiting, *Power and Wealth in Rural China: The Political Economy of Institutional Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶⁸ Joseph P.H. Fan et al., "The Visible Hand behind China's Growth," Joint NBER-CUHK Conference on Capitalizing China, 2009 ; S. Philip Hsu and Jih-Wei Shao, "The Rule-Bound Personnel Turnover of China's Provincial Leaders, 1993-2010," in *Choosing China's Leaders*, ed. Chien-Wen Kou and Xiaowei Zang (London ; New York: Routledge, 2014), 97–123.

⁶⁹ Pierre F Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷⁰ Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*, 203.

administrative one for ordinary cadres.⁷¹ Underlining the political feature of leading cadres, Pieke suggested that, in contrast to appointed bureaucrats, they hold positions which would be given to elected officials in an electoral democracy.⁷² This idea of a dualistic approach of the Party-State towards its agents, as well as the level of compliance expected from them, is at the core of another sub-branch of the literature regarding Chinese officials, which focuses on *elite dualism* from a quantitative perspective.

d) *Elite dualism and sponsored mobility*

In *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, György Konrád and Iván Szelényi argued that in the 1960s and 1970s, East European communist regimes, as well as the USSR, developed a stable compromise between the ruling elite and what had become increasingly influential technocrats. The technocrats agreed not to question the political structure in exchange for policy concessions and incorporation within the decision making process. The authors argued that communist regimes have established separate career paths, one leading towards political positions with power and privileges and one geared towards more technically specialized positions with less power. These two paths are expected to involve different biases in screening, leaning either towards education credentials or towards political loyalty. This was particularly salient in Hungary where educated professionals were coopted within the regime but channeled mostly towards technical positions in the State apparatus and rarely placed in political positions within the Party.⁷³

In 1995, Andrew Walder took Konrád and Szelényi's idea as a starting point and developed an *elite dualism* model applied to contemporary China. The main argument was that political recruitment had been segmented into two main paths: one leading to more technical positions within the Chinese government, and one ending in more political ones within the CCP. Analysis of career data showed that whereas education level in general, and scientific training in particular, had a positive effect on chances of recruitment, it was stronger for State positions than for Party ones. Political loyalty, measured through Party membership, was by contrast much more important for Party positions than government ones.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Maria Edin, "Remaking the Communist Party-State: The Cadre Responsibility System at the Local Level in China," *China: An International Journal* 1, no. 1 (2003): 1–15.

⁷² Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 30.

⁷³ György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

⁷⁴ Andrew G Walder, "Career Mobility and the Communist Political Order," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 3 (1995): 309–28.

Party membership itself being very common among cadres,⁷⁵ Li Bobai and Andrew Walder used instead the length of Party membership to account for political loyalty in a later study which refined the elite dualism model. Analyzing a sample of urban residents, they showed that early recruitment in the CCP was crucial for promotion to political positions. In contrast, Party membership obtained in one's mid or late career did not provide career advantages in the administration.⁷⁶ In order to conceptualize this variation, the authors relied on Turner's concept of *sponsored mobility*.⁷⁷ As opposed to a framework in which competition is based on one's abilities, sponsored mobility favors a more controlled selection, in the sense that some individuals are selected early-on for elite status. For Turner, sponsored mobility is a way to cultivate elite values and manners among a set of selected individuals, as well as loyalty to the system. Following this logic, those who joined the CCP early-on became part of a pool of potential candidates for high positions in the organization, by opposition to those who got appointed into the government.

Li Bobai added to this sponsored mobility logic the potential re-training of chosen elite members through adult education. According to him, people who have been selected and have proven their loyalty are re-trained to fulfill the education criterion. This provides both loyal and educated recruits to the CCP.⁷⁸ Echoing this importance given to adult education, several studies have stressed the function of communist Party schools in as far as elite homogenization and renewal are concerned. Frank Pieke has emphasized the transformative value of Party school training on the officials who take part in it. Adult education, he argued, functions as a *rite de passage* to become part of the Party-State's elite. Through Party school training, "the party-state creates a highly specific power cult that turns bureaucratic administrators into an elite who embodies the charisma of the party and its ideology."⁷⁹ Departing from Pieke's anthropological approach to the Party school and its focus on elite values, Charlotte Lee statistically assessed the positive effect of Party school training on a cadre's chances of being

⁷⁵ In 1998, more than 95% of the 508,025 leading cadres were CCP members (Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 67).

⁷⁶ Bobai Li and Andrew G Walder, "Career Advancement as Party Patronage: Sponsored Mobility into the Chinese Administrative Elite, 1949-1996," *The American Journal of Sociology* 106, no. 5 (2001): 1371-1408.

⁷⁷ Ralph H. Turner, "Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System," *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 6 (December 1960): 855-67.

⁷⁸ Bobai Li, "Manufacturing Meritocracy: Adult Education, Career Mobility, and Elite Transformation in Socialist China" (PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 2001).

⁷⁹ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 15.

promoted. Closer to Li Bobai's approach, she described the Party school as a tool for the CCP to screen and train its officials, in order to prepare them for future promotion.⁸⁰

The elite dualism and sponsored mobility frameworks were later applied specifically to the Chinese top political elite. After Walder and Li Bobai's studies based on large samples of urban residents and therefore mostly on lower level officials, Zang Xiaowei used the same elite dualism model to account more closely for the career paths of top political elites, specifically cadres who held deputy provincial governorship or higher positions in the Chinese political hierarchy. He confirmed that education is more important for appointment to State positions than Party ones.⁸¹ Parallel to Edin's point on the separation between a political and an administrative career in the Party-State hierarchy, Zang described this elite dualism as an effect of the increasing functionalization of career paths. According to him, the Party still controls the political decision-making process, but, for the purpose of efficiency and economic development, it delegates administrative power to skilled professionals within the State apparatus.⁸²

The elite dualism literature, and its use of the sponsored mobility model, illuminates the diversity of Party-State officials, as well as the Party's strategies to induce elite's values among officials. Yet, while it emphasizes the idea that Party leaders are recruited because of their political loyalty, its appraisal of the issue of loyalty itself is rather shallow. This is particularly problematic in Zang Xiaowei's transposition of the argument to top leaders. Focusing on lower level cadres, Li and Walder had used the length of Party membership as a proxy for loyalty. They showed that a young entry in the Party was crucial to be promoted in the party hierarchy. Using the same proxy, Zang overlooked the fact that, while at the local level a young entry in the CCP is rare, it is a very common feature among national leaders. Zang did not find any clear variation between State and Party leaders regarding the length of Party membership,⁸³ stressing that it was not a meaningful way to differentiate career paths in the first place. More broadly, the elite dualism literature shares a major limitation with the broader literature on the CCP's

⁸⁰ Charlotte Ping Lee, "Party Adaptation, Elite Training, and Political Selection in Reform-Era China" (PhD Dissertation, 2010).

⁸¹ Xiaowei Zang, "Elite Transformation and Recruitment in Post-Mao China," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 26, no. 1 (1998): 39–58; Xiaowei Zang, "The Consolidation of Political Technocracy in China: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Central Committees of the CCP," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 15, no. 3 (1999): 101–13; Xiaowei Zang, "University Education, party Seniority, and Elite Recruitment in China," *Social Science Research* 30, no. 1 (2001): 62–75; Xiaowei Zang, *Elite Dualism and Leadership Selection in China* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004);

⁸² Zang, "Technical Training, Sponsored Mobility, and Functional Differentiation: Elite Formation in China in the Reform Era."

⁸³ *Ibid.*

institutionalization: it tends to portray the Chinese Communist party as a holistic actor, with a mind of its own.

e) Beyond the *organizational emperor*

The literature on formal politics in post-Mao China tends to treat the CCP as a monolithic actor, with its own rationality. This is true even beyond the question of cadre management, as reflected in two books written by CCP specialists. In a 2006 piece, David Shambaugh presented the CCP as a holistic organization with its own logic, and capable of both *adaptation* and *atrophy*.⁸⁴ Zheng Yongnian, in a 2010 book, anthropomorphized the CCP, describing it as an *organizational emperor*.⁸⁵ While this approach allows for a macro understanding of the CCP and its evolutions, by taking the perspective of the organization, it also leaves the actors' perspectives aside, depicting them as mere puppets in the hand of the organization. Following Bourdieu's account, I suggest we could gain analytical leverage by apprehending the Party-State as a *field*, or social arena, within which a variety of actors are fighting or collaborating for their own goals depending on their position. While the field is relatively autonomous and the actors follow common rules, this perspective contrasts greatly with an approach of the CCP as a monolithic entity endowed with a single rationality and purpose.⁸⁶

By focusing on the Party's goals, the different branches of literature I just reviewed disregard the perspective of the cadres themselves, both recruiters and recruits. First, one should question the reasons pushing the recruiters to implement the reforms and promote younger and better educated cadres, who might subsequently become competitors for power positions. Second and more importantly, in a socioeconomic situation in which the economic advantages of cadre status are not as clear as they were in Mao China,⁸⁷ and where numerous other opportunities exist for these young and educated talents, why would they choose to become officials and remain loyal overtime?⁸⁸ The recruits' interests have to be analyzed more carefully

⁸⁴ David L Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Washington, D.C.; Berkeley: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; University of California Press, 2008).

⁸⁵ Yongnian Zheng, *The Chinese Communist Party as Organizational Emperor: Culture, Reproduction and Transformation*, China Policy Series 12 (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁸⁶ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D Wacquant, *Réponses: pour une anthropologie réflexive [An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology]* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 78.

⁸⁷ Burns noted that officials' salaries are comparatively low in post-Mao China, compared to the Mao period but also to other countries. He stressed that this is often partially balanced by corruption and grey income. See: John P Burns, "Civil Service Reform in China," *OECD Journal on Budgeting* 7, no. 1 (2007): 1–25.

⁸⁸ On the diversification of social promotion channels and the evolution of officials' economic status, see : Yanjie Bian, "Chinese Social Stratification and Social Mobility," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 91–116.

in order to tackle these issues. Focusing on *informal politics*, the subfield of the literature that I now turn to investigates the viewpoint of both recruits and recruiters, focusing on the personal relationships binding them and explaining why they would mutually support each other.

2) *Informal politics in post-Mao China*

a) *Family ties in post-Mao China*

The *informal politics* literature focuses on a variety of personal relationships which exist in parallel to the *formal* Party-State rules and which are presented as having a key effect on the recruitment and cohesion of Chinese political elites. In this literature, *formal* and *informal* refer to two ideal-types of interpersonal links. A collective book on this issue entitled *The Nature of Chinese Politics* has shed light on the debate over the precise implications of these terms, but also on the relative consensus regarding their definition: formal ties derive from the rules of the organization, while informal ties either preexist the relationships established through the organizational hierarchy, such as family ties, or stem from another type of links, such as friendship.⁸⁹ Taking the point of view of individual actors, and networks of actors, rather than that of the CCP as an organization, this literature emphasizes the variety of personal interests which govern the recruitment and promotion of cadres in China.

Family ties among officials and the issue of the creation of a new communist aristocracy have been key points of interest within this literature. In particular, the creation of an unofficial hereditary elite would explain why the retiring cadres in the 1980s accepted the reforms, as their children would *de facto* largely inherited their status, which assured elite cohesion. Several studies have underlined the rise of *princelings*, the children of high ranking party and military officials, in the CCP leadership. As put by Stephanie Balme, in the 1980s they were a perfect fit for the new recruiting criteria: educationally, they had been to the best schools; politically, they had often entered the Party at a very young age and could use their parents' connections to gain advancement. According to Balme, the merger of family background and university diplomas made them both "red" and "expert,"⁹⁰ therefore the best candidates for promotion.⁹¹ Balme showed, for instance, that a large number of princelings became secretaries of high

⁸⁹ Jonathan Unger, ed., *The Nature of Chinese Politics: From Mao to Jiang* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

⁹⁰ "Red" refers here to political loyalty. On the debate regarding the being both "red" and "expert" in Mao China, see: Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 8.

⁹¹ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 160–181.

ranking officials while their parents were still alive.⁹² The position of personal secretary (*mishu*, 秘书) has been largely recognized since the late 1980s as a way to access the highest levels of power.⁹³ Aristocratic practices were noticed at all levels of the Chinese system. Lü Xiaobo suggested that the practice of *dingti* (顶替), implying the replacement in State-owned enterprises of an old employee by a family member, became very common in the 1970s.⁹⁴

According to Balme, these elitist practices quickly appeared as a double-edged phenomenon for the Party-State. It certainly pleased the incumbent leaders and allowed a peaceful transition to a new generation of leaders, but at the same time it made visible the aristocratic leanings of the Chinese state.⁹⁵ Tanner and Feder also emphasized the bad public image of the princelings.⁹⁶ According to Balme, the unpopularity of these aristocratic practices seemed to have pushed the CCP's leaders to find institutional ways to curb them. In 1986, *dingti* was officially forbidden.⁹⁷ In 1989, Beijing and other provinces adopted measures preventing high level officials from interfering with appointments and promotions involving their relatives.⁹⁸ As a result, cadres without familial connections to the CCP's leadership have been increasingly promoted in the 1990s.⁹⁹ Still, a recent statistical study conducted in the 2000s showed that blood ties remain an important criterion for promotion to top political positions¹⁰⁰.

This literature on family ties among the Chinese elite is valuable in the sense that it helps explain why the older cadres peacefully implemented the reforms which ultimately led to their demise: they were largely replaced by their children. However, its explanatory value is less obvious regarding the princelings' motives. In light of the advantage they held in terms of

⁹² Ibid., 228.

⁹³ Wei Li and Lucian W Pye, "The Ubiquitous Role of the Mishu in Chinese Politics," *The China Quarterly*, no. 132 (1992): 913–36; Xia Li Lollar and Anne Wing Hamilton, "Patronage or Prebendalism? The Mishu/shouzhang Relationship and Corruption in Chinese Politics," *China Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 157–82; Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Nicola Dean, "Lifting the Veil of the CCP's Mishu System: Unrestricted Informal Politics within an Authoritarian Regime," *The China Journal*, no. 73 (2015): 158–85.

⁹⁴ Xiaobo Lü, *Cadres and Corruption: The Organizational Involution of the Chinese Communist Party* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 183.

⁹⁵ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 373.

⁹⁶ Murray Scot Tanner and Michael J Feder, "Family Politics, Elite Recruitment, and Succession in Post-Mao China," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 30 (1993): 89–119.

⁹⁷ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 219.

⁹⁸ Jae Ho Chung, "The Politics of Prerogatives in Socialism: The Case of Taizidang in China," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 24, no. 1 (1991): 58–76.

⁹⁹ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 301.

¹⁰⁰ Victor Shih, Christophe Adolph, and Mingxing Liu, "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China," *The American Political Science Review* 106, no. 1 (February 2012): 166–87.

connections within the State, they could have chosen any professional direction they fancied: why, therefore, did they opt for the political path? As noted by Bourdieu in his study of French elite administrative schools, social background cannot be the sole variable taken into account to explain one's willingness to pursue an administrative career: even the heirs have to be converted to their heritage, through education and rituals.¹⁰¹

A parallel argument has been developed by Andrew Walder in his study of the Red Guards in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution. Walder argued against an approach in terms of groups and family backgrounds, very common in the literature on Chinese politics, in order to explain one's political trajectory. His study showed that factional cleavages during the Cultural Revolution could not be explained based on these variables. Contrary to the common narratives of the period, the conservative faction was not particularly constituted of the cadres' children, who would have had an interest in the perpetuation of the status quo, and the radicals were not distinctively coming from less advantageous family backgrounds, which would have pushed them to change the system. Instead, these two groups were found in both factions, their alignment depending more on personal encounters and strategic choices at different points in time than supposed preexisting group identities.¹⁰² This analysis should be kept in mind while we tackle the issue of elite renewal and cohesion in China: the effect of supposed preexisting identities, be it social background or else, should not be taken for granted.

b) Factionalism in the Chinese polity

Beyond family ties, the debate over the existence of *informal* political groupings within the Party has been a main feature of the overall literature on Chinese politics. While often in disagreement regarding the type of groupings or their constitutions, a number of researchers have analyzed the struggles at the top of the CCP since its foundation in 1921. Andrew Nathan, in a seminal article published in 1973, argued for a factional approach towards Chinese politics. According to him, the CCP consisted of different factions, “mobilized on the basis of clientelist ties to engage in politics and consisting of a few, rather than a great many, layers of personnel.”¹⁰³ Ensued a debate between Tang Tsou and Andrew Nathan regarding the nature of these factions, or informal groups to use Tang Tsou's more extensive term, and of their

¹⁰¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'Etat: grandes écoles et esprit de corps* [*The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*] (Paris: Les Editions de minuit, 1989), 143.

¹⁰² Andrew G Walder, *Fractured Rebellion the Beijing Red Guard Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 12–13.

¹⁰³ Andrew J Nathan, “A Factionalism Model for CCP Politics,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 53 (1973): 34–66.

relationships to one another. But both of them, and numerous other authors who adopted this approach, had in common to give a lot of importance to these *informal* factors in political promotion.¹⁰⁴

Several authors also approached the lower echelons of the Chinese polity through the lens of informal politics. Ben Hillman's 2014 book is a good example of this branch of literature. In order to best convey the idea that cadres are not necessarily in a constant state of conflict among themselves and are mostly interested in promotion within the hierarchy, he used the term *patronage* rather than *faction* to qualify the networks of cadres he observed at the county level. He emphasized the role played by these networks in the promotion of local officials, both the ones at the county level and those elected at the lowest level of the Chinese polity. Against the argument made by Maria Edin regarding the Party-State's capacity to control its agents at the local level,¹⁰⁵ Hillman suggested that loyalty to these patronage networks undermines the *nomenklatura* system.¹⁰⁶ Graeme Smith also emphasized the weakening of the local state structures by what he called a "shadow state," constituted of Party leaders and their affiliates and which mirrors the official hierarchy.¹⁰⁷ This overall literature on factions and informal ties is very important as it incites researchers to go beyond the institutions' face value and get into the CCP's internal struggles.

c) The limits of the *formal* and *informal* dichotomy

A recent article by Shih et. al. reopened the debate on informal politics in China. Using a database including all the Central Committee members of the CCP from 1921 to 2002, the authors statistically assessed the influence of informal ties on promotion. According to them, the Party leaders promote officials with whom they are personally linked, even if they are less educated or less efficient in their work. While the data they use is impressive in its volume, this study is a good example of the problems this branch of literature faces in separating so-called formal and informal politics. The authors used different measures to proxy for factional ties but overall heavily relied on the idea that cadres who studied in the same university, or worked

¹⁰⁴ See in particular on Chinese factionalism: Fewsmith, *Elite Politics in Contemporary China: Joseph Fewsmith*; Zhiyue Bo, *China's Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing* (Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2007); Jing Huang, *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective."

¹⁰⁶ Ben Hillman, *Power and Patronage: Local State Networks and Party-State Resilience in Rural China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Graeme Smith, "Political Machinations in a Rural County," *The China Journal*, no. 62 (2009): 29–59.

together, belong to the same faction.¹⁰⁸ A major concern with this measure is that it could also be interpreted in terms of formalized promotion paths, underlining that they were promoted through the same institutional channels. This criticism follows a long standing methodological debate regarding the tendency to overemphasize factionalism in the Chinese system. In 1973, William Parish made a similar argument against a study explaining promotion in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) based on factional ties. According to him, bureaucratic rules should have been taken more seriously into account since they accounted for the promotions better than factionalism.¹⁰⁹

Beyond this methodological point, the implicit logic behind the informal and formal dichotomy is problematic. The basic idea is that informal practices are resilient traditional behaviors which impede the modernization of the political system. Hence, full-blown institutionalization should eventually make informal ties irrelevant in terms of recruitment and promotion.¹¹⁰ Jean-Louis Briquet, in his study of clientelism in Corsica, argued that this view of a linear modernization of politics towards less and less informality actually stems from an appropriation by the researcher of political actors' narratives. He showed that far from a traditional practice, clientelism is both shaped by the evolution of the political system and shapes it. But in order to legitimize themselves and claim formal political abilities, politicians themselves publicize a discourse regarding the modernization of politics that contrasts with such practices.¹¹¹

Furthermore, an approach in terms of informal politics is often tainted with culturalism, especially in the Chinese case. Some authors argue that *guanxi* (关系), or interpersonal relationships, are at the foundation of contemporary Chinese politics, due to constant cultural features.¹¹² However, as stated very clearly by Andrew Walder, the contemporary practices I described cannot be explained by referring to a specific culture: "a cultural tradition cannot explain its own continuity (or lack thereof) without resorting to tautology: the continuity of

¹⁰⁸ Shih, Adolph, and Liu, "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China."

¹⁰⁹ William L. Jr Parish, "Factions in Chinese Military Politics," *China Quarterly* 1973 (1973): 667–99.

¹¹⁰ This logic is for instance made explicit by Huang Jing, for whom factionalism was and continues to be imposed on the CCP by the fact that it is a dictatorship, an only partially modern political system (Huang, *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics*).

¹¹¹ Jean-Louis Briquet, *La tradition en mouvement: clientélisme et politique en Corse [Tradition in motion: clientelism and politics in Corsica]* (Paris: Belin, 1997), 75.

¹¹² See in particular: Lucian W. Pye, "Factions and the Politics of Guanxi: Paradoxes in Chinese Administrative and Political Behaviour," *The China Journal*, no. 34 (July 1995): 35–53.

culture itself must be explained by its relation to institutional structures that serve to perpetuate it.”¹¹³

Following Lucian Pye, I think that the dichotomy between *formal* and *informal*, which was developed for the study of organizations and administration, is not adequate for the study of politics. While I strongly disagree with Pye’s culturalist approach towards Chinese politics, I think his intuitions about politics more broadly are valuable. When he wrote that, due to its specific culture and history, “the ‘informal’ is very nearly the sum total of Chinese politics,”¹¹⁴ he should have seen that this is a common trait of politics everywhere. He implied it himself when he wrote: “Politics, however, is not administration, and there are no neat boundaries between what might be thought of as official and unofficial politics. When the American president ‘works the phones’ to get critical Congressional votes, or when lobbyists walk the corridors of the Capitol to persuade legislators to support their interests, such activities are just ordinary politics, neither formal nor informal.”¹¹⁵ Pye’s approach is based on the Weberian distinction between politics and administration. For Weber, while the appointed bureaucrat’s function is to carry out orders and follow the rules, the elected politician only relies on himself, and not on rules and orders, in the competition for power over the State.¹¹⁶

Following this distinction between politics and administration, it turns out that the literature focusing on informal ties we just reviewed is basically assessing that there is a political element to officials’ appointments in China, and that it is not pure administration. We are, as a result, getting to the very definition of a Leninist system, which is ruled according to “democratic centralism.” It implies that the Party is both in charge of policy making and policy implementation, and that there is no difference between bureaucrats and politicians.¹¹⁷ There is no political neutrality cadres: at the end of the day the Party is in control, as already shown by the literature on the cadre management system.¹¹⁸ For this reason, I refer in the dissertation to the cadres’ *political* careers rather than depicting them as pure bureaucrats.

Interestingly, this lack of separation between administration and politics has been described even beyond Leninist regimes. Studies on bureaucratic elites in democratic contexts

¹¹³ Andrew G Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 10.

¹¹⁴ Pye, “Factions and the Politics of Guanxi: Paradoxes in Chinese Administrative and Political Behaviour,” 39.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹⁶ Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David S. Owen (Hackett Publishing, 2004), 45.

¹¹⁷ On democratic centralism, see: Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, 118–128.

¹¹⁸ Burns, “Strengthening Central CCP Control of Leadership Selection: The 1990 Nomenklatura”; Brødsgaard, “Cadre and Personnel Management in the CPC,” August 2012.

have emphasized the increasing politicization of bureaucrats, as well as the bureaucratization of politicians.¹¹⁹ In his study on contemporary French bureaucracy, Eymeri showed in particular that the politicization of top bureaucrats has blurred the difference between the administrative and political spheres. He stressed that through their advice and propositions on specific topics, high level bureaucrats actually take political actions.¹²⁰ These parallels illustrate that a comparative perspective is crucial to better understand the interaction between politics and administration in China and to get out of debates which tend to overstate China's uniqueness. Theoretical approaches developed in other contexts are hence at the foundation of my research.

Overall, the two branches of the literature that I have reviewed, on formal and informal politics, constitute the two sides of a same coin, with at its heart the interaction between administration and politics. I propose to develop an approach towards elite renewal and cohesion in China that takes this interaction seriously. In order to do so, I suggest we move beyond the limitations of elite studies, as noted by Roderic Camp: rather than focusing on the shared characteristics of the ruling elite, i.e. the outcome of the mobility process, it is time to carefully examine the *mechanisms* that bring these individuals to the top.¹²¹ In the case of the CCP, the literature I reviewed tends to focus on broad outcomes, such as the fact that cadres became younger and more educated, but it falls short in unveiling the mechanisms at play. A change in perspective is necessary to allow us to follow the actors themselves through the mobility process and to better grasp the processes that enable both renewal and cohesion of the Chinese elite.

In the following section, I review the interactionist theoretical tools, developed by the Chicago school of Sociology and in particular Howard Becker or Erving Goffman, which I use to analyze these mechanisms. I show that an approach focusing on personal commitment and career trajectories puts at the forefront of the analysis the point of view of the actors themselves, beyond the organization's goals. This enables me to demonstrate that the political and administrative features of the CCP are complementary rather than contradictory.

¹¹⁹ Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman, *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*; Ezra N Suleiman, *Dismantling Democratic States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹²⁰ Jean-Michel Eymeri, "Frontières ou marches ? De la contribution de la haute administration à la production du politique [On the high administration's participation to the production of the political]," in *La politisation*, ed. Jacques Lagroye (Paris: Belin, 2003), 68.

¹²¹ Roderic Ai Camp, *Political Recruitment across Two Centuries: Mexico, 1884-1991* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 27.

C - An interactionist approach towards political mobility

1) Loyalty, commitment and career

Loyalty is a key concept in the literature on Chinese elites but, as shown in the literature review, it is also poorly developed. It is generally only apprehended through the lens of Party membership. In addition, the distinction that we discussed between formal and informal politics separates the issue of cadres' organizational loyalty to the Party from their personal loyalties to one another. As argued earlier, I think that we should move beyond this distinction and focus on the cadres' point of view, be they recruiters or recruits, instead of the organization's perspective. The sociology of commitment strikes me as particularly useful to develop such an approach and question the often unspecified concept of loyalty. As defined by Howard Becker, commitment is "the process through which several kinds of interests become bound up with carrying out certain lines of behavior."¹²² In contrast with a rather cognitive idea of loyalty, for instance based on adherence to ideology, the concept of commitment pays attention to the individual's interests and trajectory. Focusing on the processes through which cadres' interests align with the Party line, and not to disobey orders or abandon their position, is a fruitful way to take into account the organizational and personal factors which might come into play.

Compared to an approach in terms of loyalty, the concept of commitment brings a dynamic aspect to the analysis. It goes together with an approach in terms of career, as analyzed by Howard Becker in the case of marijuana users. The concept of the career implies progressive steps, which bring new costs and benefits previously inexistent or irrelevant.¹²³ Regarding drug users, Becker showed how every step forward into the practice makes the next steps possible or not: the users first have to learn the technique of drug using, in order to potentially learn to perceive its effects, and later learn to enjoy them.¹²⁴ Becker borrowed this concept from Hughes' study of professions,¹²⁵ stressing both its objective and subjective features: a career is both a sequence of social positions, as well as the evolution of the individual's perception over these positions and his trajectory as a whole. The individual's view on his own options at every level is the focus of the analysis, which allows the researcher to take into account the structural constraints over the actors' actions but also how they perceive them. Applied to the political field, the concept of career helps us appreciate how recruits are progressively transformed by

¹²² Howard Saul Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 27.

¹²³ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 108.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 41–58.

¹²⁵ Everett C Hughes, *Men and Their Work* (Free Press, 1958).

political organizations as well as how organizational socialization, through certain activities and encounters, can lead to political professionalization,¹²⁶ which is understood here as “living off” politics to borrow Max Weber’s famous expression.¹²⁷

An approach in terms of commitment and career which focuses on individual actors allows me to tackle several of the limitations I pointed in the literature on elite renewal in China. First, contrary to a non-dynamic multivariate analysis focusing on explaining the outcomes of political mobility, this approach focuses on the mechanisms which makes political professionalization progressively possible and desirable. In particular, it goes beyond an explanation of the actors’ tactical choices simply based on their supposed preexisting identity. Second, it accounts for the agents’ perspective without negating the structural effect of the organization. Beyond the idea of a monolithic and omniscient CCP, we can here analyze the organization through the eyes of the actors who inhabit it. Instead of focusing on the organization’s ability to guarantee the actors’ loyalty through ideology or coercion, which tends to forget the actors’ perspective and agency, I study how individuals deal with the organization’s internal constraints based on their personal interests and tactics, as developed through the various stages of their career.

The notions of commitment and career are particularly prominent in the literatures on social movements and religious groups. I now turn to these subfields of the literature to further define my approach and develop specific aspects of the concept of commitment. The mechanisms at play in the commitment of political activists or religious followers are partly transposable to the case of political professionalization and illuminate elite cohesion in contemporary China.

¹²⁶ On the concept of career applied to political organizations, see in particular : Éric Agrikoliansky, “Carrières militantes et vocation à la morale : les militants de la LDH dans les années 1980 [Militant careers and moral vocation : LDH militants in the 1980s],” *Revue française de science politique* Vol. 51, no. 1 (March 2001): 27–46; Muriel Darmon, “La notion de carrière: un instrument interactionniste d’objectivation [The notion of career: an interactionist tool],” *Politix* 82, no. 2 (2008): 149–67; Olivier Fillieule, “Propositions pour une analyse processuelle de l’engagement individuel - Post scriptum [Suggestions towards a processual analysis of individual commitment - Post scriptum],” *Revue française de science politique* 511, no. 1–2 (2001): 199–215.

¹²⁷ Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, xlix.

2) The non-material incentives for political commitment beyond ideology

Through the concept of commitment, and the rewards which go with it, one can analyze why Chinese cadres would choose a political career and carry on in that direction. A branch of the literature, very lively in French political sociology, enriched Olson's analysis of the "collective action dilemma" in order to shed light on the rewards which go together with political commitment. Olson's main idea is that "selective incentives" are the key to explaining one's rational engagement into a collective action aiming at acquiring a public good, as opposed to free-riding on the efforts of others.¹²⁸ Daniel Gaxie, in a seminal article of 1977, took this idea further and focused on the incentives, such as salary or career opportunities, leading militants to join political parties. When balancing the cost of being part of the organization and the profits based on these incentives, such militants find the cost of leaving is greater than the cost of remaining.¹²⁹

In addition to the material enticements provided by political parties, Gaxie put the emphasis on the non-material incentives, which were only briefly mentioned by Olson.¹³⁰ Against the tendency to overemphasize ideology in order to explain political commitment, Gaxie put forward the personal symbolic and social incentives to elucidate the strong commitment of large numbers of voluntary militants in political parties.¹³¹ The parallel with the Chinese case is obvious as the literature reviewed above highlights the decreasing value of ideology for the recruitment of officials but, at the same time, does not provide an alternative explanation to their enduring commitment to a political career. Still, Gaxie's study focuses on parties' militants in a democratic system and cannot be completely imported into the Chinese context. In particular, it cannot account for the high level of commitment expected from Chinese officials, who often sign up for a life-long career within the CCP.

Communist parties have sometimes been qualified as "total institutions" due to the degree of commitment expected from their cadres. This concept was developed by Erving Goffman who defined a total institution, such as an asylum or a jail, as a living space, meticulously regulated, which separates the individuals from the outside world and from their

¹²⁸ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

¹²⁹ Daniel Gaxie, "Économie des partis et rétributions du militantisme [Economic Analysis of Parties and the Militants' Incentives]," *Revue française de science politique* 27, no. 1 (1977): 123–54.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

previous roles in society.¹³² The concept of total institution was later used to describe reclusive institutions such as religious communities, seminaries,¹³³ and also communist parties.¹³⁴ While it is an imperfect fit, since in contrast to asylums or jails, people voluntarily choose to join a political party, the concept is relevant to emphasize the importance of social and cognitive factors in these extreme forms of commitment. As argued by Verdès-Leroux, the type of commitment that classical total institutions usually obtain by coercion, is, through rituals and manipulation, willingly conceded by the individual in the case of the French Communist Party in the 1940 and 1950s. In particular, if members do not challenge the official line nor exit the organization, it is not because of any physical obstacle to do so, but above all because of the fear to be labeled as apostates.¹³⁵

In line with this concept of total institution, the literature on cults and sects further explored the social and cognitive features of commitment. This is exemplified by Kanter's study of several American utopian communities of the 19th century, which can be seen as total institutions. Based on these cases, she highlighted three main kinds of commitment, which are linked to different personal relationships with the organizations and can be mutually reinforcing: *cognitive-continuance commitment*, *cathectic-cohesion commitment*, and *evaluative-control commitment*.¹³⁶

Cognitive-continuance commitment refers to commitment to social roles: the individual invests in the fate of a specific organization and in the role he developed in it. The actors think here in terms of sacrifice and investment and therefore, the more they invest, the less they will accept to exit and lose their investment. This type of commitment explains why they stay in an organization on the long run, but does not account for their behavior within it. For instance, individuals who have personally invested in an organization will remain members even though they sometimes do not follow its rules. Kanter illustrated this type of commitment through the

¹³² Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Anchor Books, 1961).

¹³³ Charles Suaud, *La vocation: conversion et reconversion des prêtres ruraux*. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1978).

¹³⁴ See in particular : Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, "Une institution totale auto-perpétuée: le parti communiste français [a self-perpetuating total institution: the French Communist Party]," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 36, no. 1 (1981): 33–63; Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, "Institutions totales ou institutions batardes? Les anciennes écoles de cadres des partis communistes et leurs métamorphoses [total Institutions or Hybrid Institutions? The Former Schools for Communist Party Cadres and Their Transformations]," in *Erving Goffman et les institutions totales*, ed. Charles Amourous and Alain Blanc (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 175–98.

¹³⁵ Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, *Au service du Parti: 1944-1956 [For the Party: 1944-1956]* (Paris: Fayard : Éditions de Minuit, 1983), 110.

¹³⁶ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities," *American Sociological Review* 33, no. 4 (August 1968): 499–517.

example of teenagers who are too personally invested in their family and will not run away, even though they do not always listen to their parents.

Cathectic-cohesion commitment, is linked to social ties: the individuals get personally attached to other members of the group. Their commitment grows with the development of social ties within the group and the renunciation of relationships outside the group. It implies that the individuals will remain part of this group even though the ideology of the organization changes for instance, because they value these relationships too much and do not want to risk breaking them. Kanter illustrated this phenomenon referring to the comradeship developed within a social movement or a religious group.

Evaluative-control commitment refers to the values and norms which constrain the individuals. This can for instance refer to commitment to a certain ideology, embodied by the group. But in this case the commitment is linked to the norm rather than the organization itself. Therefore, if the norm changes, exit can occur. This type of commitment can hardly explain in itself the long term personal commitment to a group, but rather the lack of deviance within the group in case everyone strongly adheres to its norms. However, as underlined by Kanter, such strong level of adherence within the group is specific to total institutions. It implies a renunciation of personal interests in order to dissolve oneself in the group for maximum compliance. I think this cannot be applied to the study of individuals who freely start a political career and are continuously in competition with one another for further advancement in the organization, which sometimes implies bending the rules. We are reaching the limits of the parallel between total institutions, such as asylums, and institutions which are competitive by definition such as political parties.

Kanter's article is valuable in developing these different, mutually reinforcing, mechanisms through which an individual can become committed to an organization. The two first types of commitment are of particular interest to the present research. They highlight the mechanisms through which a group can keep its members despite changing its norms and values. They are therefore highly relevant to understanding elite cohesion within a Chinese Communist Party decreasingly structured by ideology. The third type of commitment, on the other end, is based on commitment to the norm rather than the organization itself. As a result, it cannot account for elite cohesion in a time of ideological uncertainty. By focusing on social roles and social ties, I also distance myself from a simplistic approach focusing purely on ideological motivations to explain commitment to an organization. Both the literature on social movements and cults have in fact shown that adherence to a group's values is often a result of the first steps

of commitment, and of the ties already developed with the group itself, rather than the other way around.¹³⁷

I now get into the details of the commitment to social roles and the commitment to social ties developed by Kanter in order to highlight how these mechanisms can be applied to political professionalization and help better understand elite cohesion in post-Mao China.

3) Vocation and commitment to political roles

Kanter's cognitive-continuance commitment refers to the idea that an individual's commitment depends on how much one invests in an activity. One's willingness to personally invest depends on the social roles one develops within an organization and the extent to which one learns to appreciate it. The importance of one's social role and aspiration to join a certain elite is particularly prominent in studies of political professionalization.

Building on Goffman's analogy between everyday interactions and the interpretation of a variety of roles by an actor on stage,¹³⁸ scholars have focused on the role politicians embody when taking up a position. As defined by Jacques Lagroye, the role is here understood as the set of behaviors which are linked to a specific position and which make it palpable to others.¹³⁹ The role is therefore made of the public expectations towards an individual in this position, but also of the individual's own views on what it implies. The role is progressively internalized by the actor: the expectations attached to it both constrain and enable his actions.¹⁴⁰ As argued by Briquet, the role should not only be seen negatively as a constraint: it can also be used strategically, in order to legitimize one's position in a group or organization.¹⁴¹

The concept of role, both in its constraining and strategic aspects, is a key aspect of a political career. Commitment to the role itself is therefore crucial to understand someone's decision to pursue a political life. We are getting to the question of vocation and to the classic distinction made by Max Weber between living *off* or *for* politics. If one lives for politics,

¹³⁷ Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 6 (1980): 1376–95; Robert D Benford and David A Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual review of sociology* 26 (2000): 611.

¹³⁸ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959).

¹³⁹ Jacques Lagroye, "Être du métier [Insiders]," *Politix* 7, no. 28 (1994): 5–15.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.; Rémi Lefebvre, "Se conformer à son rôle. Les ressorts de l'intériorisation institutionnelle [Conforming to One's Role. The Mechanisms of Institutional Internalization]," in *Sociologie de l'institution*, ed. Jacques Lagroye and Michel Offerlé (Paris: Belin, 2011), 219–47.

¹⁴¹ Jean-Louis Briquet, "Communiquer en actes. Prescriptions de rôle et exercice quotidien du métier politique [Communicating through Actions. Role and the Daily Exercise of Power]," *Politix* 7, no. 28 (1994): 25

beyond the material rewards one gets off it, one has to enjoy the role itself and has to develop a vocation.¹⁴² A vocation is developed through the professionalization process and further commits the individuals to this path. A study of young militants in contemporary French political youth organizations, for instance, highlighted that political ambition is often not a primary cause of political engagement but that career opportunities become reachable and desirable through the commitment process itself.¹⁴³ As a parallel, Eyméri also put forward in the case of high level civil servants in contemporary France that their vocation as servants of the State is rarely what drove them to choose this path in the first place. While during their studies they mostly followed the path of good students in social sciences, aiming for conformity, they progressively developed a vocation which led them towards very competitive exams and a career in the civil service.¹⁴⁴ The development of a vocation is overall the result of a process through which the young political recruits internalize their life project as part of an elite and are given the idea that they are both competent and legitimate to attain these positions.

Oddly, the issue of vocation is completely absent from the literature on elite renewal and cohesion in communist regimes. There is a propensity to portray the recruits as indoctrinated. I argue instead that the cadres' perspective and their commitment to a political role should be taken seriously in order to explain why someone would pursue a political life, especially in a regime like post-Mao China where political career is not the only upward social mobility channel.

4) The social dimension of commitment

a) Personal ties and group dynamics

In addition to the commitment to the role, or what we have qualified as a vocation, Kanter emphasized the importance of social ties in what she called a cathetic-cohesion commitment.¹⁴⁵ The role played by social ties in order to explain political commitment has been particularly emphasized by the literature on social movements. It has put forward the importance of a multiplicity of social networks, both preexistent or developed through the commitment process, in order to explain why people take part in political activities and remain

¹⁴² Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, xlix.

¹⁴³ Lucie Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]* (Paris: Dalloz, 2009), 23.

¹⁴⁴ Jean-Michel Eyméri, *La fabrique des énarques [Making énarques]* (Paris, Fr: Economica, 2001), 152.

¹⁴⁵ Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities."

active overtime.¹⁴⁶ In his study of the Paris Commune, Roger Gould analyzed for instance the interaction between preexisting neighborhood ties and the ones created through the organization of the movement, in order to explain the high level of group cohesion during a crisis situation.¹⁴⁷

Following Gaxie's emphasis on the non-material incentives for political commitment, the literature on individual's commitment within political organizations has also indicated the important effect of social ties in explaining why one would become and remain a militant.¹⁴⁸ In fact, Daniel Gaxie demonstrated how obvious the social function of a party organization is, given the large number of inefficient meetings: if the members keep on organizing so many practically useless meetings, it is that they value the fact of meeting itself.¹⁴⁹

The social features of the political party can be assessed through the transformation of one's personal ties and networks. The most obvious is the shaping of friendly and romantic relationships. Focusing on political youth organizations in contemporary France, Lucie Bargel showed how organizations shape the relationships of their members.¹⁵⁰ It echoes the idea developed by Gaxie that parties are often considered as new families by their members, integrating them within a whole new social network. This development of personal relationships within the organization progressively reinforces individual commitment to the organization, as exit becomes socially and emotionally costly. This is true beyond political organizations, as shown by this statement from Becker's study on drugs users: "a drug addict once told me that the moment she felt she was really 'hooked' was when she realized she no longer had any friends who were not drug addicts."¹⁵¹

Studies in sociology of the military have also emphasized the effects of strong bonds among primary group members on the overall organizational cohesion, such primary groups

¹⁴⁶ See in particular: Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Englewood Cliffs., N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973); Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Frédéric Sawicki and Bruno Duriez, "Réseaux de Sociabilité et Adhésion Syndicale. Le Cas de La CFDT [Social Networks and Trade-Union Membership. the Case of CFDT]," *Politix* 16, no. 63 (2003): 17–51.

¹⁴⁷ Roger V. Gould, "Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871," *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 6 (December 1991): 716–29.

¹⁴⁸ See in particular : Gaxie, "Économie des partis et rétributions du militantisme [Economic Analysis of Parties and the Militants' Incentives]"; Frédéric Sawicki, *Les réseaux du Parti socialiste: sociologie d'un milieu partisan [The Socialist Party's networks]* (Paris: Belin, 1997); Sawicki and Duriez, "Réseaux de Sociabilité et Adhésion Syndicale. Le Cas de La CFDT [Social Networks and Trade-Union Membership. the Case of CFDT]"; Agrikoliansky, "Carrières militantes et vocation à la morale : les militants de la LDH dans les années 1980 [Militant careers and moral vocation : LDH militants in the 1980s]."

¹⁴⁹ Gaxie, "Économie des partis et rétributions du militantisme [Economic Analysis of Parties and the Militants' Incentives]," 148.

¹⁵⁰ Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 455.

¹⁵¹ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 38.

being generally understood as platoon-size fighting units. According to this literature, primary group level social dynamics explain the cohesion of the organization as a whole, beyond ideology or selective material incentives.¹⁵² In a famous study, Shils and Janowitz argued that the Wehrmacht's cohesion level and its combat efficiency were not the result of political convictions but of strong primary groups stable overtime.¹⁵³ Bargel stressed the importance of such subgroups in the case of political organizations. In her study of contemporary French youth political organizations, she showed how the recruits are integrated within the whole organization through a variety of clubs and subgroups. These groups being smaller and made of people who know each other through face to face interactions, strong cohesion is easier to maintain.¹⁵⁴

However, an argument solely based on primary groups solidarity is questioned by Bearman who showed in a study of the Confederate troops during the American civil war that strong ties within the smaller units, in this case based on local identities, can also push soldiers to desert in groups.¹⁵⁵ This study raises the question of the primary groups' level of autonomy regarding the broader organization. The primary groups imply another level of non-material retributions for the individual's commitment, in addition to the overall structure. These two scales of retributions have to remain inseparable for the overall cohesion to be maintained. A recent article revisited this literature on army cohesion and examined the various mechanisms of organizational socialization which reinforce overall cohesion. Through the examples of the Wehrmacht and the US army in Vietnam, Paul Kenny showed that if primary group cohesion is important, it has to go together with a strong discipline. To put it in another way, in order to reinforce the organizational integrity, cohesive primary groups cannot be too autonomous.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² For a review of this literature, see : Guy Siebold, "The Essence of Military Group Cohesion," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 2 (2007): 286–95.

¹⁵³ Edward A Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1948): 280–315.

¹⁵⁴ Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 416.

¹⁵⁵ Peter S. Bearman, "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War," *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (1991): 321.

¹⁵⁶ Paul D. Kenny, "Organizational Weapons: Explaining Cohesion in the Military" (Households in Conflict Network, 2011).

b) Institutionalized group dynamics in contemporary China

Martin Whyte has emphasized the importance of primary groups in the Chinese polity. He shed light on the CCP's capacity to shape individuals' socialization through the creation of a variety of small groups in every social organization. These groups are headed by Party members or officials in charge of monitoring them. The CCP does not coopt preexisting groups but creates them through its organizational structure. According to Whyte, this is a Chinese specificity compared to other Leninist systems such as the USSR, and it has proven effective in order to mobilize people during the mass campaigns of the Mao era. Individuals are surrounded by people who comply with the policies and it therefore becomes very hard for them not to comply.¹⁵⁷

This idea of the CCP's capacity to reorganize social ties in order to best mobilize the population is further developed by Andrew Walder in the case of factory workers. However, what Walder described is not a multiplicity of separated and cohesive primary groups but an overall clientelist network linking the workers to factory managers through lower ranked supervisors. As workers are dependent on this network for public goods and services, as well as for their personal career progression, it guarantees their compliance with the management's orders. Walder argued that these clientelist ties replace the impersonal standards of behavior dictated by the Communist ideology, upon which the individuals are supposed to be evaluated. At every level of the organizational structure, the supervisor determines whom he thinks shows adherence to the regime's ideology through their behavior. He therefore rewards the individuals who, according to him, display such commitment. Such a system tends to evolve into a personal patron-client relationship.¹⁵⁸

Walder called *principled particularism* this "clientelist system in which public loyalty to the party and its ideology is mingled with personal loyalties between party branch officials and their clients."¹⁵⁹ It is not the conformity to ideals which is rewarded but the concrete compliance of the worker to the Party branch.¹⁶⁰ Particular rewards for compliance and display of loyalty are instituted as organizational principles.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Martin King Whyte, *Small Groups and Political Rituals in China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 10–14.

¹⁵⁸ Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

With the progress of marketization, Andrew Walder described the change in the nature of work relations in post-Mao China. He argued that the expression of political loyalty was not a central criterion for professional promotion anymore and that work performance was becoming the new way to evaluate a worker's commitment.¹⁶² Still he noted that specific positions in the factory's CCP leadership structure were still given based on political commitment.¹⁶³

An extension of Walder's approach beyond the industrial field is warranted for the study of elite cohesion in post-Mao China. Interestingly, the principled particularism he described is a product of the organization, it is not formal nor informal. Clientelism hence does not exist separately from the Party-State organization but emerges from it. It is different from other types of personal ties, such as factions or cliques, which are competing with organizational loyalties, and are therefore a kind of *unprincipled particularism*, seen as illegitimate by the Party.¹⁶⁴ This approach is interesting in that it links personal loyalties to organizational ones, but also in how it differentiates among a variety of personal ties. The development of strong unified factions endangering the survival of the party as a whole is opposed to the multiplicity of ties that affect positively the individuals' commitment to the organization.

In order to enrich Walder's concept of principled particularism, and more broadly our understanding of elite cohesion in post-Mao China, it is also important to delve into the articulation of these various networks. Chinese officials, by going from one position to the next, develop their personal network within the Party-State. By following their career, we can then understand how these various ties interact in order to induce his commitment to different subgroups or to the organization as a whole. Do such ties lead to the development of autonomy primary groups or, by contrast, prevent it by developing ties across groups? Overall, an in-depth analysis of these various social ties developed through the organization can help us understand the mechanisms guaranteeing one's commitment to a political career and how it influences the overall cohesion of the Chinese political elite.

¹⁶² Ibid., 230.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 235.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 175–181.

5) Commitment and youth organizations: a multi-level analysis

In order to develop an approach of political mobility in post-Mao China based on the concept of commitment, I chose to focus on cadres' recruitment through the CCP's youth organizations. While these organizations are not the only recruitment channel for political positions, they are an excellent observation point in order to study politicians in the making. This is true in a variety of contexts as highlighted by Lucie Bargel in her study of two major youth political organizations in contemporary France.¹⁶⁵ In contrast to studies focusing on already established political elites, by looking at the first stages of one's political career we can analyze in details how officials cultivate a specific role and vocation. Youth organizations also provide a highly relevant perspective regarding the development of personal relationships and how it may influence one's commitment to a political career. Within these organizations, the young recruits can develop relationships which will be important for the rest of their life. Departing from studies which simplistically dismiss the political commitment of young people as the result of an identity crisis,¹⁶⁶ I take seriously the mechanisms occurring at the youth organization level, since they have a key influence on cadres' future trajectories, and therefore on the overall cohesion of the elite in the context of elite renewal.

Beyond the focus on the first steps of the commitment process, studying a specific organization within the Chinese Party-State, and the careers of its members, allows for an analysis combining multiple perspectives: *micro* regarding the agents' perspectives, *meso* regarding the evolution of the youth organization itself, and *macro* with regard to the transformations of the Chinese regime itself.¹⁶⁷ These three levels of analysis have to be understood in their articulation. By focusing on the young recruits we can have a micro level analysis of the commitment process of officials in the making. However, the agents' careers have to be understood in the context of the youth organization's rules and structure in order to go beyond a purely biographical analysis. The youth organization's structure, in turn, also depends on the evolution of the regime and the configuration of political forces at the top of the Party-State. The organization cannot be analyzed independently from a macroscopic analysis of the regime itself and its dynamics. The macro perspective allows us to understand how the

¹⁶⁵ Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis S Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

¹⁶⁷ Regarding these three levels of analysis and the study of political commitment, see : Frédéric Sawicki and Johanna Siméant, "Décloisonner la sociologie de l'engagement militant. Note critique sur quelques tendances récentes des travaux français [Decompartimentalizing the sociology of political commitment. Critical memo on recent trends among French studies]," *Sociologie du travail* 51, no. 1 (2009): 97–125.

regime's evolution can lead to various organizational configurations: certain profiles of recruits or organizations becoming more valued than others in terms of elite renewal for instance as the top leaders want to develop a specific power base. These changing political situations in turn influence the agents' tactics. And finally, the evolution of the agents' career and commitment influences the cohesion and trajectory of the youth organization but also that of the Party-State.

The multi-leveled analysis I suggest allows to better grasp the interaction between the evolution of political configurations and individuals' tactics. Before unveiling the research design, I make a last incursion in the literature and now turn to the scholarship on political youth organizations in post-Mao China. I highlight what a focus on these organizations could contribute to the literature on elite renewal.

D - The Chinese Communist Youth League in comparative perspective

1) Youth organizations and elite renewal

The role played by political youth organizations in terms of elite renewal may seem obvious but only a few studies focus on this issue. This is true in both democratic and non-democratic regimes, as noted by Bargel in her work on youth political organizations in contemporary France.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, while some studies statistically show that numerous politicians come from these organizations, very few actually unveil the mechanisms at play.¹⁶⁹ These organizations remain black boxes. In the case of European democracies, some studies stand out in the way they unveil the role played by student unions¹⁷⁰ or the youth organizations of political parties¹⁷¹ in cultivating a political vocation and specific skills among young recruits.

¹⁶⁸ Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*.

¹⁶⁹ See in particular the studies by Ecchi and Hooghe et. Al., respectively on Italy and Belgium : Ettore Recchi, "Politics as Occupational Choice: Youth Self-Selection for Party Careers in Italy," *European Sociological Review* 15, no. 1 (1999): 107–24; Marc Hooghe, Dietlind Stolle, and Patrick Stouthuysen, "Head Start in Politics: The Recruitment Function of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Belgium (Flanders)," *Party Politics* 10, no. 2 (2004): 193–212.

¹⁷⁰ See in particular regarding student unions : Sébastien Michon, "Le syndicalisme étudiant : antichambre de la profession politique ? [Student Trade-Unions: Prelude to Political Professionalization?]," in *La condition politique des syndicats. Approche comparée*, ed. Nicolas Defaud and Aurélie Llobet (Paris: L'Harmattan, Forthcoming); Jean-Yves Sabot, *Le syndicalisme étudiant et la guerre d'Algérie: l'entrée d'une génération en politique et la formation d'une élite [Student trade-unions during the Algerian war]* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995).

¹⁷¹ See in particular regarding political parties' youth organizations : Florence Moncourtois, "Les jeunes dirigeants politiques français : le cas des responsables nationaux des mouvements de jeunesse politiques [The Young French Political Leaders: The Case of the National Youth Political Movements' Heads]" (PhD dissertation, Université Paris 1 Sorbonne, 1997); François Audigier, "Les organisations politiques de jeunesse, des écoles d'éloquence? Les cas des JRI et de l'UJP [Youth political organization as eloquence schools? the cases of JRI and UJP]," in *L'éloquence politique en France et en Italie de 1870 à nos jours: études*, ed. Fabrice d'Almeida (Rome: Ecole

Lucie Bargel's work is the most comprehensive example, analyzing in details contemporary French youth political organizations.¹⁷²

In the case of communist regimes, several studies have underlined the importance of the Party-controlled youth organizations in order to supervise youth activities. Fainsod and Fisher in their respective studies of the Soviet All Union Leninist Communist Youth League, or Komsomol, put forward its major role in terms of youth indoctrination and control.¹⁷³ According to Fainsod, Leninist regimes are unique in their level of organization and indoctrination of youth.¹⁷⁴ In light of such an assessment, it is surprising to see that while the elite renewal function of these youth organizations is often stated,¹⁷⁵ it has not been analyzed in details yet. By taking the recruits' perspective seriously, I distance myself from the tendency to picture these organizations as mere indoctrination machines, manipulating passive young people. Beyond the Soviet case, this is also how they have been largely depicted in other authoritarian contexts.¹⁷⁶

In addition, to being seen as pure indoctrination organizations, the communist youth organizations are largely described as unchangeable remnants of the past. To my knowledge, not a single study explains the overtime evolution of the role they play in elite renewal and cohesion. In particular, comparing their role during the revolutionary struggle with what happens once the Party-State has hegemonic power, or even when it liberalizes the economy. One of the few studies approaching youth organizations from a dynamic perspective is Solnick's *Stealing the State*. Solnick showed how Gorbachev experimented his reform ideas on the Komsomol, which led to its disintegration. The decentralization of the Komsomol's budget, as well as of the control over its officials, to its local organizations in 1987-88 led to a "bank

française de Rome, 2001), 231–46; Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique* [*Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization*].

¹⁷² Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique* [*Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization*]; Lucie Bargel, "S'attacher à la politique. Carrières de jeunes socialistes professionnels [Becoming attached to politics. Careers of young professional socialists]," *Sociétés Contemporaines* 84, no. 4 (2011): 79–102; Lucie Bargel, "Apprendre un métier qui ne s'apprend pas. Carrières dans les organisations de jeunesse des partis [Learning a trade which cannot be learned. Careers in the parties' youth organizations]," *Sociologie* 5, no. 2 (2014): 171.

¹⁷³ Merle Fainsod, "The Komsomols. A Study of Youth Under Dictatorship," *The American Political Science Review* 45, no. 1 (1951): 18–40; Ralph Talcott Jr Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918-1954*, Studies of the Russian Institute (New York: Columbia University, 1960).

¹⁷⁴ Fainsod, "The Komsomols. A Study of Youth Under Dictatorship."

¹⁷⁵ Regarding the Soviet case, see in particular: Ibid.; Frederic J Fleron, "Representation of Career Types in the Soviet Political Leadership," in *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Barry R Farrell (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1970), 108–39; Jonathan Steele and Eric Abraham, *Andropov in Power: From Komsomol to Kremlin* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984).

¹⁷⁶ See in particular: Gino Germani, "Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Regimes: Italy and Spain," in *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society; the Dynamics of Established One-Party Systems*, ed. Samuel P Huntington and Clement Henry Moore (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 339–79.

run” phenomenon. The local Komsomol officials started to use the organization’s resources in order to develop local businesses and progressively separated themselves from the control of the Party-State.¹⁷⁷ While it only touched upon the question of elite renewal, Solnick’s study is very interesting in pointing at the evolution potential of such organizations and how it can impact the Communist system as a whole.

Focusing on the evolution of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL), the current study contributes to the thin literature on the recruitment and commitment formation functions of political youth organizations around the world and helps to put the Chinese case in a comparative context. The Chinese case is particularly relevant regarding the issue of commitment as membership in the CYL is not compulsory, by contrast with other authoritarian regimes, such as Nazi Germany in particular.¹⁷⁸ It is therefore important to understand why young people join the CYL and even become CYL officials, in the context of a liberalizing economy and the multiplicity of career options it entails. This study unveils the evolution of the role played by such organizations in the context of a reforming communist regime. Finally, it allows me to bring back to the center of the debate the agency of young people themselves in a literature which tends to take a top-down approach and to focus on how the Party-State, especially in communist systems, controls or harnesses young people through political youth organizations.

2) The Communist Youth League in post-Mao China

a) The League as the Party’s core youth organization

The Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan*, 中国共产主义青年团; CYL) is the main youth organization of the CCP. Officially founded in 1922, it is one of the biggest political organizations in the world, similar in size to the CCP,¹⁷⁹ with 87.5 million members by the end of 2015.¹⁸⁰ Established after the model of the Soviet Komsomol, the CYL has been a key adjunct of the Party since its creation. Before 1949, it was

¹⁷⁷ Steven Lee Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹⁷⁸ Sibylle Hübner-Funk, “La génération des jeunesses hitlériennes. Transitions, transformations, transmissions [Hitlerian Youth Generation. Transitions, Transformations and Transmissions],” in *Jeunesses et politique*, ed. Raymond Hudon and Bernard Fournier, vol. 2, *Sociétés et Mutations* (Sainte-Foy, Québec, Canada : Paris: Presses de l’Université Laval ; L’Harmattan, 1994), 163–83.

¹⁷⁹ The CCP had close to 88.75 million members by the end of 2015 (“Chinese Communist Party’s Membership Growth Slows,” *Financial Times*, June 30, 2016).

¹⁸⁰ “Over 87 Mln Chinese Communist Youth League Members,” *Xinhua*, May 3, 2016.

a main tool in the CCP's struggle for power. After 1949, it became a governing instrument in order to manage young people's activities. The CYL was under attack during the Cultural revolution and stopped its activities in 1966. The provincial CYL committees were reestablished starting in 1973, followed by the national organization in 1978. The CYL can now be found at every level of the Party-State hierarchy and it is very active in units with numerous young people, such as schools and universities.¹⁸¹ The CYL also supervises the other youth organizations of the CCP, mainly the All-China Youth Federation (*Zhonghua qingnian lianhehui*, 中华青年联合会), the All-China Student Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo xuesheng lianhehui*, 中华全国学生联合会), and the Young Pioneers of China (*Zhongguo shaonian xianfeng dui*, 中国少年先锋队) – dedicated to children from 6 to 14 years old.¹⁸²

Surprisingly, in the English literature, there has been no systematic study of the CYL since its reestablishment after the Cultural Revolution in 1978. Different studies from Western and Taiwanese scholars dealing with the organization from the 1920s to the 1970s brought important insights on the organization of the League and its relations with the Party, but obviously cannot account for its evolution since then.¹⁸³ The few studies in English which touched upon the case of the CYL in post-Mao China only focused on the decline of the CYL's indoctrination function. They argued that with the decreasing ideological hegemony of the CCP and the emergence of new channels of social mobility in the 1980s, the CYL has progressively lost its control over Chinese youth.¹⁸⁴ This narrative regarding the decline of the CYL is very common: the CYL is either viewed as an anachronistic and conservative organization incapable

¹⁸¹ Chien-Wen Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres," *Prospect Journal* 3 (2007): 77–116.

¹⁸² "Charter of the All-China Youth Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo qingnian lianhehui zhangcheng*, 中华全国青年联合会章程)," Congress of the All-China Youth Federation, 24 August 2010.

¹⁸³ Klaus H. Pringsheim, "The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949)," *The China Quarterly* 12 (December 1962): 75–91; James R Townsend, *The Revolutionization of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-Nien* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1967); Victor Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966," *The China Quarterly* 42 (June 1970): 105; Shelah Gilbert Leader, "The Communist Youth League and the Cultural Revolution," *Asian Survey* 14, no. 8 (August 1974): 700–715; Ronald Nicholas Montaperto, "The Chinese Communist Youth League and the Political Socialization of Chinese Youth" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1977); Ronald Nicholas Montaperto, "The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1970-1974: A Study of Adaptive Behavior," in *Organizational Behavior in Chinese Society*, ed. Sidney L Greenblatt, Richard W Wilson, and Amy Auerbacher Wilson (New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1981); Tang Bo (唐勃), *Research on the Communist Youth League of the Chinese Communist Party (Zhonggong Gongqingtuan zhi yanjiu, 中共共青团之研究)* (Taipei: Youshi wenhua shiye gongsi, 1985); Sofia Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (January 2014): 117–49.

¹⁸⁴ The work of Stanley Rosen is a good example of this branch of literature: Stanley Rosen, "Prosperity, Privatization, and China's Youth," *Problems of Communism* 34 (1985): 1–28; Stanley Rosen, "The Effect of Post-4 June Re-Education Campaigns on Chinese Students," *The China Quarterly* 310–34 (June 1993).

of evolving in post-Mao China,¹⁸⁵ or by contrast it is depicted as too much involved in the 1989 movement and therefore politically weakened after its repression.¹⁸⁶ As I demonstrate in this dissertation, these polarized views cannot account for the evolution of the CYL, especially after 1989. In particular, they cannot explain the steady increase in CYL membership over the period and the role it plays in terms of elite renewal.

By contrast, the Chinese literature on the CYL after 1978 is very large. Most studies adopt a descriptive and historical approach of the organization's activities. While very informative, these studies do not really develop an analytical framework explaining the evolution of the CYL in post-Mao China.¹⁸⁷ Some other studies propose a more analytical approach of the organization and its ideology. The main issue is that they often develop a normative viewpoint on the CYL, from the perspective of the Chinese State or the organization itself.¹⁸⁸ Most of these studies are actually conducted by former CYL cadres¹⁸⁹ or by the CYL's research centers themselves.¹⁹⁰ These studies analyze only superficially the role played by the CYL in terms of elite renewal, even though the CYL is officially presented as the Party's "reserve force" (*houbeijun*, 后备军).¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ See in particular : Rosen, "Prosperity, Privatization, and China's Youth"; Gordon White, *Riding the Tiger: The Politics of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

¹⁸⁶ Datong Li, "China's Youth League Faction: Incubus of Power?," *OpenDemocracy*, October 31, 2007, https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democracy_power/china_inside/youth_league.

¹⁸⁷ See in particular : Li Yuqi (李玉琦), *Short Story of the Chinese Communist Youth League (Zhongguo Gongqingtuan shigao, 中国共青团史稿)* (Beijing: China Youth Press, 2012); Luo Chengquan (罗成全), *The Communist Youth League in the high tide of China's reforms, 1978-1994 (Zhongguo gaige dachao zhong de Gongqingtuan, 中国改革大潮中的共青团, 1978-1994)* (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1996).

¹⁸⁸ This tendency is well reflected in Li Wuyi book's title : Li Wuyi (李五一), *Analysis and Practice of the CYL's Support to the Government in Managing Youth Affairs (Gongqingtuan xiezhu zhengfu guanli qingshaonian shiwu de yanjiu yu shijian, 共青团协助政府管理青少年事务的研究与实践)* (Beijing: Chinese Society Press, 2009).

¹⁸⁹ See for instance: Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角*)" (PhD Dissertation, Fudan University, 2005); Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)* (Beijing: China Aerospace Press, 2009).

¹⁹⁰ See for instance: An Guoqi (安国启), *A research report on contemporary communist youth league work in urban areas (dangdai chengshi Gongqingtuan gongzuo yanjiu baogao, 当代城市共青团工作研究报告)* (Beijing: Chinese Society Press, 2009); An Guoqi (安国启) and Deng Xiquan (邓希泉), *Research on the Construction and Renovation of the CYL at the local level (Gongqingtuan jiceng zuzhi jianshe yu chuanxin yanjiu, 共青团基层组织建设与创新研究)* (Beijing: Chinese Society Press, 2010).

¹⁹¹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhangcheng, 中国共产党章程*)," Congress of the CCP, 14 November 2012.

b) The Party's *reserve force*

As the Party's "reserve force," the CYL has a dual role in terms of recruitment and training. First, it recruits a large number of members between 14 and 28 years old, screens and trains them so they can eventually become CCP members. But since CYL membership is now extremely broad, it has no major significance in terms of political career. The CYL had 87.5 million members in 2015, equaling around a quarter of Chinese young people between 14 and 28 years old, among which only a small minority eventually become Party-State officials.¹⁹² The second function of the CYL as a reserve force, and on which I focus, is the recruitment and training of new cadres who generally become CCP officials.

Since the first years of the CCP, the CYL has been seen as an important promotion channel for Party officials. According to Zheng Changzhong, between 1921 and 2002, 22.76% of CCP Central Committee members had an experience as CYL cadres at various levels.¹⁹³ This implied that they were not only members of the CYL but were appointed as officials within the organization. However, it is mostly after its reorganization in 1978 that this specific role of the CYL has been emphasized by specialists of Chinese politics. According to several studies of the early years of the reform era, the two groups of cadres which benefited the most from the reforms were princelings, children of revolutionary leaders, and former CYL officials.¹⁹⁴ In fact, since the 1980s, the role played by the CYL in terms of recruitment and promotion of cadres has been repeatedly put forward. But the mechanisms explaining this increasingly important role in elite renewal are surprisingly understudied.

While the organization itself has not been the focus of recent research, several China scholars, in particular Cheng Li and Bo Zhiyue, have explained the rise of former CYL cadres through the lens of factional politics. According to this perspective, princelings have been facing since the early 2000s an increasing powerful *tuanpai* (团派) faction, constituted of former CYL officials and supposedly led by Hu Jintao, the former general secretary of the CCP,

¹⁹² "Over 87 Mln Chinese Communist Youth League Members," *Xinhua*, May 3, 2016.

¹⁹³ Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 214.

¹⁹⁴ See in particular : Cheng Li and David Bachman, "Localism, Elitism, and Immobilism: Elite Formation and Social Change in Post-Mao China," *World Politics* 42, no. 01 (1989): 64–94; Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 284.

who was secretary of the CYL in the 1980s.¹⁹⁵ Cheng Li described it as a group of like-minded officials, particularly interested in social policy.¹⁹⁶

This pekinological literature is interesting in detailing the supposed personal relationships between a number of Chinese top officials.¹⁹⁷ Still, it remains mostly speculative. In the case of the *tuanpai*, the lack of data makes it impossible to capture the exchanges supposedly taking place between Hu Jintao and his followers. We do not know to what extent he used the CYL as a factional weapon in order to win power and also in which way he helped the so-called *tuanpai* members to get promoted. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it is problematic to rely solely on group identity, being familial or organizational, in order to explain political choices. In fact, why would princelings or former CYL officials necessarily have common interests? Overall, a study of the organization itself, and the actual content of these cadres' experiences while working at the CYL, would be needed in order to understand the mechanisms at play and why they might develop, or not, common goals.

In addition, the like-mindedness of CYL officials put forward by Cheng Li cannot be explained through a generational analysis. In Karl Mannheim's definition of the term, a political generation is not a purely age-based phenomenon but it becomes "sociologically significant only when it also involves participation in the same historical and social circumstances."¹⁹⁸ However, the whole post-Mao era saw a multitude of defining moments and historical circumstances, such as economic reforms, the Tiananmen movement and its repression, etc. While an analysis in terms of generation has been applied to the study of other groups of Chinese youth, such as the "lost generation"¹⁹⁹ – constituted of the urban educated young Chinese sent to work in the countryside between 1968 and 1980 – or the "red guard generation,"²⁰⁰ and used to demonstrate how a common historical experience transformed individual trajectories, it can hardly be applied to the CYL officials. Over the period, the variety of CYL officials cannot be grouped within one generational group. Even when using the political generations defined by the Chinese Party-State itself, these cadres can be found in

¹⁹⁵ See in particular: Bo, *China's Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing*; Cheng Li, "New Provincial Chiefs: Hu's Groundwork for the 17th Party Congress," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 13 (2005); Cheng Li, "The New Bipartisanship within the Chinese Communist Party," *Orbis* 49, no. 3 (June 2005): 387–400; Li, "The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites."

¹⁹⁶ Li, "The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites," 25.

¹⁹⁷ Pekinology is, by reference to the Kremlinology, the study of the Chinese political elites' comings and goings, and of the murky struggles at the top of the Party-State hierarchy.

¹⁹⁸ Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1952), 298.

¹⁹⁹ Michel Bonnin, *The Lost Generation: the Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968-1980)*, trans. Krystyna Horko (The Chinese University Press, 2013).

²⁰⁰ Guobin Yang, *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China*, (Columbia University Press, 2016).

several of them. Li Keqiang, PRC Premier since 2013 and former CYL leader, is for instance part of the fifth generation, while Hu Jintao who was PRC President between 2004 and 2012 and leader of the CYL in the 1980s, is part of the fourth.²⁰¹

The various articles published by Kou Chien-Wen on the political mobility function of the CYL stand as an exception as they focus on the organization itself.²⁰² For Kou, two effects are playing at the same time and explain the rise of CYL affiliates: a factional effect and an organizational one. As the CCP's reserve force, the CYL provides a continuous pool of talents which are potentially absorbed by the *tuanpai faction*.

Kou's "organizational effect," however, remains unspecified. For him, it is mainly a matter of age:²⁰³ CYL leaders come out of the organization with an age advantage. Kou argued that due to the step-by-step promotion system and the limited number of positions, such an advantage is decisive to get to top positions in the Chinese system. While the age argument is important, and I come back to this issue on Chapter Two, Kou's analysis has two major limitations. First, he does not explain the political rationale behind the decision to give such a career advantage to CYL cadres. It is unclear why the CYL became more important for elite renewal after the reforms, as compared to the Maoist era. He treats this evolution as a mechanical result of the institutionalization of rules in the CCP, whereas I argue that these rules reflect politically motivated decisions. Second, Kou never accounts for who the CYL cadres are, why they are given such an advantage early on, and what actually happens to them while in the CYL. Finally, Kou mainly focuses on the high level CYL officials, forgetting what might happen at the lower levels of the organization and during the earlier steps of their career, especially in terms of political commitment formation. More specifically, the massive presence

²⁰¹ On Chinese political generations as defined by the Party-State, see : Li, "Jiang Zemin's Successors: The Rise of the Fourth Generation of Leaders in the PRC."

²⁰² Kou Chien-Wen (寇健文), "The Chinese Communist Youth League and China's Elite Recruitment (*Gongqingtuan yu Zhonggong zhengzhi jingying de zhenbu: tuan zhongyang changwei shitu fazhan diaocha*, 共青團與中共政治精英的甄補：團中央常委仕途發展調查)," *Mainland China Studies* 44, no. 9 (2001): 1–26; Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres"; Kou Chien-Wen (寇健文), "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Networking or Organization's Mission (*Hu Jintao shidai tuanxi ganbu de jueqi : paixi kaoliang vs. ganbu shusong de zuzhi renwu*, 胡錦濤時代團系幹部的崛起：派系考量vs.幹部輸送的組織任務)," *Prospect Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (2007): 49–95; Chien-Wen Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," in *Choosing China's Leaders*, ed. Chien-Wen Kou and Xiaowei Zang (London ; New York: Routledge, 2014), 142–64; Chien-wen Kou and Wen-Hsuan Tsai, "Sprinting with Small Steps' Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System," *The China Journal* 71, no. 1 (2014): 153–71.

²⁰³ See in particular : Kou and Tsai, "Sprinting with Small Steps' Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System."

of the CYL in universities is completely put aside, even though this is a key place for political recruitment in China.²⁰⁴

c) The Communist Youth League on campus

Different studies have mentioned the importance of the first steps of political professionalization within universities for one's future career in the Chinese Party-State.²⁰⁵ However, no systematic study of this phenomenon, and the role played by the CCP's youth organizations, has been written. The literature on youth organizations on campus has so far mainly focused on the control function of these organizations over students' activities, and how this control capacity has fluctuated overtime, leaving aside the issue of political commitment formation on campus.

Dingxing Zhao and Xueliang Ding have both written on the declining control capacity of the CYL and other youth organizations on campus before the Tiananmen movement. According to Zhao, the CCP's youth organizations on campus became "amphibious" in the 1980s: some officials "captured student control institutions to spread nonconformist ideologies."²⁰⁶ Ding also noted that campus branches of the CYL organized reformists conference and supported liberal journals.²⁰⁷ In addition to providing them with mobilization capabilities, according to Wasserstrom, as well as Francis, the youth organization on campus helped develop the students' political culture.²⁰⁸ All this eventually facilitated the 1989 movement²⁰⁹.

In a recent article, Yan Xiaojun showed that from the 1990s on, the CCP's youth organizations retook control over students' activities on campus. According to him the CYL

²⁰⁴ On Party recruitment on campus, see : Gang Guo, "Party Recruitment of College Students in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 43 (May 2005): 371–93.

²⁰⁵ See in particular regarding Tsinghua University : Cheng Li, "University Networks and the Rise of Qinghua Graduates in China's Leadership," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 32 (July 1994): 1–30; Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 267.

²⁰⁶ Dingxin Zhao, "Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement," *Sociological Perspectives* 40, no. 2 (January 1997): 170.

²⁰⁷ Xueliang Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 99.

²⁰⁸ Corinna-Barbara Francis, "The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University," in *Chinese Education: Problems, Policies, and Prospects*, ed. Irving Epstein (New York: Garland Pub., 1991), 394–415; Jeffrey N Wasserstrom and Xinyong Liu, "Student Associations and Mass Movements," in *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China: The Potential for Autonomy and Community in Post-Mao China*, ed. Deborah Davis et al. ([Washington, D.C.]; Cambridge [England]; New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Cambridge University Press, 1995), 362–93.

²⁰⁹ Zhao, "Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement"; Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989*; Wasserstrom and Liu, "Student Associations and Mass Movements."

and the student union exercise a thorough grip over students' life on campus.²¹⁰ He also described that, in addition to the professional CYL cadres, universities count numerous "students cadres" (*xuesheng ganbu*, 学生干部) who work within the CYL or other youth organizations. While the value of such an experience for a future political career is mentioned by Yan for the current period, no systematic study of the matter has been done.²¹¹

While the student cadres were not the focus of my initial research plan, I discovered during my fieldwork how important this experience is for a student's political future and chose to integrate it. This first experience as a cadre, while in college, came out as a decisive moment in the development of a commitment to a political career. Focusing on the student cadres in college appeared all the more relevant as, since the reforms of the 1980s, the large majority of officials go to university,²¹² which makes it a determining arena in terms of career choice.²¹³

Overall, a comprehensive study of the CYL at different levels of the polity constitutes a novel way to shed light on the issues of elite renewal and commitment formation in post-Mao China. The different levels of analysis allow us to focus on the different stages of a cadre's career, from the starting point of professionalization on campus to the beginning of a national career at the central level CYL.

E - Research Question and Hypotheses

The main research question driving this dissertation is: how does the Chinese Party-State renew its political elite and maintain its cohesion in the post-Mao era? By focusing on this specific issue, I address the gaps I mentioned in the literature on post-Mao Chinese politics. Relying on various strands of literature, both on post-Mao China and comparative cases, I bring out the political features of the communist bureaucracy at the nexus of formality and informality,

²¹⁰ Xiaojun Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," *The China Quarterly* 218 (2014): 493–513.

²¹¹ Francis, "The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University"; Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China."

²¹² Already in 1998, 80.5% of leading cadres had a higher education degree (Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 70.

²¹³ As most officials go to university, middle schools and high schools are not the political selection arenas they used to be during the Mao era. As I develop in the Second Part of the dissertation, they are less relevant to the issue of political elite renewal and I only superficially studied the role played by the CYL in these institutions. On high schools and middle schools during the Mao era, see : Jonathan Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Susan L Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

and I highlight how it cultivates individual commitment beyond ideological attachment. In the answer I provide, I unveil in particular the role played by the Party's youth organizations.

First, I hypothesize that the Party-State leaders created a sponsored mobility system in order to renew the Chinese political elite. Through the various steps of the sponsored mobility process, the young recruits develop a political commitment to their career in the Party-State and to the survival of the regime. The opposite hypothesis would be that the Party-State, instead of recruiting young people and progressively cultivating them for high level positions, renews its elite by coopting young professionals who already have a career outside the administration, and therefore takes advantage of the skills they have acquired from their previous experiences. This is for instance what happened in the USSR under Khrushchev (1953-1964). During that period, the Soviet elite was renewed through the cooptation of professionals with technical skills rather than by recruiting young cadres who spent their whole career in the Party-State.²¹⁴ As a result, the Party's main youth organization, the Komsomol, which role was to focus on the recruitment of young people, played a limited role in the elite renewal process. Gehlen actually showed that in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee, the number of central and local Party leaders who previously had a position in the Komsomol went from 34% in 1952 to 8% in 1968.²¹⁵

To test my first hypothesis, which stands in contrast to the Soviet case, I analyze to what extent the Chinese Communist Youth League played a role in the renewal of the Party's elite since the 1980s, and if it became more important than during the Mao era. In line with this hypothesis, I question the specific political configuration that led Chinese leaders, at the central but also local levels, to rely on a sponsored mobility process and the CYL for elite renewal, in opposition to Khrushchev's strategy. Finally, I explore to what extent political commitment developed early in one's career is rewarded in terms of future opportunities. By opposition to the idea that political considerations are not important in the selection of Chinese officials, I hypothesize that the recruits who developed a political commitment early on, through the Party's youth organizations, are put on a specific promotion path, which includes specific opportunities and trainings, in line with the elite dualism theory. By acting as a career

²¹⁴ Frederic J Fleron, "System Attributes and Career Attributes: The Soviet Political Leadership System, 1952 to 1965," in *Comparative Communist Political Leadership*, by Carl Beck et al. (New York: D. McKay Co., 1973), 58; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Le pouvoir confisqué: gouvernants et gouvernés en U.R.S.S. [Confiscated power: rulers and ruled in USSR]* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 243.

²¹⁵ Gehlen referred here to the apparatchiki in the Central Committee, who include the Central Committee members who were Party secretaries at the central, republic or province levels. Michael P Gehlen, "The Soviet Apparatchiki," in *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Barry R Farrell (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1970), 143.

accelerator, the youth organizations attract young talents and at the same time allow the CCP to nurture the recruits' commitment over a long time period.

Second, I hypothesize that the Party's youth organizations play a key role in the first steps of the sponsored mobility process starting from college, linking from the beginning the youth's political commitment to the Party-State organizations rather than specific individuals or the universities themselves. This contrasts with other models of sponsored mobility in which the education institutions play the role of political promotions channels, separated from the Party and its organizations. This was in particular the situation during the Institutional Revolutionary Party regime in Mexico (1929-2000). The key role played by institutions of higher education in terms of political networking and political recruitment, went with a decline of the Party's role in this matter.²¹⁶ In order to test this hypothesis, I analyze the importance of CCP's youth organizations on campus and interrogate the role they play in commitment formation, political networking and political recruitment. I explore to what extent the students who go through these organizations at the university level develop a commitment to a political career by endorsing a specific social role as future officials and by transforming their social circles. Also I study to what extent they have, or not, more opportunities than other students in terms of future political career.

Third, I hypothesize that the decentralized nature of the Party-State and its youth organizations make it difficult for the young recruits to establish cohesive groups which could organize against the Party-State itself. This hypothesis contrasts with the idea that an overall faction is developed throughout the CYL, constituted of officials with common goals and interests. To test this hypothesis, I question the cohesion and autonomy of the CYL as a network of officials. I interrogate to what extent this network is constitutive of their career and lead them to develop common interests, or if it is only one connection among a multiplicity of crosscutting ties.

In order to test these hypotheses, this research combines different levels of analysis, the one of the regime and its evolution, the one of the youth organizations and their rules, and the perspective of the recruits and recruiters at the different echelons of the Chinese polity. Rather than focusing on one set of independent and abstract hypotheses, and aim for a unidirectional causal inference, I get into the multiplicity of causes and influences in order to develop a holistic

²¹⁶ Roderic A Camp, "The Political Technocrat in Mexico and the Survival of the Political System," *Latin American Research Review* 20, no. 1 (1985): 97-118.

analysis of the role played by the CCP's youth organizations in elite renewal and cohesion in post-Mao China.

F - Research Design

1) Research methods

I relied on mixed methods in order to assess the evolution of the CYL as a path to power in post-Mao China. In addition to primary and secondary written sources to account for the evolution of the organization since 1949, I combined descriptive statistics about the cadres' professional trajectories with semi-structured interviews with the concerned actors to better reconstruct the careers, and the commitment formation process, of CYL officials since 1978. In total I spent fourteen months doing fieldwork in China between 2011 and 2015.

a) Career data

In order to study the elite renewal function of the CYL, I relied on already compiled career data, such as the data base regarding the CCP Central Committee members put together by Shih et. al.,²¹⁷ and developed my own datasets. Based on official resumes, I collected career data on CYL leaders at the national level from 1949 until 2015 (set of 74 cases). In addition, I gathered career information on the leaders of all the provincial CYL committees between 1978 and 2015 (set of 356 cases). I also compiled biographical data regarding CYL secretaries in two universities based in Beijing in which I did fieldwork, Peking University and Tsinghua University (42 cases for the 1949-2015 period). Finally, I coded the career trajectories of student leaders at the national level (set of 140 cases for the 1979-2000 period) and the same two universities (128 cases for 1949-2013). The name lists of these officials and student leaders came from a variety of official and non-official online sources,²¹⁸ which I crosschecked with

²¹⁷ The data base can be found here: <http://faculty.washington.edu/cadolph/index.php?page=61> (consulted on January 27 2016).

²¹⁸ The official name list for central CYL secretaries can be found here: "Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央)," Website of the PRC Government (http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-01/27/content_173796_6.htm, consulted on 15 June 2016). Regarding provincial level CYL leaders, no official name list exists for the period, however several unofficial ones can be found on the internet, I cross examined them and verified them with local CYL officials (See in particular: http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=pg3Z-9wNGpnu_KwwZTp3JhPgnOVgF1PmAe8qKkHUy8OmhmITp3LgJeleRAxjb_CTQMSQ-bFXmj117HfGt2qS0LpY_NsSif12N_SrCWVkvN7, Consulted on 18 August 216). For the former CYL secretaries of Peking University and Tsinghua University, several name lists can be found on the internet (See in particular : <http://blog.renren.com/share/36924648/3903186873>, consulted on 1 June 2016), I cross examined them and verified them with university officials and older lists published by the two universities (Fang Huijian (方惠坚)

other lists and verified through interviews. The career data itself was found in official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or in the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of *Wikipedia*, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites. The data being missing for some individuals, I had to treat them as not having pursued an official career.

Overall, this data was useful in order to trace the variety of careers youth organization leaders can go through and to provide an overall image on the extent to which they pursue a political career and get promoted to top positions. It was also key in addressing the issue of the evolution of the function played by these organization as promotion channels within the Party-State hierarchy. However, such biographical data remains thin in order to understand the different mechanisms at play in terms of recruitment and promotion. The role played by a cadre's personal network is for instance particularly hard to address. In addition, official resumes can often be altered strategically by an official or an organization in order to appear more legitimate, in particular in an authoritarian context. In order to reconstruct the individuals' careers, this official data was compared with the information acquired through interviews.

b) Interviews

A set of 121 semi-structured interviews with 92 actors constitutes the foundation of this study (I met several times with a number of the interviewees).²¹⁹ I mainly interviewed current or former CYL cadres (44 cases) and student-cadres (24 cases). As much as possible, I targeted officials of different ranks within the organization and who have worked at different time periods during the post-Mao era. In addition to the cadres per se, I interviewed several academics (24 cases) either from the Central CYL School, who are in charge of training CYL cadres, or from the different universities in which I did fieldwork. These interviews have a specific status as these academics are not the actors I am directly interested in. Their comments and the information they may have shared with me was never used in its own right unless it was

and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), eds., *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi, 清华大学志)*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2001), 879; Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)* (Beijing: People's Press, 2004), 358–388. Finally, regarding student leaders (student union chairmen and chairwomen) in Tsinghua University and Peking University, several name lists can be found on the internet (See in particular for Tsinghua University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/3751112.htm>, and for Peking University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2394305.htm>, both Consulted on 1 June 2016). The official name lists of the All-China Student Federation leaders since 1949 was found here: Li Yan (李艳) and Min Xiaoyi (闵小益), eds., *Compilation of Historical Documents from the Past Congresses of the All-China Student Federation (quanguo xuelian lici daibiao dahui shiliaoji, 全国学联历次代表大会史料集)*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Chinese Literature and History Press, 2011).

²¹⁹ See Annex I for a full list of interviewees and dates of encounters. All the interviewees were anonymized.

related to the university in which they were working. While their thoughts on the CYL more broadly or regarding the cadres were very useful, it was never taken for granted and always checked through the interaction with the actors themselves. In terms of gender, 22 interviewees are female, while 70 are male. The age range is very large, from 20 to 80 years old, as some of my interviews were still student cadres in college while others were retired academics or officials.

Semi-structured interviews are an important device in order to establish the role of agency in recruitment and promotion processes. In addition to providing important and sometimes hidden information, they give access to the perceptions of officials themselves regarding their biography, beyond the flat information displayed in their resumes. It is therefore a perfect tool to analyze one's career in the interactionist sense of the word. As argued by Becker, having the actors themselves describe their trajectory is a good method to get to the progressive way in which they developed their career, and how it was influenced by their perception of obstacles and opportunities.²²⁰ In particular, it offers a vantage point to analyze how they developed their individual strategies within the framework of their organization and how they perceived their options, including exit options, across different points in time. In addition, through the way they present themselves and talk about other cadres and non-cadres, we can appraise their role and status as officials or future officials and examine how they embody it. The description of their relationships with colleagues and non-colleagues overtime is also important in order to better grasp how their social circle evolved and how it influences, and is influenced, by their political commitment.

However, we cannot stop the analysis at the actors' narrative of their own trajectory. As underlined by Bourdieu, the "biographic illusion" leads actors to present their life as if every action made perfect sense and aimed at an overarching goal. In order to prevent such teleological approach to individual trajectories, the different steps of the careers have to be analyzed in their own right, not as a necessary stage towards a predefined target.²²¹ The researcher has to reconstruct the context surrounding the individual's choices and contrast them with the choice of individuals in different situations, to identify their specificity and logic.

In order to better understand how commitment to social role and to social groups influences political commitment, the trajectories of the most committed have to be analyzed in

²²⁰ Howard S. Becker, "Biographie et mosaïque scientifique [Biography and scientific patchwork]," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 62, no. 1 (1986): 105–10.

²²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, "L'illusion biographique [The biographical illusion]," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 62, no. 1 (1986): 69–72.

contrast with those who chose a different path. Among my interviewees, several of them had an experience in the Party's youth organizations, generally as student cadres, but did not pursue a political career. In addition to providing me with insights regarding organizations that they know well even though they do not feel committed to it anymore, such individuals constituted a sort of control group. The contrast in terms of social role and social practices highlighted the specificity of the politically committed individuals.

In order to investigate the mechanisms at play and the context surrounding my interviewees' life decisions, I made the choice of a site-intensive method with a snowball sampling strategy. It allowed me to get into the details of the young cadres' recruitment and promotion process in the selected locales and to analyze how the characteristics of every local context influenced the actors' tactics and commitment formation. Though the relatively small size of my sample limits the external validity of the study, a site-intensive approach is the best way to explore organizational mechanisms and actors' perceptions. Across the different sites, the replication of interviews enabled me to distinguish an isolated act from a common one.

To be sure, the choice of a limited set of fieldwork sites was also linked to the difficulty of accessing information. Yet, what I lose in quantity, I earned in quality. The repeated encounters with my interviewees in the same locale favored the development of relationships based on trust and enabled me to go beyond the official discourse on the organization.

The interviews ran in average for an hour and a half and generally took part in the interviewees' office if they had one, or in public spaces, such as coffee shops. In order to not rebuke the interviewees and get more out of them, I did not record the interviews but took handwritten notes. It gave an informal flavor to the encounter and I had the impression that the interviewees spoke more freely as a result, sometimes even asking not to take into note a personal comment given almost as a confidence. During the interviews, I mixed precise questions, in order to get the actual information of interest, with broader, more abstract interrogations about their organization or my research questions, in order to gather overall impressions. On several occasions, my respondents gave me new ideas and directions, which I pursued in later interviews. Rather than following a basic sampling logic and asking the same questions to a representative portion of the studied group, I aimed for saturation. Each time, I built on the previous interviews in order to prepare the next and achieve an increasingly accurate understanding of the question at hand.

I met my first group of interviewees mainly through academics and student cadres I contacted in different universities and in the Central CYL School. They were willing to help

me because of preexisting personal connections, because they were interested in the research itself, or because they wanted to develop their personal network among foreign academia. They helped me to find several interviewees through their own contacts, which in turn introduced me to additional ones. Such introductions were important to get people to, at least partially, trust me and talk about their own career as well as their understanding of the recruitment processes. Some of the interviewees also allowed me to join them at official dinners or evaluation trips, where I was able to observe interactions among officials and meet more potential interviewees. This first encounter often smoothed things out when I formally asked them for an interview. Overall, I had to navigate the cadres' network myself in order to study it.

For around a third of the interviewees, we met repeatedly and had up to four interviews over the period of my fieldwork. In some cases, it was harder to develop such a relationship and several interviewees refused another meeting. More broadly, getting in touch with potential interviewees and getting them to accept the interview was not always easy, especially with higher ranked officials. As a result, my access to actors in the central level CYL administration was largely limited to Central CYL school cadres and academics. Access was also limited due to circumstantial events such as the demotion for corruption of the Party leader of Nanjing City while I was doing fieldwork there, which made officials at all levels more cautious and less inclined to talk to foreigners, or the elections for student leaders in the various universities, a sensitive time during which university officials were less open to meet with me.

Beyond access to interviewees, it was sometimes hard to make them talk about certain issues. It was in particular the case with the issue of their own social background, as well as the question of personal ties in the administration and how it plays on promotions. I had to approach these issues indirectly, either getting into other cases they knew, or questioning them repeatedly about specific instances of socialization, such as training programs. In addition, the truthfulness or accuracy of specific information acquired through interviews was sometimes questionable; it was therefore systematically checked through a triangulation both across interviews and with documentary sources.

c) Primary written sources

In addition to interviews and official biographical data, the consideration of a numbers of written sources has proven important to this research. First, diverse official documents, including Party State regulations and policy documents (sometimes disseminated through official websites or social media platforms), but also organizational yearbooks and local

gazetteers gave precious standardized information regarding the functioning of the CYL and other youth organizations at different levels of the Chinese polity.

Second, internal documents regarding specific units were also useful in order to examine the most recent activity of the local units I studied, which was not recorded in the yearbooks yet. Also it gave me a taste of the shape taken by the information flows within the organization and how CYL cadres presented their activity to their superiors. Interviews were often the occasion to collect these documents, such as the cadres' activity reports or the unit's organigrams.

Finally, looking at press articles gave additional information, even beyond the studied locales. In addition to media reports coming from a variety of Chinese newspapers and websites, I systematically analyzed the content of the CYL's official daily newspaper, the *China Youth Daily*, between January 2012 and December 2015. The *China Youth Daily* articles were particularly useful to get information regarding the organization itself, at the central and local levels, including descriptions of meetings and activities, leaders' speeches, membership data... In addition to this organizational data, some pieces about specific activities, locales or individual cadres allowed me to draw parallels with the information I could get on my fieldwork sites. Overall, the media reports helped me assess the generalizability of my localized findings.

2) Fieldwork sites

Beyond my focus on the central organization of the CYL, I chose to account for the situation of the CYL since the end of the Cultural Revolution in two provincial capitals and four universities. First I focus on the capital cities of two very different provinces: Jiangsu and Guizhou. Jiangsu is the fourth richest province-level locale in the country with a GDP per capita of 24,950 USD (PPP) in 2015, whereas Guizhou is the last one with 8,463 USD (PPP).²²² Through the comparative study of these two provinces I can account for similarities and make general claims regarding the recruitment and promotion processes, but I can also see how the organization adapts to local specificities, in particular to gaps in terms of economic development. Moreover, focusing on the provinces' capitals – Nanjing for Jiangsu and Guiyang for Guizhou – which centralize the province level and city level CYL committees as well as

²²² Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (<http://data.stats.gov.cn/english/>, consulted on 13 September 2016).

some grassroots units of the CYL, I was able to get into the relations between the different sub-levels of the League, and see how officials get transferred, or not, from one to another.

During my fieldwork, I spent in total ten months in Beijing (two weeks in the winter 2011, two in the summer 2012, one month in the summer 2013, four months in 2014 and four months in 2015), more than three months in Nanjing (two weeks in the winter 2011, two weeks in the summer 2012, two weeks in the summer 2013, and two months in 2015), and one month in Guiyang (during the winter 2015). In addition to these specific locales, I did additional interviews regarding the situation of the local CYL committees in Chengdu the capital of Sichuan Province as well as Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei Province. I went to these two cities as I had been introduced to local cadres through personal contacts. Such interviews helped me to compare my results to other local realities.

In order to test my hypothesis regarding the role played by the CYL and its sub-organizations within universities, I focused on four universities during my fieldwork. First, the two best schools in the country: Peking University and Tsinghua University. I chose these two universities as they are the ones providing the most Party-State leaders, and therefore contributing to elite renewal. Since 1982, 9% of the CCP Central Committee members have a degree from Peking University or Tsinghua University, as well as 15% of the CCP Politburo members.²²³ Also, according to the website of the “Chinese Universities Alumni Association” (*Zhongguo xiaoyou hui*, 中国校友会), in 2007 Tsinghua University had the most alumni within the current political elite, with 41 officials within the CCP Central Committee or at the ministerial level and above. Peking University was second with 34 alumni in such positions.²²⁴

Still, these universities are highly specific in terms of the career prospects they offer to students and are based in Beijing, close to the central administration. For the purpose of comparison, I chose to include in the sample two universities outside Beijing: one highly ranked, Nanjing University, and one of lesser rank, Nanjing Normal University.²²⁵ Overall, these four universities remain part of the “211 Project,” which includes the one hundred or so best

²²³ Source: Data base compiled by Victor Shih et. al. (2012), which can be found here: <http://faculty.washington.edu/cadolph/index.php?page=61> (consulted on 1 June 2016).

²²⁴ Wang Qian (王骞), “Beida Graduates in the Political Arena (*zhengzhi wutai shang de Beida biyesheng*, 政治舞台上的北大毕业生),” *Southern Weekend*, December 18, 2007.

²²⁵ According to the 2015 ranking of national universities by the *CUAA-Team of China University Evaluation*, Nanjing University was ranked 8th whereas Nanjing Normal University was 48th (Source: <http://edu.people.com.cn/n/2014/1229/c391924-26293836.html>).

universities in the country.²²⁶ I chose to focus on these elite schools as I am interested specifically in the recruitment of high level officials and the cultivation of their commitment. Students from other schools, and vocational ones in particular, have less political career opportunities.²²⁷ To widen the scope of the comparison, I also did some complementary interviews in several universities in Beijing, Chengdu and Guiyang.

In addition to universities, I conducted isolated interviews with CYL cadres in other units, in particular in four state-owned enterprises (SOEs) based in Beijing, Nanjing and Guiyang, and two high schools in Nanjing. These units are not representative of SOEs or high schools throughout the country but these interviews allowed me to have a general sense of the role played by CYL and its officials in such units and to put into perspective the role the organization plays in universities. The CYL also has cells in the People's Liberation Army, however I did not manage to obtain access to these units. Furthermore, the CYL units within the military are not really relevant to my study of political elite renewal, the political career and military ones being increasingly separated in post-Mao China.²²⁸

My field sites' selection strategy was targeting at having the best overall view on the role played by the CYL in terms of elite renewal and cohesion. Rather than selecting sites with very specific variations from one another in order to draw causal inference, I chose a "one-case multi-field-site approach," as presented by Maria Heimer. The idea is to treat the different sites as one case, which therefore allowed a form of triangulation across sites in order to carefully analyze the mechanisms of interest. I could then play with the different sites, and administrative levels in each site, in order to cross check information and to rely on various networks of interviewees.²²⁹ While I was not focusing on a specific variation, I chose field sites which were very different socioeconomically, for the sake of representativeness. Instead of basing my whole analysis on one specific site, I continually compared my observations in the different field sites in order to be able to separate singular contextual phenomena from shared

²²⁶ For a synthetic explanation of the "211 project" (211 *gongcheng*, 211工程), see the website of the China Education Center: <http://www.chinaeducenter.com/en/cedu/ceduproject211.php> (Consulted on 12 May 2016).

²²⁷ In 2008, 14% of the graduates from all the "211 project" universities got directly a position in a Party-State Administration or an Academic Institution, which includes both official and academic posts. By contrast, only 5% from vocational higher education institutions did. Source: Cheng Changqun (成长群), "Research on the Issue of Employment of University Students: Survey on the Issue of Hubei University Student Employment as a Case (*daxuesheng jiuye wenti yanjiu: yi Hubei daxuesheng jiuye diaocha weili*, 大学生就业问题研究:以湖北大学生就业调查为例)" (PhD Dissertation, Wuhan University, 2010), 98.

²²⁸ On this issue, see : Ji You, "The Roadmap of Upward Advancement for PLA Leaders," in *Choosing China's Leaders*, ed. Chien-Wen Kou and Xiaowei Zang (London ; New York: Routledge, 2014), 42–64.

²²⁹ Maria Heimer, "Field Sites, Research Design and Type of Findings," in *Doing Fieldwork in China*, ed. Maria Heimer and Stig Thøgersen (Copenhagen; Abingdon: NIAS ; Marston [distributor], 2006), 58–77.

mechanisms. Focusing on two cities and four universities offers a good balance in terms of breadth and depth of the study. It allowed me to contextualize my findings, but also to avoid what Hurst called, the “invalid part-to-whole mapping.”²³⁰

G - Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation is structured in three parts, themselves sub-divided in thematic chapters. The First Part is specific as its level of analysis differs greatly from the remaining of the text. While in the later parts I focus on individual cadres and their commitment formation, I adopt here a macroscopic perspective focusing on the evolution of the organization itself since the creation of its first cell in 1920. I unveil the historical continuities in the Youth League’s structure and functioning since the Mao era. I also argue that despite these continuities, the League managed to evolve with the regime transformation by diversifying its activities and enlarging its domain of action through the development of sub-organizations. These adjustments allowed the organization to maintain its monopoly over the management of youth affairs. Overall, I argue that while the CYL organizational nature and relationship to the CCP did not fundamentally change, it played an increasing role in elite renewal since the 1980s, in a context of elite struggle and overall rejuvenation of the Party-State. Paradoxically, it is when the regime reforms itself and becomes less orthodox in its ideology that this classic communist organization gains in political importance, situating itself at the nexus of the Party-State’s sponsored mobility system.

The second and third parts of the dissertation focus on individual cadres and their commitment formation. They are organized following the different steps of the political career: being recruited as a student cadre, being selected as a student leader, being appointed as a CYL official and promoted within the university administration, and finally rising to leading positions within the CYL at the central or local level. This sequence is not a necessary one since most student cadres never pursue a political career, and a lot of CYL cadres actually only go through part of these steps. However, these steps logically follow each other and represent an ideal-type of a rising trajectory within the Party’s youth organizations.

In the Second Part, I unveil the mechanisms of political sponsored mobility in China starting with the key role played by the CCP youth organizations on campus. I show that

²³⁰ William Hurst, “Cases, Questions and Comparison in Research on Contemporary Chinese Politics,” in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*, ed. Allen Carlson et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 162–77.

becoming a student cadre and getting promotion within these organizations on campus is a key primary phase in a personal trajectory towards officialdom. Through this experience the students are subjected to different commitment building mechanisms. As they rise in the hierarchy, they learn to cultivate and enjoy their role as future Party-State officials, which strengthen their commitment to a political career. Most importantly, the student cadres' experience transforms their social circles, which progressively reinforce their political commitment. The student cadre experience can also lead the cadres to stay on campus and become CYL officials. I underline how this first job on campus can also be used as a springboard for political office for the less risk-averse and the most ambitious recruits. Overall, by unveiling the different steps of the political commitment process which takes place on campus, Part II of the dissertation highlights the decisive role played by universities in political recruitment in China.

After focusing on the first steps of the political career on campus, both before and after graduation, I turn in the Third Part to the local and central CYL officials themselves. I argue that the CYL is a key nexus in the political trajectory of an official, often in continuity with the first step of the career presented in the previous part of the dissertation. Focusing on CYL leaders in particular, both at the central and local levels, I show that the generalist feature of their job sets them apart from more specialized officials, working in sectorial administrations for instance. In the CYL, they learn to become generalist leaders. This accounts for the survival of generalist cadres in the Chinese system by opposition to the literature describing an overall technocratization of the regime. I also highlight the gap within the CYL between leading cadres and non-leading cadres, and the different personal trajectories it entails. The leading cadres can often use the Party-State's rules to their advantage. They also develop particularly diverse personal networks as they rotate quickly from one position to the next. As a result, I argue that the multiple experience these cadres have lead them to develop various cross-cuttings personal ties, across administrations and locales, making it harder to organize in unit-based factional groups with clear common interests.

I. “Au service du Parti”

The First Part of this dissertation is named after a book by Jeannine Verdès-Leroux which argued that a major part of the French intellectuals and artists were, in the years following world war two, at the service of the French Communist Party.²³¹ While the relationship of the intellectuals to the Communist Party can be highly debated, I stress that this level of submission to the Party qualifies more accurately the position of the Party’s own youth organization, and particularly in the Chinese context. By contrast to the Soviet Komsomol where decentralization of Party management led to the dismantlement of the organization’s resources in the late 1980s, I show that since the 1920s, the Chinese Communist Youth League has been under strict Party control, a situation that did not change overtime.

This First Part has a specific place in this dissertation as its level of analysis differs greatly from the remaining of the text. While in the later chapters I focus on the individual cadres and the development of their political commitment, I adopt here a macroscopic perspective focusing on the evolution of the organization itself. Before underlining the mechanisms at play within the Youth League, making it a key recruitment and promotion channel for Party-State officials in post-Mao China, it is necessary to unveil the evolution of the organization and the various shapes it took since the creation of its first cell in 1920 and until my fieldwork in the mid-2010s.

I argue in this First Part that while the CYL organizational nature and relationship to the CCP did not fundamentally change, its function of *reserve force* actually grew stronger since the 1980s, in a context of elite struggle and overall bureaucratization of the Party-State. Paradoxically, it is when the regime reforms itself and becomes less orthodox in its ideology that a traditional Leninist organization made for youth indoctrination gains in political importance. I stress both the continuities between the Mao era and the post-Mao era, but also the flexibility of the Party-State organizations that adapted to a new political context.

Tracking the League’s changes and adjustments allows us to understand how the organization became even more important for cadres’ promotion since the 1980s, compared to the more orthodox Mao era. I show that the CYL became a key channel for early political professionalization, understood as the process through which one is recruited in a paid position

²³¹ Verdès-Leroux, *Au service du Parti: 1944-1956 [For the Party: 1944-1956]*.

within the Party-State administration.²³² As seen in the Introduction, administration and politics is even harder to distinguish in the PRC than in other political regimes, making any career in the Party-State inherently political.

The main questions driving this First Part are: did the structure and activities of Youth League changed since its creation? And why did it become more important for political mobility in post-Mao China? In order to tackle these issues, the two chapters which constitute this First Part focus on different aspects of the Youth League. The first one develops the history of the organization itself, and how its function of mass organization in charge of managing youth has evolved since 1920. The second focuses more precisely on its function as a promotion channel within the Party-State and how it was transformed by the political context. This echoes the two official functions of the League as the Party's "assistant and reserve force" (*zhushou he houbiejun*, 助手和后备军).²³³

²³² A political activity becomes professional when someone lives off it. On this issue, see: Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*; Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 65.

²³³ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013

Chapter 1: Changing to stay the same: the Communist Youth League as the Party's *assistant*

Through an historical overview of the CCP's main youth organization, this chapter underlines that, while its structure and its activities did evolve with the context, its fundamental nature remained the same. Four years after its First National Congress of 1921, the official name of the organization became the Communist Youth League, symbol of its subordination to the CCP. Since then, the name and the structure of the Youth League evolved over time but it always remained the Party's *assistant*, as written in its charter. This official catchphrase summarizes the Youth League's dependence towards the CCP, as well as the role it plays in the implementation of CCP's policies and in the management of youth affairs on behalf of the Party-State.

In this chapter I unveil the historical continuities in the Youth League's organizational framework and functioning since the Mao era. I also show that despite these clear continuities, the League managed to evolve with the regime transformation by diversifying its activities and enlarging its domain through the burgeoning of sub-organizations. These adjustments allow the organization to maintain its monopoly over the management of youth affairs in the Chinese Party-State.

A - From a revolutionary organization to an established bureaucracy

In the first part of this chapter, I review the early years of the Youth League. I put forward the process which led the relatively independent Socialist Youth League, established in 1920, to subordinate itself few years later to the CCP, and to become its main youth organization. During the years that followed and the civil war, the CCP's youth organizations took several forms, but remained major political tools for the Party in extending its reach among young people and facilitating their adhesion to its revolutionary cause.

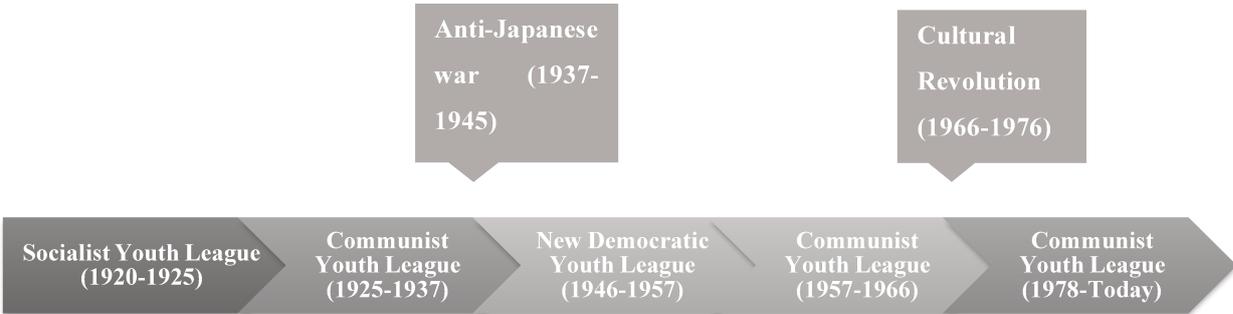
With the foundation of the PRC in 1949, the Youth League was reestablished as the Party's main youth organization, supervising various subordinated organizations. It became one of the CCP's main mass organizations, along with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (*Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui*, 中华全国总工会 ; ACFTU) and the All-China Federation of Women (*Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhehui*, 中华全国妇女联合会; ACWF).²³⁴ Officially,

²³⁴ On mass organizations in the early years of the PRC, see : A. Doak Barnett, "Mass Political Organizations in Communist China," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 277 (September 1951): 76–

mass organizations are not Party-State administrations but as Barnett put it, “they form an essential part of the organizational matrix of Chinese Communist rule.”²³⁵ James Townsend identified four major characteristics of mass organizations, which are still true today. First, they are firmly controlled by the Party, with CCP members at key positions and with orders coming directly from the CCP. Secondly, similar to the Party, they are structured according to the principle of “democratic centralism,”²³⁶ which means in practice that they combine a mass membership with a strongly hierarchical structure. Thirdly, they are greatly developed at the grassroots level to allow for their role of political mobilization and interests articulation.²³⁷ They have cells in all the structures where the targeted category of population can be found numerously. Finally, they have an official function as “transmission belts” for Party-State policies, expanding the power of the CCP towards specific sectors of society.²³⁸

Far from the revolutionary organization it once was, the League became at the time a control instrument in the hands of the Party-State. It became a bureaucracy in charge of youth affairs. It was criticized as such during the Cultural Revolution and was temporally dismantled starting in 1966. Despite the parenthesis of the Cultural Revolution, I underline here how the early years of the PRC were crucial in establishing the League’s Party-like organizational structure that still persists today.

Figure 1.1: Simplified chronology of the Youth League’s evolution



88; Kuo-Chun Chao, “Mass Organizations in Mainland China,” *The American Political Science Review* 48, no. 3 (September 1954): 752–65.

²³⁵ Barnett, “Mass Political Organizations in Communist China,” 76.

²³⁶ For Lenin, democratic centralism implies, “freedom of discussion, unity of action.” In reality the centralism has always trumped the democratic element. It is the ideological justification for the hierarchical ways in which functions all Leninist parties (on democratic centralism, see: Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, 118–128.

²³⁷ By grassroots level, I mean all the cells below the county level, including within units such as enterprises and schools. By contrast the local level includes the county, city, and provincial echelons.

²³⁸ James R. Townsend, *Political Participation in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 151.

1) The Youth League as a revolutionary tool (1920-1949)

a) The domestic and foreign origins of the Socialist Youth League

After the fall of the Manchu Dynasty and the foundation of the Republic of China in 1912, the country went through a period of profound instability. The revolutionary leader Sun Yatsen stepped down after a month as President of China in favor of the general Yuan Shikai, in an attempt to save the young Republic. Yuan Shikai declared himself emperor in 1915, sparking various rebellions and paving the way to the warlord era. In response to the rapid failure of the Republic, emerged an intellectual movement in urban centers looking for new ways to reform the regime. It was the New Culture Movement (*Xin wenhua yundong*, 新文化运动). The movement came to its apex with the demonstrations of May Fourth 1919. The news that the 1919 Treaty of Versailles had turned territories formerly controlled by Germany over to Japan triggered a patriotic march among students and intellectuals in Beijing. The students took the streets in Beijing to protest against the government weakness and the control of imperialist powers over Chinese territory. The movement spread to other major urban centers, leading for instance to a general strike in Shanghai.²³⁹

The May Fourth Movement is largely presented as a founding political moment in China. Jeffrey Wasserstrom showed for instance how it constituted a blue print for future youth activism, both as a historical precedent and in terms of repertoire of contention.²⁴⁰ The movement brought into the political sphere a new generation of politicized students into the political sphere who would eventually join either the nationalists of the Kuomintang (KMT) or the communists. As showed by Sofia Graziani, it turned emerging cultural and academic associations into building blocks for political organizations. In particular it had a strong impact on the foundation of the first Chinese Communist Party cells, as well as units of the Socialist Youth League (*Shehui zhuyi qingniantuan*, 社会主义青年团 ; SYL), the ancestor of the CYL.²⁴¹ In fact, Chen Duxiu who later became one of the founders of the CCP and the SYL, created in 1915 the *Youth Magazine* (*Qingnian zazhi*, 青年杂志). It was renamed *New Youth*

²³⁹ On the May Fourth Movement, see : Tse-tung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960); Jeffrey N Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 51–71.

²⁴⁰ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai*, 295.

²⁴¹ Graziani, “Youth and the Making of Modern China.”

(*Xin Qingnian*, 新青年) a year later, and became one of the important magazines of the New Culture movement.²⁴²

The May Fourth Movement did not remain unnoticed abroad. Vladimir Lenin had just organized the First Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in March 1919. Its role was to push for the spread of communist organizations over the world. The establishment of the Young Communist International, under the leadership of the Comintern, quickly followed in November 1919. Reports from China indicated that the conditions were mature for the creation of a communist party and a communist youth organization. The Comintern therefore sent its agent Grigori Voitinsky to introduce the Leninist organizations to radical intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu. Voitinsky helped to establish the first communist cell in China in April 1920 as well as the SYL.²⁴³

The Chinese communists were introduced to the organization and functioning of the All Union Leninist Communist Youth League, or Komsomol, which will serve as blue print for the CCP's youth organization. The Komsomol itself was established in 1918, bringing together previously dispersed and autonomous youth organizations. It was directly brought under the patronage of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The establishment of youth organizations under Party control became a common feature of every Leninist organization. In addition, to the Soviet Union and the CCP, the KMT also established youth organizations and in particular the Three People's Principles Youth Corps in 1938, which I come back to in the next chapter.²⁴⁴ According to Fainsod, these organizations allowed Leninist regimes to attain a unique level of organization and indoctrination of youth.²⁴⁵

Overall, the CCP followed the organizational template set by the CPSU. However, it did so according to a different sequence, reflecting the revolutionary potential youth people represented in China at the time. The CPSU's youth organization was established only after the soviets took power, in order to manage youth activities over the newly controlled territories and to train new communists. By contrast, the Chinese equivalent was founded directly after the

²⁴² Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 25.

²⁴³ On the Youth Comintern and its influence on the SYL, see :Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 124–131; Kristin Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration* (Routledge, 2015), 14.

²⁴⁴ Jennifer Liu, "Indoctrinating the Youth: Guomindang Policy on Secondary Education in Wartime China and Postwar Taiwan, 1937-1960" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2010), 103–108.

²⁴⁵ Fainsod, "The Komsomols. A Study of Youth Under Dictatorship," 18–40.

first communist cell, underlining the major political role taken by young people in China following the May Fourth Movement.²⁴⁶

b) Loosing independence: from the Socialist Youth League to the Communist Youth League

The Shanghai Socialist Youth League was founded in August 1920, three months after the establishment of the first communist cell, also in Shanghai. Chen Duxiu supervised the creation of the two organizations with the help of the Comintern agent Voitinsky. According to Graziani, the founders decided to coin their youth organization more broadly as socialist, rather than communist, to attract a wider range of people from the variety of radical groups which emerged after the May Fourth Movement.²⁴⁷ Followed in September the creation of a Beijing Socialist Youth League initiated by Li Dazhao, and of another cell in Changsha in January 1921 under the leadership of Mao Zedong.²⁴⁸ Similar groups were also established in Tianjin, Taiyuan, Guangzhou, and so on.²⁴⁹ While there was some communication between the various local youth leagues, transmitting for instance the charter of the Shanghai organization in order to facilitate further creations, there was no nationwide organization or hierarchical relationship across units. Just like the first communist cells, the SYL units operated autonomously.²⁵⁰

The First National Congress of the SYL took place in Guangzhou in May 1922.²⁵¹ Similarly to the First National Congress of the CCP in July 1921, it was the occasion to create a national organization absorbing the existing local cells, the Chinese Socialist Youth League (*Zhongguo shehui zhuyi qingnian tuan*, 中国社会主义青年团).²⁵² Twenty-five delegates were assembled, representing fifteen local organizations and five thousand members, as well as the Youth Comintern representative Sergei Dalin. At the congress, the SYL formally joined the Youth Comintern. The congress approved the “Guiding principles” (*gangling*, 纲领) of the organization, aligned with the Comintern’s political line. In addition to setting age requirements for joining the SYL (from 15 to 28 years old), the principles stipulated several goals, such as

²⁴⁶ On the difference of importance given to youth organizations in the Russian and Chinese revolution, see : Montaperto, “The Chinese Communist Youth League and the Political Socialization of Chinese Youth,” 15–21.

²⁴⁷ Graziani, “Youth and the Making of Modern China,” 126.

²⁴⁸ Kristin Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration*, 2015, 15; Graziani, “Youth and the Making of Modern China,” 126.

²⁴⁹ Li Yuqi (李玉琦), *Short Story of the Chinese Communist Youth League (Zhongguo Gongqingtuan shigao*, 中国共青团史稿), 30.

²⁵⁰ Graziani, “Youth and the Making of Modern China,” 128.

²⁵¹ For a full list of the Youth League national congresses, see Annex II.

²⁵² Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration*, 48.

the mobilization of young people to participate in the liberation from warlordism and imperialism as well as the dissemination of socialist principles to all youth. A major mission of the SYL was to develop its membership among young Chinese and to infiltrate other youth organizations, such as anti-Christian associations or student unions.²⁵³

At the time of the League's First Congress, there was no clear link between the SYL and the CCP. There was no mention of the CCP in SYL documents and no obvious presence of CCP leaders.²⁵⁴ The relationship between the two organizations was first put forward by the publication by the SYL, in September 1922, of the so-called Document 17 on "the relationship between the League and the Chinese Communist Party" (*bentuan yu zhongguo gongchandang zhi guanxi*, 本团与中国共产党之关系). The document described a relationship of cooperation but no clear hierarchy between the CCP and the SYL.²⁵⁵ Unsatisfied with the status quo, the CCP issued at its Second National Congress in July 1922 its own "Resolution on the question of the youth movement" (*guanyu shaonian yundong wenti de yi'an*, 关于少年运动问题的决议案).²⁵⁶ It stated that "the Socialist Youth League should be an independent organization as far as the struggle for the economic and educational interests of young workers is concerned, while it should restrain itself under agreement with the Chinese Communist Party when it comes to political movement."²⁵⁷

For the CCP this was a response to the "second Party tendency" (*di er dang qingxiang*, 第二党倾向) developing within the SYL. The SYL was bigger than the Party at the time and was very active in recruitment and propaganda, especially in areas where no Communist Party cell had been established. In May 1922, the SYL had 5,000 members while the CCP only had 195. Therefore, the SYL was seen as a threat to the Party. Illustrating this tendency, Chen Duxiu wrote in *Pravda* in 1922 that the SYL was more influential than the CCP.²⁵⁸

In 1923, as the CCP decided to join forces with the KMT in a "united front" against warlords and foreign imperialists, it further strengthened its control over the SYL following the

²⁵³ Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 134.

²⁵⁴ Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration*, 52.

²⁵⁵ Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究)* (People's Press, 2013), 116.

²⁵⁶ Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 136.

²⁵⁷ "Resolution on the Question of the Youth Movement (*guanyu shaonian yundong wenti de jueyi an*, 关于少年运动问题的决议案)," Congress of the CCP, 23 July 1922, quoted in *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁵⁸ Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration*, 17.

Comintern's instructions. At the Third National CCP Congress in June 1923, its relationship with the SYL went from one of "agreement" (*xieding*, 协定) to follow the Party's line, to one of "absolute subordination" (*juedui fucong*, 绝对服从) to the Party leadership.²⁵⁹ This hierarchical relationship was ratified by the SYL at its Second National Congress in August 1923. At the same time, the Youth League developed its organizational structure and began the publication in 1923 of the magazine *China Youth* (*Zhongguo qingnian*, 中国青年), which became its main propaganda tool, supervised by CCP officials.²⁶⁰ The SYL also followed the CCP's decision to join forces with the KMT and the youth movement was reorganized. A Central Youth Bureau was set up as the united front organization in charge of the youth movement.²⁶¹

From an organization initially detached from the CCP, the SYL was gradually placed under the Party's control. Symbol of this transformation, at its Third Congress, held in January 1925 in Shanghai, the Socialist Youth League became the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan*, 中国共产主义青年团; CYL). This new name clearly indicated the Party's leading role.²⁶²

c) The multiplication and militarization of communist youth organizations

During the first united front between the CCP and the KMT (1923-1927), the CYL was repeatedly criticized by the Party for cultivating a tendency towards "vanguardism" (*xianfeng zhuyi*, 先锋主义), seeing itself as more revolutionary than the CCP and trying to assume the leading role in the communist movement. However, they were brought together by a common enemy:²⁶³ when Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) turned against the communists in Shanghai in April 1927, the CYL members fought along with the CCP.²⁶⁴ It was the end of the first united front and the communist organizations were forced to go underground. Both in bad shape, the CYL and the CCP issued a joint statement in December 1927 pushing aside the competition between the two organizations. The massive anti-communist repression which followed the

²⁵⁹ Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 136. Translations are Sofia Graziani's.

²⁶⁰ Li Yuqi (李玉琦), *Short Story of the Chinese Communist Youth League* (*Zhongguo Gongqingtuan shigao*, 中国共青团史稿), 58.

²⁶¹ Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 136.

²⁶² Li Yuqi (李玉琦), *Short Story of the Chinese Communist Youth League* (*Zhongguo Gongqingtuan shigao*, 中国共青团史稿), 72.

²⁶³ Pringsheim, "The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949)."

²⁶⁴ On these events, see : Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (Chicago, Ill.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Haymarket Books, 2010), 110–120.

Shanghai massacre of April 1927, or “white terror”, eventually brought the CYL and the CCP closer together.²⁶⁵

The invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 and the Sino-Japanese war that followed opened a new chapter in the life of communist youth organizations in China. In 1935, the CCP issued a “Decision about youth work” (*guanyu qingnian gongzuo de jue ding*, 关于青年工作的决定) announcing the transformation of the CYL in an inclusive organization for all patriotic young people, communist or not.²⁶⁶ In line with the second united front formed in 1936 between the communists and nationalists against Japan, the CYL was transformed into a broad militarized organization for national liberation. A meeting of representatives of the youth organizations which emerged in red bases was organized in April 1937 in Yan’an, and the North West National Salvation Youth Federation (*Xibei qingnian jiuguo hui*, 西北青年救国会) was established. The former CYL stopped its activities during this period.²⁶⁷

During the war, multiple youth organizations emerged, linked either to the CCP or the KMT. These militarized organizations took an active role in the civil war. The CCP created youth work committees starting from May 1938, in order to supervise the organizations active in the territory it controlled.²⁶⁸ Some of them were created by the CCP, like the National Salvation Youth Federation, others were later absorbed, like the Democratic Youth Alliance (*Minzhu qingnian tongmeng*, 民主青年同盟) created in Kunming in 1944.²⁶⁹

After the Japanese defeat and the end of the second united front, the various youth organizations built for national salvation became useless. In October 1946, the CCP started to reorganize them in the territories under its control. Local Democratic Youth Leagues were established under the leadership of the CCP youth work committees, in order to recruit and manage young activists. These local groups were an important tool in the CCP’s struggle against the KMT, and they served as base for the foundation of the new national communist youth organization in 1949.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration*, 68.

²⁶⁶ Graziani, “Youth and the Making of Modern China,” 146.

²⁶⁷ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 45.

²⁶⁸ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 55.

²⁶⁹ On the different communist-led youth organizations during the period, see : *Ibid.*, 46–56.

²⁷⁰ Pringsheim, “The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949),” 88.

2) Becoming a bureaucracy: the Youth League as the Party's core youth organization (1949-1966)

a) The rebirth of the Communist Youth League as a control instrument

The First Congress of the New Democratic Youth League (*Zhongguo xin minzhu zhuyi qingniantuan*, 中国新民主主义青年团) took place in Beijing in April 1949, two months after the CCP took over the city. Three hundred twenty-three delegates were representing the 190,000 members of the organization. This was the result of a long development process of local Democratic Youth Leagues over the national territory since 1946, following the advance of the CCP's military.²⁷¹ During this process, the main propaganda tool of the League, the magazine *China Youth*, resumed publication in 1948. The League's principal newspaper, the *China Youth Daily* (*Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 中国青年报) was established later in 1951.²⁷² Also in 1948, the Central Youth League School (*zhongyang tuanxiao*, 中央团校) was created and missioned to train its cadres.²⁷³ In 1949, the charter of the New Democratic Youth League was voted by the congress, setting up the overall national organization. It was the beginning of the League's institutionalization process following the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

After 1949, the rules of the organization at the different levels were progressively clarified and a new charter was issued in 1957. The League still follows this overall structure today. According to its fundamental text, the League is organized similarly to the CCP. National Congresses of the League are to be set every four years²⁷⁴ and Central Committee Plenums are to be organized every year. Lower level CYL units, provincial and ministerial, send a certain number of representatives to the CYL National Congress depending on their size.²⁷⁵ As the highest League institution, the National Congress' main powers are: the evaluation of the League's work since its last meeting, the establishment of the organization's further direction, the modification of its charter, and the election among its members of the League's Central

²⁷¹ Paul Michael Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979* (Nathan, Qld., Australia: School of Modern Asian Studies, Griffith University, 1982), 52.

²⁷² Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League* (*zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 39; Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949-1966," 121.

²⁷³ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League* (*zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 58.

²⁷⁴ Since 1982 CYL congresses officially meet every five years ("Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 24 December 1982).

²⁷⁵ Interviews with cadre 3 and cadre 7

Committee.²⁷⁶ At the occasion of the Central Committee First Plenum, after the National Congress, it selects the Standing Committee and the secretariat. The secretariat is the main operational body of the organization, acting in the interim of the Standing Committee.²⁷⁷ It is constituted of a first secretary (*diyī shūjī*, 第一书记), an executive secretary (*chángwú shūjī*, 常务书记) and around 5 additional secretaries²⁷⁸. Several functional departments are then in charge of the practical activities of the League. In 1957, 1,493 representatives were present for the Third Congress of the New Democratic Youth League. They elected a Central Committee of 116 full members as well as 35 alternate members, which in turn selected a Standing Committee of 19 and a secretariat of 6.²⁷⁹

While developing itself as a bureaucracy, the Youth League was brought even more tightly under the CCP's control. As stated in the New Democratic Youth League charter of 1949, the Youth League is the CCP's "assistant and reserve force". This formulation illustrates the two official missions of the Youth League: on the one hand the implementation of CCP's policies and the management of youth affairs on behalf of the Party-State, and on the other hand providing a training ground for potential CCP members and officials.²⁸⁰ In 1956, the CCP Eight Congress issued a new charter for the Party that integrated a section regarding the relationship with the Youth League. It stated that at every level of its hierarchy, the Youth League committees were under the leadership of the CCP committee that is at the same level.²⁸¹ As stressed by Funnell, from this moment on, the Youth League's directives always came from the Party. As a symbol of this control of the Party over the youth organization, in 1957, the New Democratic Youth League was officially renamed again the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL).²⁸² With the period of the Great Leap Forward starting in 1958, the CCP became even

²⁷⁶ Standing Committee members are elected from within the Central Committee. They generally includes the Central Secretariat members as well as the League's central functional departments' directors and provincial level committees' secretaries ("The CYL Chooses the First Female Secretary Born After 1970 (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang xuanchu shou wei 70 hou nü shūjī*, 共青团中央选出首位70后女书记)," *Qilu Evening News*, June 16, 2008).

²⁷⁷ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 24 May 1957.

²⁷⁸ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 68.

²⁷⁹ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 72.

²⁸⁰ "Charter of the New Democratic Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国新民主主义青年团章程)," Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 17 April 1949.

²⁸¹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhangcheng*, 中国共产党章程)," Congress of the CCP, 26 September 1956

²⁸² Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949-1966," 114.

more dominant over the activities of the CYL: all the plans, activities and meetings were organized by the Party hierarchy.²⁸³

b) Laying the organizational basis of a bureaucratic Youth League

In 1957 were established the organizational rules which are still the basis of the CYL's functioning today. If the age range for membership evolved afterward,²⁸⁴ the process through which one becomes a CYL member was designed as a simplified version of the equivalent process within the CCP. Like in the CCP, to join the CYL, applicants need to be recommended by two CYL members and to formally apply to the CYL branch in their school or work unit.²⁸⁵ They then go through a monitoring period during which the CYL cadres of the local branch investigate their familial and personal background. Regular meetings are therefore organized with CYL cadres so they can evaluate the applicants' commitment. However, this investigation process is shorter and less thorough than in the case of the CCP. The overall selection process did not fundamentally change since 1957, but the criteria taken into account did evolve. In particular, class background is not a selection criteria anymore.²⁸⁶ Starting in 1958, an overall system of archives was established at every level of the CYL in order to keep track of its members.²⁸⁷

The 1957 charter also established the rules for the creation of CYL local units, which are still in place today. Following the CCP blueprint, grassroots branches of at least three members are the basic units of the organization. The branches (*zhibu*, 支部) are developed at every level of the Party-State hierarchy and in all the places of work and residence where young people are present, in particular in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), in state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and in schools. To manage the large number of League members, a pyramidal organization is constituted: the branches are brought together in general branches

²⁸³ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 55.

²⁸⁴ One had to be between 15 and 25 years old in 1957 to join the CYL, while the age range is now 14 to 28. I come back on these age related issues in the next chapter ("Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 24 May 1957).

²⁸⁵ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 24 May 1957.

²⁸⁶ On the process towards becoming a CYL member, see : Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 87–90; Yanjie Bian, Xiaoling Shu, and John R Logan, "Communist Party Membership and Regime Dynamics in China," *Social Forces* 79, no. 3 (March 2001): 813.

²⁸⁷ Compilation Committee for local records of Jiangsu Province (*Jiangsu sheng difangzhi pianzuan weiyuanhui*, 江苏省地方志编纂委员会), ed. *Local Records of Jiangsu Province - Records on Social Groups - Volume on Youth Organizations (Jiangsu sheng zhi - shetuanzhi - qingnian tuanti pian*, 江苏省志—社团志—青年团体篇) (Beijing: Local Records Press, 2002), 101.

(*zongzhibu*, 总支部) when the membership exceeds fifty people, which are in turn organized in committees (*weiyuanhui*, 委员会) when they include more than two hundred members.²⁸⁸

The charter also set the hierarchical linkages within the organization, and in relation with the CCP, which are still ruling the organization today. The different grassroots CYL committees are under the supervision of the local committees. These lower level committees imitate in their structure the League's Central Committee.²⁸⁹ Similarly to the central level, the committee members are selected by a congress assembled every few years.²⁹⁰ The congress members are sent by lower level units of the CYL.²⁹¹ At the township level, congress members are sent by lower level committees of the CYL and they are set up in various units within the county proportionally to the number of their CYL members, such as firms, factories, and schools. Then the various township level CYL congresses send representatives for the county level CYL congresses which in turn send representatives to the city level congresses, and so on up to the National Congress.²⁹² As stressed by Zheng Changzhong, this overall framework has been normalized countrywide only since the early 1990s.²⁹³

The overall selection process for CYL congress representatives remains the same today. For instance the Peking University CYL Committee, being of the same rank as a CYL committee of a Beijing district, sent eight representatives for the Beijing CYL 13th Congress in August 2012.²⁹⁴ As shown in my interviews, in practice the name list of the representatives goes throughout the upper level CYL committee for acceptance.²⁹⁵ In addition, certain implicit quotas are now taken into account while selecting the representatives, in order to have a certain number of people from different nationalities, or genders for instance.²⁹⁶ Such quotas are also

²⁸⁸ “Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程),” Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 24 May 1957.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ In 1957 the rule for provincial level CYL congresses was to meet every two years, it was aligned on the central level practice in 1982, and they now meet every five years (*Ibid.*).

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Several units, such as SOEs or schools for instance, have an administrative level equivalent of a township, a county, or even a city or a province. The CYL committees set up in these units will therefore send representatives to the CYL congress at the hierarchical level just above.

²⁹³ Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), “Research on the Transformations of the CYL Internal Democracy and Grassroots Personnel System (*tuanei minzhu shijian yu Gongqingtuan jiceng zuzhi zhidu bianqian yanjiu*, 团内民主实践与共青团基层组织制度变迁研究),” *Journal of China Youth College for Political Sciences* 23, no. 3 (2004): 1–5.

²⁹⁴ Interview with cadre 3.

²⁹⁵ Interviews with cadre 3 and cadre 7.

²⁹⁶ Interview with cadre 7.

present in leading organs: the CYL committees at the local and provincial levels always include one female secretary.²⁹⁷

Overall, the Youth League has fully integrated the principle of “democratic centralism” that characterizes the Communist Party. When the New Democratic Youth League transformed into the Communist Youth League and developed itself as a bureaucracy in charge of youth affairs, it also became the core element of a web of youth organizations set up to control different sub-groups of young people. In this respect, it replicated the organizational hegemony the CCP developed over the different sectors of society within the field of youth issues, through its mass organizations and united front structures.²⁹⁸

3) The Youth League’s hegemony over youth work

a) Expanding the Youth League’s reach through an umbrella organization

Several youth organizations were established or reshaped in 1949 with the founding of the PRC. They targeted young people outside the reach of the Youth League. The main one was the All-China Federation of Democratic Youth (*Zhonghua quanguo minzhu qingnian lianhehui*, 中华全国民主青年联合会). As the Youth League was targeting “politically advanced” youth, the CCP saw the need for a broader organization aiming at supervising young people more widely. The All-China Federation of Democratic Youth was thus created as an umbrella organization encompassing other youth groups, including the Youth League but also the Young Pioneers and the Student Federation.²⁹⁹ Its First Congress was held in Beijing in May 1949. It then became in 1958, the All-China Youth Federation (*Zhonghua qingnian lianhehui*, 中华青年联合会; ACYF) and still exists as such today.³⁰⁰

Since 1949, the CYL has been officially defined as the *core* (*hexin*, 核心) of the ACYF.³⁰¹ As Barnett put it, in addition to helping the CCP in implementing its policies, the CYL members “function as a sort of secondary elite acting under the direction of the even

²⁹⁷ Interview with cadre 9.

²⁹⁸ On the CCP’s hegemony strategy and the United Front organization, see : Gerry Groot, *Managing Transitions the Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism, and Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xiii.

²⁹⁹ Pringsheim, “The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949),” 87–88; Barnett, “Mass Political Organizations in Communist China,” 83–84.

³⁰⁰ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)* (Beijing: Chinese Society Press, 2013), 82.

³⁰¹ “Charter of the All-China Youth Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo qingnian lianhehui zhangcheng*, 中华全国青年联合会章程),” Congress of the ACYF, 24 August 2010.

smaller Party elite and extending the Party's influence throughout the entire web of youth organizations.”³⁰² In practice, the ACYF Chairman is, since 1949, also the Executive Secretary of the CYL Central Committee, the number two of the League. Also, the ACYF Secretary-General, in charge of day-to-day activities, is at the same time the CYL United Front Work Department Director.³⁰³ Local Youth Federations have also been established since 1949 at the provincial, city, and sometimes even at the county levels. It is then the local CYL secretary who chairs them. Also, the ACYF is financially dependent on the CYL.³⁰⁴

The ACYF has functioned since its creation as a united front organization for the CYL,³⁰⁵ meaning that its mission is to coopt non-communist youth and to make them participate in CYL's youth work.³⁰⁶ The ACYF still plays this role today. The ACYF is a consultative body for the CYL. In practice the ACYF does not have its own activities or organizational life besides the one of the League. Its relationship with the CYL is often compared to the one of the CCP with the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).³⁰⁷ This Conference is an advisory body. While it has no legislative power, it makes legislative suggestions and reports regarding different sectors of society. Local Political Consultative Conferences can also be found at every echelons of the Party-State. At the central level, the CPPCC Chairman is usually the number four of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee, and its highest ranked Deputy Chairman is the United Front Work Department Director. This Conference embodies the Party's united front strategy. It is a discussion platform between the CCP and non-Party elites, such as economic, intellectual or religious elites. It is constituted by representatives of the CCP

³⁰² Barnett, “Mass Political Organizations in Communist China,” 85.

³⁰³ Kou, “CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres.”

³⁰⁴ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 80.

³⁰⁵ In the continuity of the first and second united fronts between the CCP and the KMT, the Party developed a united front strategy based on its own organizational structures and targeting a large number of potential allies. The aim has been to rally to the Party's cause, groups which are not seen as “politically advanced” enough to be integrated as communists, and therefore to neutralize other social forces. In addition to mass organizations such as the CYL and the ACFTU which make the link between the Party and rather “politically advanced” groups, the CCP established in the 1940s a United Front Work Department in charge of supervising its relationship with these other groups. In particular, it manages the eight democratic parties, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, as well as religious associations and organizations in charge of contacts with overseas Chinese. The basic functioning of the united front work has not really varied since 1949. For more details on the united front and related organizations, see: Groot, *Managing Transitions the Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism, and Hegemony*, xiii; Emmanuel Jourda, “Les usages postrévolutionnaires d'un canon orthodoxe : le front uni et l'invention politique de l'après-révolution en Chine (1978-2008) [Postrevolutionary Uses of an Orthodox Pillar: The United Front and the Invention of Post-Revolution in China (1978-2008)]” (PhD dissertation, Ecole des hautes études en Sciences Sociales, 2012).

³⁰⁶ Pringsheim, “The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949),” 88.

³⁰⁷ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, and cadre 32.

as well as by representatives of the eight democratic parties and other civil organizations.³⁰⁸ Since the 1990s, the CCP representatives do not exceed around a third of the seats.³⁰⁹

The overall rules of the ACYF were set in the 1950s and still shape its present functioning. Just like the CYL, a ACYF congress is organized every five years to supervise the Federation's work as well as to select its Central Committee, which include around 1000 members. A Standing Committee of roughly 200 members is also selected. The selected Central Committee members can be up to 40 years old and the Standing Committee members up to 45.³¹⁰ The ACYF congress takes place a few months after the CYL's, which allows for the integration of its newest directives.³¹¹ Just like for the CPPCC, the selection of potential committee members is far from transparent.³¹² As explained to me by a national ACYF representative, the selection is highly controlled by the CYL's United Front Department. At the level of a county, or a city district, the local CYL United Front Work Department suggests young people to become representatives. These candidates are generally elected without problem by the local Youth Federation. Following the CYL's model, every district, county, or county level organizations send representatives to the city level Youth Federation, then again to the provincial and finally national level.³¹³

The ACYF Committee Plenums, which are assembled once a year, are presented as mostly ceremonial and with little content besides hearing the work report from the previous year. In my interviews, the ACYF is often portrayed as a public relations tool for CYL leaders. By presenting them as Youth Federation chairmen rather than Youth League secretaries, they can show a more neutral face to foreign visitors in particular.³¹⁴ Also, as I develop in the Third

³⁰⁸ The democratic parties are political organizations under the supervision of the CCP. Each of them targets a specific group and make the link with the Party-State. For example, the Chinese Party for Public Interest (*Zhongguo zhigong dang*, 中国致公党) deals with returned overseas Chinese and people with ties abroad. On the democratic parties, see: Groot, *Managing Transitions the Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism, and Hegemony*, xiii.

³⁰⁹ On the CPPCC, see: Ibid.; Cabestan, *Le système politique chinois: un nouvel équilibre autoritaire [The Chinese political system: a new authoritarian equilibrium]*, 351.

³¹⁰ "Charter of the All-China Youth Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo qingnian lianhehui zhangcheng*, 中华全国青年联合会章程)," Congress of the ACYF, 24 August 2010.

³¹¹ Interview with cadre 32.

³¹² As underlined by Cabestan, work units, representatives of different sectors of society are selected by the United Front Department to send representatives to the relevant Political Consultative Conference, depending on the units' rank. Still the selection process itself remains highly non-transparent (Cabestan, *Le système politique chinois: un nouvel équilibre autoritaire [The Chinese political system: a new authoritarian equilibrium]*, 343–367).

³¹³ Interview with cadre 32.

³¹⁴ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, and cadre 32. The public relation dimension of the ACYF is also put forward in: Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 80.

Part of the Dissertation, with no real political influence, membership to the ACYF is mostly an issue of prestige and network building for its members.

b) Controlling the schools through the Young Pioneers of China and the All-China Student Federation

Two other major youth organizations under the umbrella of the ACYF are the Young Pioneers of China and the All-China Student Federation, targeting both specific subgroups: children and students. The Young Pioneers of China (*Zhongguo shaonian xianfeng dui*, 中国少年先锋队) was created in January 1949 and soon became part of the Youth Federation. It was established in the continuity of previous children organizations under the tutelage of the Youth League, such as the Children Worker Corps (*Laodong ertong tuan*, 劳动儿童团) from the 1920s.³¹⁵ In 1949, its members were between nine and fifteen years old.³¹⁶ The age range has now changed to six to fourteen years old.³¹⁷

In addition to the organization's membership to the ACYF itself, managed by the CYL, the Pioneers are under the League's direct supervision. Since 1957, a section in the CYL charter has been dedicated to the Pioneers, explaining that they are to follow the League's directives and that the CYL selects and trains the advisors in charge of managing the young pioneers in their schools³¹⁸. This hierarchical relationship remains today. In 2004, around 4.8 million advisors were in charge of more than 100 million pioneers, which included almost all children between six and fourteen years old enrolled in schools.³¹⁹ Young pioneers are potential future Youth league members. As Funnell put it, "if the League was a 'school for the study of communism,' then the Pioneers were the kindergarten."³²⁰

From the CCP's perspective, the development of an organization specifically directed to students, as the future intellectual elite of the country, was also important in order to reach as many young people as possible. Therefore in 1949, an All-China Student Federation

³¹⁵ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 72.

³¹⁶ Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966," 124.

³¹⁷ "Charter of the Young Pioneers of China (*Zhongguo shaonian xianfeng dui zhangcheng*, 中国少年先锋队章程)," Congress of the Young Pioneers of China, 3 June 2005.

³¹⁸ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 24 May 1957.

³¹⁹ Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Research on the Transformations of the CYL Internal Democracy and Grassroots Personnel System (*tuanei minzhu shijian yu Gongqingtuan jiceng zuzhi zhidu bianqian yanjiu*, 团内民主实践与共青团基层组织制度变迁研究)," 104.

³²⁰ Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966," 59.

(*Zhonghua quanguo xuesheng lianhehui*, 中华全国学生联合会) was brought under the ACYF umbrella. The first national student association was created in 1919 in Shanghai, in relation to the May Fourth Movement. While it had relationships at time with the Youth League and the CCP, it also was in contact with the KMT. The Student Federation was in fact never clearly aligned with the communist organizations before the 1940s. Its 14th Congress in 1949, and its affiliation to the ACYF, constituted a big change for the All-China Student Federation.³²¹

The overall structure of the Student Federation was set in 1949, following the framework set by the CYL organization, and still shapes its functioning today.³²² Just like the ACYF, the All-China Student Federation is constituted of smaller organizations rather than individuals: it is an umbrella organization for the student unions in the different high schools and universities across the country. It is present at the national, provincial, and sometimes city or prefectural levels.³²³ Student Federation chairmen are student leaders of the best schools of the country. At the national level, the chairman is, since 1956, alternatively the Student Union Chairman of Peking University or of Tsinghua University. At the provincial level, it is generally the student union chairman of the province's best university who is in charge.³²⁴ As part of the ACYF, the Student Federation is under the supervision of the CYL. In practice, the ACYF General Secretary, who actually manages the organization as the chairman is still a college student, is the Central CYL Schools Department Director.³²⁵ In the Second Part of the dissertation I detail the functioning of student unions on campus.

c) Anti-bureaucracy: the Cultural Revolution and the dismantlement of the Youth League

After the establishment of the PRC and until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the Youth League remained the main mass organization of the Party in charge of youth activities, as well as the *core* of its youth organizations. In May 1966, the movement of the

³²¹ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 81.

³²² "Charter of the All-China Student Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo xuesheng lianhehui zhangcheng*, 中华全国学生联合会章程)," Congress All-China Student Federation, March 1949.

³²³ Lü Lili (吕丽莉), "Study on the Democratic Construction of College Student Organizations (*gaoxiao xuesheng zuzhi de minzhu jianshe*, 高校学生组织的民主建设)" (PhD Dissertation, Liaoning University, 2012), 29–30; Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 81.

³²⁴ I come back in Chapter Four on the education and career history of ACYF Chairmen and their provincial counterparts (Source: the CVs of the former ACYF Chairmen, available on *Xinhua.cn*).

³²⁵ Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres," 85.

Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was launched under Mao Zedong's initiative. As described by Funnell, at every stage of the movement the Youth League suffered the same attacks as the CCP. The Beijing CYL Committee was purged in June 1966, few weeks after the Beijing CCP Committee.³²⁶

In August 1966, the CYL Central Committee and secretariat were purged. Hu Yaobang, then CYL Central Committee First Secretary, was accused of revisionism and dismissed.³²⁷ The actual demise of the CYL occurred in January 1967 as the Red Guards³²⁸ seized power over the organization. After that, the CYL only existed on paper: it was replaced by the Red Guards as the regime's main political tool for managing youth.³²⁹ CYL local units only started to resume recruiting in the mid 1970s. A new congress was convened in 1978, two years after Mao's death.³³⁰

B - Neither a NGO nor a ministry: the Youth League in post-Mao China

Reviewing the developments of the Youth League until 1966, we saw how it transformed itself from a revolutionary organization, into a bureaucratized mass organization. We also highlighted that, since 1925, it has constantly been under the Party's control. In the second part of this chapter I focus on the reestablishment of the organization after the Cultural Revolution and its development until the time of my fieldwork, in the mid 2010s. Getting into the details of the organizational structure and its activities, I stress clear continuities with the previous period, especially regarding the CYL's relationship with the CCP. The organizational structure of the League and the basis for its membership expansion established in the first years of the PRC have not fundamentally changed since. More precisely, I show that the CYL has, despite its enormous membership, little autonomy and decision-making power over youth work. The CYL cannot be compared to a Non-governmental organization (NGO), as it is too close to the Party-State and financially dependent on it. It is also not a Youth Affairs Ministry as it has no State power and it cannot initiate a policy or directly propose laws regarding youth affairs.

³²⁶ Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966," 105.

³²⁷ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 69.

³²⁸ The Red Guards were a multiplicity of paramilitary youth organizations mobilized by Mao Zedong in 1966 and 1967, during the Cultural Revolution. On the demise of the CYL by the red guards, see: Leader, "The Communist Youth League and the Cultural Revolution."

³²⁹ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 82.

³³⁰ Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China."

Overall, it remains merely a mass organization under Party control.

Tracing the League main activities back to the first years of the PRC until the mid 2010s, I highlight continuities in its working style. I show that, while some new activities were developed since the 1980s by the CYL and especially by the sub-organized it established, in large part the practices inherited from the Mao period are simply recycled, framed and presented in a new way in order to keep attracting young people. It allows the League to maintain its hegemony over youth affairs management in the Chinese system.

1) Back to the basics: a Party-like organization to manage Chinese youth

a) Rebuilding the Youth League to close the parenthesis of the Cultural Revolution

After 1966, the Communist Youth League stopped its activities for the first years of the Cultural Revolution. It is only in October 1969 that the CCP launched its reconstruction. Between 1970 and 1973, CYL committees at the grassroots and the county levels were progressively reestablished and new members recruited.³³¹ Starting in 1973, CYL provincial committees were rebuilt.³³² During this period the CYL was under the control of the leftist faction of the CCP. As noted by Healy, one of the first CYL committee reestablished was in Hulin County in Heilongjiang Province, famous at the time for its leftist leadership.³³³

With the end of the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong's death and the succession struggle that followed, the central organization of the CYL was reorganized in 1978. In October 1978, the Tenth National Congress of the organization was convened, fourteen years after the Ninth.³³⁴ The central CYL was reestablished and a new charter was issued. Regarding the organization's basic structure, it replicated by and large the rules established in 1957. Until today, no major change to the overall organization is noticeable. Figure 1.2 represents the organization of the central CYL in 2015. In addition to the Leadership organs which I mentioned earlier, we can here see the different sub-units of the CYL dedicated to specific tasks.

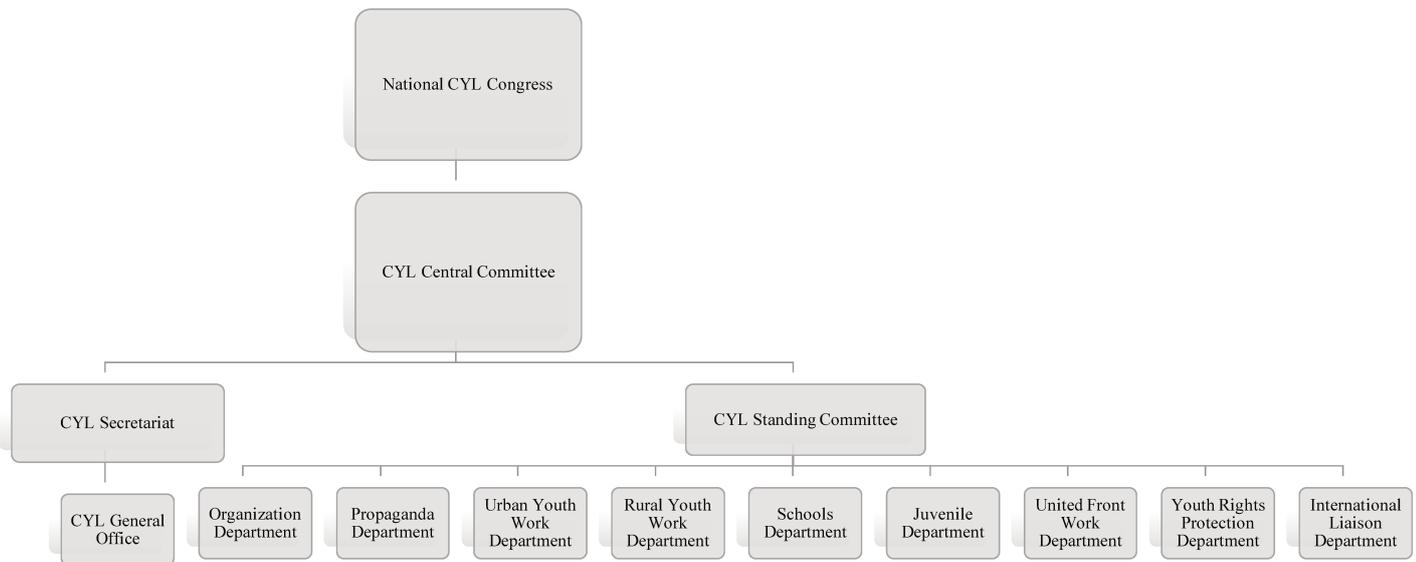
³³¹ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 87.

³³² Leader, "The Communist Youth League and the Cultural Revolution," 709.

³³³ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 88.

³³⁴ Rosen, "Prosperity, Privatization, and China's Youth," 4.

Figure 1.2: The central level Communist Youth League's organizational structure³³⁵



The central CYL has now nine functional departments in charge of the various missions of the organization. Five departments are in charge of specific activities of the organization, targeted at certain groups of young people or aspects of youth life. The Juvenile Department is in charge of children work and deals with the Young Pioneers of China. The Urban Youth Work Department and its rural counterpart are in charge of specific activities targeting these different groups of young people. The Schools Department is in charge of the relationship with CYL committees in high schools and universities. Finally, the Youth Rights Protection Department deals with juridical issues and serves as a communication platform with the legal institutions for cases of youth crime or youth mistreatment.³³⁶

The four other departments are standard organs which can also be found in the CCP central organization. The Organization Department manages the inner workings of the organization and its human resources. The Propaganda Department deals with the circulation of the official message and the promotion of the activities of the CYL. The United Front Work Department is in charge of the relationship with the non CYL groups, and more particularly manages the All-China Youth Federation. Finally, the International Liaison Department supervises the relationships with foreign organizations.

³³⁵ Wu Qing (吴庆), *Guide towards League Spirit 2012 (tuanqing zhinan, 团情指南 2012)* (Beijing: China Youth Press, 2012), 250.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

In addition to these functional departments, just like the CCP organization, the CYL has a General Office which oversees several smaller offices, for instance the office in charge of the organization's finances or the one regrouping the leaders' aids. With some local adaptations this overall organization is reproduced at the CYL lower echelons, from the provincial level down.

Beyond its own organizational structure, the central CYL is directly in charge of twenty other units controlling various services. For instance, just like the Party, the CYL has its own school, the Central Youth League School, which trains the organization's officials,³³⁷ and its own press agency, the Chinese Youth press agency (*Zhongguo qingnian baoshe*, 中国青年报社).³³⁸ This press agency, as well as the CYL's publishing house China Youth Press (*Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe*, 中国青年出版社), are in charge of the printed propaganda of the CYL. Its two main publications are the newspaper *China Youth Daily* and the magazine *China Youth*. As the most important propaganda organs of the Youth League, they aim at systematically educate the younger generation according to the League's directives, as well as conveying the organization's instructions and policies to lower level units all over the country.³³⁹

They both stopped publication in 1966, when the CYL virtually disappeared, and they started to publish again in 1978. The *China Youth Daily* is still one of the most important newspapers in China, with a circulation of around one million copies a day.³⁴⁰ While their content progressively evolved with the market liberalization,³⁴¹ they remained the main propaganda organs of the CYL, diffusing information about its activities and its organizational life. With the economic reforms these publications have only partially evolved, similarly to the major CCP propaganda organs, such as the *People's Daily*.³⁴² The CYL organization overall follows the blueprint of the Party and its evolutions. I detail in Chapter Six how this can also

³³⁷ I come back to the CYL cadres training in the Third Part of the dissertation.

³³⁸ Ibid., 51.

³³⁹ Regarding the content of the magazine *China Youth* during the Mao era, see : Townsend, *The Revolutionization of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-Nien*.

³⁴⁰ See the official presentation of the *China Youth Daily*, on its website: <http://www.cyol.net/home/english/intro/daily.htm> (consulted on 17 February 2016).

³⁴¹ According to a systematic study of the content of the magazine *China Youth* between 1980 and 2009, its articles are less about politics and more about economic issues. It increasingly targets a urban and cultivated audience from the coastal parts of the country (Wang Xiaodao (王晓焘), "Evolution of the Characteristics of Youth Media (*qingnian meiti xingxiang de techeng yu bianqian*, 青年媒体形象的特征与变迁)," *China Youth Studies* 4 (2011): 54–60.

³⁴² On the evolution of the CCP's propaganda organs since the 1980s, see : Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

be noticed at the lower levels of the organization and how it is tied to the transformation of the CYL cadres' profile.

b) The more the better: the quantitative development of the organization

After its reestablishment in 1978, the Youth League also pursued the expansion of its membership and local structures all over the country. The figures in Table 1.1 represent this quantitative expansion. While these official statistics remain questionable in their accuracy, they give us a glimpse of the large trends and evolutions within the League. Since 1949, the Youth League has constantly increased its membership as well as its local implantation with more cadres and grassroots units. While soon after the establishment of the New Democratic Youth League in 1949 its membership was still low, it then quickly surpassed the Party's. In the 1950s, the Youth League membership was largely superior to the Party's. The membership expansion was particularly rapid at that time, going from three to twenty five million members between 1950 and 1959.³⁴³

But starting in the 1960s the increase has gone slower relative to the exploding numbers of Party members. Healy underlined that at that time the organization's main goal was consolidation, and especially the strengthening of the League in rural areas, rather than membership expansion.³⁴⁴ Interestingly, local structures of the Youth League remained active during the Cultural Revolution and the organization membership did not collapse between 1966 and 1978. Due to the recruitment waves of the early 1970s that I mentioned earlier, the figure actually increased over this period.

³⁴³ Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966," 114.

³⁴⁴ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 65.

Table 1.1: Quantitative evolution of the CYL organization (1949-2013)³⁴⁵

| Congress | Year | CCP members | CYL members | Full-time CYL cadres ³⁴⁶ | CYL local units ³⁴⁷ |
|------------------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 6 th | 1949 | 4.5 million | 190 000 | missing | missing |
| 7 th | 1953 | 6.4 million | 9 million | missing | 380,000 |
| 8 th | 1957 | 11 million | 23 million | 80,000 | 920,000 |
| 9 th | 1964 | 18 million | 32 million | missing | 1,300,000 |
| 10 th | 1978 | 36 million | 48 million | 150,200 | 2,127,000 |
| 11 th | 1982 | 39 million | 48 million | 184,716 | 2,265,000 |
| 12 th | 1988 | 47 million | 56 million | 208,027 | 2,569,000 |
| 13 th | 1993 | 53 million | 56 million | 227,546 | 2,700,000 |
| 14 th | 1998 | 61 million | 68 million | 213,695 | 2,766,000 |
| 15 th | 2003 | 68 million | 69 million | 183,000 | 3,157,000 |
| 16 th | 2008 | 75 million | 75 million | 190,000 | 2,946,000 |
| 17 th | 2013 | 85 million | 89 million | 250,000 | 3,590,000 |

³⁴⁵ The indicated figures are the ones officially released at the given year, which generally cover the actual statistics of the previous year. Some figures were not available regarding the number of CYL cadres or local units. Sources for the Table : “Collection of the yearly League statistics, (*tuan linian shuju tongji huizong*, 团历年数据统计汇总),” *CCP News website*, available on : <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/242358/242770/17735465.html> (consulted on 18 February 2016) ; “China's Communist Party Membership Exceeds 85 million,” *Xinhua*, July 1, 2013 ; “Comrade Wang Zhaoguo’s Work Report at the 11th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Wang Zhaoguo tongzhi zai Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiyi ci quanguo daibiao dahui shang de gongzuo baogao*, 王兆国同志在中国共产主义青年团第十一次全国代表大会上的工作报告),” Congress of the CYL, 20 December 1982 ; “Comrade Li Keqiang’s Report at the 13th Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Li Keqiang tongzhi zai Gongqingtuan di shisan ci quanguo daibiao dahui shang de baogao*, 李克强同志在共青团第十三次全国代表大会上的报告),” Congress of the CYL, 03 May 1993 ; “Report at the 14th Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zai Gongqingtuan di shisi ci quanguo daibiao dahui shang de baogao*, 在共青团第十四次全国代表大会上的报告),” Congress of the CYL, 19 June 1998 ; “Report at the 15th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zai Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan di shiwu ci quanguo daibiao dahui shang de baogao*, 在中国共产主义青年团第十五次全国代表大会上的报告),” Congress of the CYL, 22 July 2003 ; Li Yuanchao, “Speech at the first Plenum of the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zai Gongqingtuan shiqi jie yi zhongquanhui shang de jianghua*, 在共青团十七届一中全会上的讲话),” *China Youth Daily*, June 24, 2013 ; “Report at the 16th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zai Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan di shiliu ci quanguo daibiao dahui shang de baogao*, 在中国共产主义青年团第十六次全国代表大会上的报告),” Congress of the CYL, 10 June 2008. Funnell, “The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966,” 128; Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 66; Shaoguang Wang and Jianyu He, “Training Ground for Democracy : Associational Life in China,” in *State and Civil Society the Chinese Perspective*, ed. Zhenglai Deng (Singapore; Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2010), 271–310; Lance Gore, *The Chinese Communist Party and China’s Capitalist Revolution: The Political Impact of the Market* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 3; Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu*, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究), 167.

³⁴⁶ No data is available for the whole period regarding the number of part-time CYL cadres, who are not remunerated as CYL officials.

³⁴⁷ The local units include the local CYL branches, general branches, as well as committees.

The CYL and CCP memberships eventually reached quasi equality in the 1990s, and since then they tended to evolve at a similar trend. As it only includes young people, the CYL membership represents a much large percentage of its targeted demographic than the CCP membership.³⁴⁸ Since 1982, the CYL membership has been more or less equal to 25% of Chinese young people between 14 and 28 years old.³⁴⁹ The organization hence expanded its coverage compared to the 1950s and 1960s when it represented around 20% of its age group.³⁵⁰ In fact, since the late 1980s, the competition to enter the CYL is largely presented as less fierce. According to Rosen, entry in the CYL is less competitive as membership itself does not bring any advantages in terms of access to education or jobs.³⁵¹ As I highlight in the different chapters of the dissertation, this is far from true for people who actually work for the CYL as cadres, and are not mere members.

The CYL also followed the evolution of the CCP regarding its social composition. Gore showed that the number of workers and peasants drastically decreased within the CCP since the 1920s. In 2008, the workers only amounted to 9.7% of its membership and the peasants to 31.1%. The remainder includes mostly professionals from the service sector, Party-State officials and retirees.³⁵² Following this same trend, in 2007 only 7.3% of the CYL membership came from the industry sector and 26.9% from young peasants. The service sector stood for 14.4% of the total membership. The majority of the CYL membership was made of students (51.3%).³⁵³ By comparison, in 1954, half of the CYL's membership was constituted of rural

³⁴⁸ In 2015, the CCP membership only represented 6.54% of the overall Chinese population (Statistics regarding CCP membership can be found on the website *Statista*: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/250090/share-of-chinese-communist-party-ccp-members-in-chinese-population/> (consulted on 10 August 2016)).

³⁴⁹ “Comrade Wang Zhaoguo’s Work Report at the 11th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Wang zhaoguo tongzhi zai Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiyi ci quanguo daibiao dahui shang de gongzuo baogao*, 王兆国同志在中国共产主义青年团第十一次全国代表大会上的工作报告),” Congress of the CYL, 20 December 1982 ; Sofia Graziani, “A Study of China’s Communist Youth League Adaptation in the Reform Era (1978-2011)” (New European Research on Contemporary China Conference, Beijing, 2012).

³⁵⁰ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 50; Pringsheim, “The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949),” 15.

³⁵¹ Stanley Rosen, “Students and the State in China: The Crisis in Ideology and Organization,” in *State and Society in China: The Consequences of Reform*, ed. Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 167–191.

³⁵² Gore, *The Chinese Communist Party and China’s Capitalist Revolution: The Political Impact of the Market*, 133.

³⁵³ “The CYL Membership has Already Reached 75,439,000 (*Zhongguo Gongqingtuan tuanyuan renshu yi dadao 7543.9 wan*, 中国共青团团员人数已达到 7543.9 万人),” *Xinhua*, May 4, 2008. It can be accessed here: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2008-05/04/content_8104045.htm (consulted on 18 August 2016).

youth.³⁵⁴ In addition, the gender proportion is rather balanced, with 46.2% of female members in 2007.³⁵⁵

The expansion of the CYL membership went together with an increasing number of local units of the organization, and of CYL cadres. Still, starting in the 1990s, the number of CYL officials dropped. This is linked to the reforms of the public sector enterprises launched in 1997, which led to the dismantlement of several SOEs and hence CYL units.³⁵⁶ It then started to increase again in the 2000s. It is important to note that the figures given here are for full-time CYL officials who are in charge of managing the organization at its different echelons and get a salary for it. In numerous cases, in most State-owned enterprises for instance, the CYL units are fully or partly managed by part-time cadres who also have another position to which their salary is attached. This practice is extremely widespread and I come back to it in the Second Part of the dissertation in the case of SOEs. A study of county level CYL committees noted that, in 2008, they had on average only two full-time cadres, in addition to several part-time ones.³⁵⁷ In 2013 the organization numbered overall 500,000 part-time cadres in addition to its 250,000 full-time officials.³⁵⁸ Still, these figures remain extremely low compared to the number of members these cadres are supposed to manage. It should be noted that for similarly high membership figures, the number of CYL cadres is particularly low compared to the CCP cadre corps. In 2013 the CYL had 250,000 full time officials to manage 89 million members, and the CCP had 27 million officials for 85 million CCP members. While these figures are not completely comparable as it is impossible to really dissociate Party and State officials, this gap highlights the CYL's lack of organizational power.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 38.

³⁵⁵ “The CYL Membership has Already Reached 75,439,000 (*Zhongguo Gongqingtuan tuanyuan renshu yi dadao 7543.9 wan*, 中国共青团团员人数已达到 7543.9 万人).”

³⁵⁶ Research team of the CYL (*tuan zhongyang ketizu*, 团中央课题组), “Opportunities and Reactions Faced by the CYL Organization in a Liberalizing Economy (*shichang jingji tiaojianxia Gongqingtuan zuzhi mianlin de jiuyi, tiaozhan yu duice*, 市场经济条件下共青团基层组织面临的机遇、挑战与对策),” *China Youth Studies* 1 (2001): 39–46.

³⁵⁷ Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu*, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究), 167.

³⁵⁸ Li Yuanchao, “Speech at the First Plenum of the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zai Gongqingtuan shiqi jie yi zhongquanhui shang de jianghua*, 在共青团十七届一中全会上的讲话).”

³⁵⁹ The figure of 27 million given by Cabestan is based on official Chinese sources and includes the Party-State cadres (who are around 60 million in total) who are at the same time Party members. Based on a publication of the CCP Central Organization Department, Brødsgaard reported the figure of 40 million Party-State cadres in 1998, among which 15 million were Party members (Cabestan, *Le système politique chinois: un nouvel équilibre autoritaire [The Chinese political system: a new authoritarian equilibrium]*, 403; Brødsgaard, “Management of Party Cadres in China,” 73.

Despite its very large membership base, I now highlight the ways in which the CCP maintains a tight control over its youth organization. The organization's "lack of power and lack of funds" (*meiquan meiqian*, 没权没钱) was stressed by all my interviewees, from the different levels of the organization.

2) The dependence of the CYL is engraved in its structure

a) The League 's "lack of power"

The CYL's activities, its leadership and its budget are controlled by the CCP.³⁶⁰ This relationship of dependence towards the CCP is well exemplified by the organization of the CYL National Congresses. Since 1982, the CYL congress always meets three to nine months after the CCP congress and its content mirrors the one of the CCP. For instance, the 18th Congress of the CCP took place in November 2012 and the 17th Congress of the CYL in June 2013.

In addition to leadership change, the National Congress is the occasion for the CYL to incorporate the new political direction given by the CCP. Since the 1980s, a CCP Politburo Standing Committee member, who is in charge of the relationship with the CYL, gives an opening speech presenting the Party's expectations to the CYL representatives. This task fell to Hu Qili in 1988,³⁶¹ to Hu Jintao in 1993³⁶² and 1998,³⁶³ to Wu Guangzheng in 2003,³⁶⁴ to Li Changchun in 2008³⁶⁵ and to Liu Yunshan in 2013.³⁶⁶ The short delay in-between CCP and CYL congresses also allows the CYL to integrate into its charter the new Party's political theories and slogans. Jiang Zemin's theory of the "three represents" (*sange daibiao*, 三个代

³⁶⁰ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013.

³⁶¹ "The 12th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shi'er quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十二次全国代表大会)," Website of the central CYL (www.gqt.org.cn, consulted on 2 December 2015).

³⁶² "The 13th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shisan quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十三次全国代表大会)," Website of the central CYL (www.gqt.org.cn, consulted on 2 December 2015).

³⁶³ "The 14th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shisi quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十四次全国代表大会)," Website of the central CYL (www.gqt.org.cn, consulted on 2 December 2015).

³⁶⁴ "The 15th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiwu quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十五次全国代表大会)," Website of the central CYL (www.gqt.org.cn, consulted on 2 December 2015).

³⁶⁵ "The 16th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiliu quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十六次全国代表大会)," Website of the central CYL (www.gqt.org.cn, consulted on 2 December 2015).

³⁶⁶ "The 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiqi quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十七次全国代表大会)," Website of the central CYL (www.gqt.org.cn, consulted on 2 December 2015).

表),³⁶⁷ ratified by the 16th Party Congress in 2002,³⁶⁸ was for instance included within the CYL's charter at its 15th Congress in 2003.³⁶⁹ Also, Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" (*Zhongguo meng*, 中国梦), popularized since the end of 2012,³⁷⁰ was added to the CYL's charter at its 17th Congress in 2013.³⁷¹

In addition to controlling its agenda, the CCP selects the CYL leaders at every echelon of the organization. At the central level, while the CYL secretaries are formally elected by its Central Committee, it is in practice the CCP leaders who select them as these are key positions. The decision is made at the level of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee, and largely influenced by its member in charge of the relationship with the CYL.³⁷² The CYL lower ranked cadres, the department directors and below, are managed by the organization itself.

This configuration is reproduced at the lower levels of the organization, in local CYL committees, such as at the provincial or municipal level, but also within units, such as firms or schools.³⁷³ A local CYL committee is under the "leadership" (*lingdao*, 领导) of both the upper level CYL committee and the CCP committee at the same level.³⁷⁴ The CCP committees actually manage at every level the CYL committees, on a similar pattern as at the central echelon. A CCP deputy secretary at the local level is in charge of the relationship with the CYL³⁷⁵ while the CCP committee is responsible for the promotion of the local CYL secretary and deputy secretaries.³⁷⁶ The latter are treated just like local CCP department directors.

³⁶⁷ The "three represents" is a political theory introduced by Jiang Zemin in 2000. The theory led to a major shift in the Party's recruitment policy, expanding it to businessmen from the private sector. On the "three represents", see : Fewsmith, "Studying the Three Represents."

³⁶⁸ "Synopsis of the 16th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party" (*Zhongguo gongchandang di shiliu ci quanguo daibiao dahui jianjie*, 中国共产党第十六次全国代表大会简介)," *Website of the central CCP* (<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64569/65444/6346418.html>, consulted on 2 December 2015).

³⁶⁹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 26 July 2003.

³⁷⁰ Besides mirroring the idea of an American dream, this formula put forward by Xi Jinping remains unclear in its practical implications. On the "Chinese Dream" and the debate regarding its implications, see: "Xi Jinping and the Chinese Dream," *The Economist*, May 4, 2013.

³⁷¹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013.

³⁷² Interview with cadre 9, also see : Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres," 90.

³⁷³ The CYL also has cells in the People's Liberation Army. The situation is there partly different as in addition to the dual control of the CCP committee and the upper level CYL committee, it is also under the power of the Youth Section of the PLA's Political Department. The activities of the CYL in the military are therefore highly controlled by the PLA itself (Funnell, "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949–1966," 123.

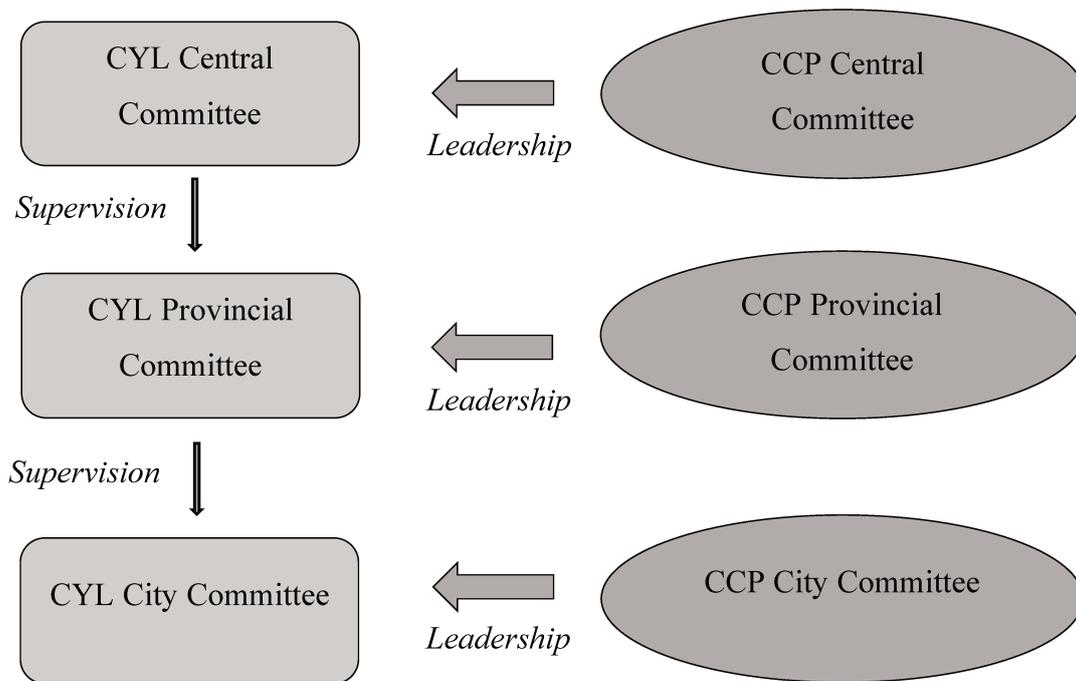
³⁷⁴ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013.

³⁷⁵ Interviews with cadre 28, cadre 37, cadre 42.

³⁷⁶ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 144.

According to the “one level downward” cadre management system (*xia guan yi ji*, 下管一级), the department directors - being one full rank below the Party committee secretary - are under the leadership of the CCP secretary who makes appointment and promotion decision with the help of the Organization Department.³⁷⁷

Figure 1.3 Authority linkages between the CCP and the CYL and the various echelons



While the upper level CYL unit has a supervision function, it has very little power. According to my interviews, the main channels through which the upper level CYL committee can influence the units below is by transmitting to the relevant CCP committee a bad evaluation of the CYL cadres or by limiting the exceptional funding it can give for specific activities. If a local CYL committee has to choose between conflicting orders given by the upper level CYL committee and by the local CCP committee, it will follow the Party.³⁷⁸ I come back to the evaluation procedure of CYL officials and the role played by the upper level CYL organ in Chapter Six.

³⁷⁷ On the “one level downward” cadre management system, see :Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party’s Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*, 88; Qingjie Zeng, “Democratic Procedures in the CCP’s Cadre Selection Process: Implementation and Consequences,” *The China Quarterly*, November 2015, 1–27.

³⁷⁸ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 28, cadre 37, and cadre 42.

At the level of the CYL officials themselves this control is palpable. The CYL leaders are both CYL and CCP members. Since 1982, the maximum limit of 28 years old for CYL membership is officially not applicable to CYL cadres.³⁷⁹ As long as they work in the CYL, they remain members and have to pay their membership dues. Since the same year, the CCP's charter stipulates that at the local level, including within enterprises or service units, the CYL secretaries must be CCP members.³⁸⁰ It guarantees the Party's control over the CYL leadership. This dual affiliation system also exists for CYL members who enter the CCP: until 28 years old they can retain membership in the CYL along with Party membership. Past 28 years old they are not CYL members anymore, unless they are CYL cadres.³⁸¹

A reform was proposed in the 1980s in order to change this situation of dependence of the League from the Party. A wider reform proposal put forward by Zhao Ziyang, in 1987 then the Party Central Committee General Secretary, included recommendations for a greater autonomy for mass organizations. In 1988, it took shape into a plan for a reform of the CYL, involving more internal democracy and decision power over its own activities.³⁸² The reform plan was set aside after the repression of the Tiananmen movement in 1989.³⁸³ The repression of 1989 had in fact a strong impact on the CYL.

The Tiananmen movement was seen as a symbol of the failure of the CYL's control over the youth. It was particularly criticized as being indulgent towards the students and too loosely organized in the 1980s.³⁸⁴ Rosen noted that a conference on CYL work in 1980 admitted that 30% of the 2.2 million local units countrywide were badly organized or even paralyzed.³⁸⁵ Ch'i reported that in 1984, only a minority of grassroots CYL secretaries were CCP members

³⁷⁹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 24 December 1982.

³⁸⁰ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhangcheng*, 中国共产党章程)," Congress of the CCP, 6 September 1982.

³⁸¹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013.

³⁸² "Basic Considerations Regarding the Systematic Reform of the Communist Youth League (*guanyu Gongqingtuan tizhigaige de jiben shexiang*, 关于共青团体制改革的基本设想)," Central CYL, 30 August 1988.

³⁸³ This document in particular called for the strengthening of Party control over the mass organizations: "Notice of the Central CCP Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the Party's Leadership over the Work of the Trade Union, the CYL and the Women Federation (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang he gaishan dang dui Gonghui, Gongqingtuan, Fulian gongzuo lingdao de tongzhi*, 中共中央关于加强和改善党对工会、共青团、妇联工作的通知)," Central CCP, 21 December 1989. On the reform plan and how it was not implemented, see: Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China: Political Reform in the Deng Xiaoping Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 235; Graziani, "A Study of China's Communist Youth League Adaptation in the Reform Era (1978-2011)."

³⁸⁴ Li, "China's Youth League Faction: Incubus of Power?"

³⁸⁵ Rosen, "Prosperity, Privatization, and China's Youth," 15.

as it was in theory the rule.³⁸⁶ This lack of political control allowed certain League officials to attempt rather liberal initiatives. The publication in 1980 by the League's newspaper, *China Youth Daily*, of a letter by Pan Xiao regarding the condition of young people in China was such an attempt.³⁸⁷ The letter was seen as critical of the current situation and Party-State policies. It triggered an intense debate as the newspaper received over 60.000 letters in the six months that followed, symbolizing the declining political orthodoxy within the CYL at the time.³⁸⁸

As a parallel, Dingxin Zhao and Xueliang Ding highlighted the declining control capacity of the CYL on campus before the Tiananmen movement. According to Zhao, the CCP's youth organizations on campus became "amphibious" in the 1980s: they were captured and diverted from their original role of student control.³⁸⁹ For example, campus CYL units organized reformist conferences and supported liberal journals.³⁹⁰ In addition to providing them with mobilization capabilities, the youth organizations on campus helped to develop the students' political culture.³⁹¹ This amphibiousness of the organizations eventually became a facilitating element towards the 1989 movement.³⁹² However, this relaxation of political control was only a parenthesis during which CYL units won some autonomy in practice. The Repression of 1989 brought it back to its former situation, under the CCP's rule.

b) The League's "lack of money"

Another feature of the CYL's organizational weakness is its lack of funds. As acknowledged by the CYL's own researchers, it is considered a poor organization.³⁹³ When comparing with another of the Party's mass organizations, the 2015 budget of the central CYL (583 million RMB) stands for only 26.4% of the 2015 budget of the All-China Federation of

³⁸⁶ Hsi-sheng Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 148.

³⁸⁷ Pan Xiao is actually the contraction of the names of the two real young authors Pan Xiaojun (黄晓菊) and Pan Yi (潘祎) (interview with academic 6).

³⁸⁸ For more details on the letter and the debate that followed, see : Rosen, "Prosperity, Privatization, and China's Youth," 12; Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 111.

³⁸⁹ Zhao, "Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement," 170.

³⁹⁰ Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989*, 99.

³⁹¹ Francis, "The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University"; Wasserstrom and Liu, "Student Associations and Mass Movements."

³⁹² Zhao, "Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement," 161; Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989*, 99; Wasserstrom and Liu, "Student Associations and Mass Movements," 362-93.

³⁹³ Research team of the CYL (*tuan zhongyang ketizu, 团中央课题组*), "Opportunities and Reactions Faced by the CYL Organization in a Liberalizing Economy (*shichang jingji tiaojianxia Gongqingtuan zuzhi mianlin de jiuyu, tiaozhan yu duice, 市场经济条件下共青团基层组织面临的机遇、挑战与对策*)," 42.

Trade Union (2 billion RMB).³⁹⁴ As noted by Zhang Hua, the ACFTU has a large source of revenue protected by the Trade Union Law of the People's Republic of China.³⁹⁵ Every workplace has to direct the equivalent of 2% of the overall salaries of its employees towards the ACFTU.³⁹⁶ There is no legal equivalent for the CYL.

The CYL has only few sources of revenue. The day to day functioning of the organization relies on the membership dues it collects as well as funds from the Party-State. At every echelon, the CYL premises and the salaries of its officials are funded by the State, just like a government office.³⁹⁷ For instance, a CYL city level committee has around thirty officials on its payroll³⁹⁸ (this figure is higher at the provincial level).³⁹⁹ The possibility to increase recruitment on its own payroll being extremely limited, the local CYL committees also recruit a large number of officials through its service units (*shiyè danwèi*, 事业单位).⁴⁰⁰ This practice is not unique to the CYL and is largely among by Party-State administrations, it allows more flexibility in recruitment.⁴⁰¹ For example, the Guizhou Province CYL Committee has 40 officials on its own payroll but almost 200 additional cadres actually work in its structures.⁴⁰² They are officially affiliated to units under the control of the CYL, such as the provincial level CYL school or volunteering center.⁴⁰³ These service units have their own budgets and payrolls

³⁹⁴ “2015 Budget of the Central CYL (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang 2015 nian bumén yúsuan*, 共青团中央 2015 年部门预算),” Central CYL website, April 17, 2015 (http://www.gqt.org.cn/notice/201504/t20150417_738048.htm, consulted on 22 February 2016); “Explication of the ACFTU’s Budget (*Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui bumén yúsuan shuoming* 中华全国总工会部门预算说明).” ACFTU website, April 17, 2015 (<http://www.acftu.org/template/10001/file.jsp?cid=809&aid=90506>, consulted on 22 February 2016).

³⁹⁵ On this topic, see: Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China* (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu*, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究), 170.

³⁹⁶ “Trade Union Law of the People’s Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gonghui fa*, 中华人民共和国工会法),” National People’s Congress, 27 October 2001. This is the law’s official English name.

³⁹⁷ The situation is more diverse for CYL committees within work units, such as firms or schools. As I describe in the Second Part, only few of the CYL cadres in such units are full time officials and a majority of them fulfill this function in addition to the actual position they get a salary for.

³⁹⁸ This figure varies depending on the city’s size and wealth, as well as its administrative ranking. The Nanjing CYL Committee, the wealthy capital of Jiangsu Province which has a vice-provincial ranking, has now 39 officials on its payroll. The Guiyang CYL Committee, the poorer capital of Guizhou, has only 25 (interviews with cadre 29 and cadre 37).

³⁹⁹ At the county level, the number of officials on the CYL payroll is much lower, between three and five according to my interviews (interviews with cadre 2, cadre 27, cadre 42, cadre 43).

⁴⁰⁰ See the entry “civil service system” in the glossary regarding the difference between cadres working in service units and civil servants, as well as on the status of CYL cadres.

⁴⁰¹ Yuen Yuen Ang, “Counting Cadres: A Comparative View of the Size of China’s Public Employment,” *The China Quarterly* 211 (2012): 676–96.

⁴⁰² Interviews with cadre 27 and cadre 29.

⁴⁰³ As I stress later in this chapter, the CYL manages large numbers of volunteers through these local agencies.

that are also funded by the Party-State at the relevant echelon.⁴⁰⁴ Their budgets can be highly superior to one of the CYL's unit they are affiliated to.⁴⁰⁵

In addition to the funds it gets from the State, the CYL can rely on the monthly due paid by its members. The due is collected at the very grassroots unit and is in part transmitted to the higher-level CYL units, up to the central level.⁴⁰⁶ The amount of the CYL membership due (*tuān fèi*, 团费), depends on the member's salary.⁴⁰⁷ An actual figure for the total amount collected every year is hard to estimate. Still, the collection of membership dues does not represent a major source of funding for the CYL. According to my interviews, it remains a funding channel of lesser importance than the money coming from the State.⁴⁰⁸ Research done by the CYL itself underlines the difficulty it has to collect membership dues.⁴⁰⁹

Beyond the funding of its day-to-day activities, the CYL can collect additional resources for specific activities. It can for instance get additional funds from the State in order to organize major activities, such as recruiting numerous volunteers for the 2008 Olympic Games,⁴¹⁰ or it can ask for private sponsorship for charity activities such as the construction of "Hope primary schools", which I develop at the end of this chapter.⁴¹¹ The sponsorship can come from very diverse sources, and is managed at various levels of the organization.⁴¹² For the activities organized by local CYL committees, at the county or city levels for instance, such sponsorship can easily come from the various firms linked to the CYL, such as the publishing house China Youth Press for cultural activities, or the "youth travel agencies" (*qīngnián lǚxíng shè*, 青年旅

⁴⁰⁴ Interviews with cadre 27 and cadre 29.

⁴⁰⁵ The Haidian District CYL Committee, in Beijing, had in 2012 a budget of around one million RMB while the volunteering federation under its supervision had a budget close to two million RMB (interview with cadre 2).

⁴⁰⁶ The grassroots units keep 50% of what they collect and then transmit it to the upper levels. The county level CYL units, and other units of equal rank, hence are supposed to receive 50% of the total amount. They keep half of it, 25% of the total, and transmit the rest to the upper level. The city level units receive 25% of the total, they keep 12,5% and transmit the other half to the upper level. The provincial level units receive 12,5% of the total, they keep 9,5% and the central level ends up with 3% of the total sum of membership dues ("Regulation Regarding the Payment and Management of the CYL Membership Dues (*guānyu tuān fèi jiāo nà hé guān lǐ shì yòng de guī dìng*, 关于团费交纳和管理使用的规定)," CYL Central Committee, 8 March 1994).

⁴⁰⁷ If the CYL member has no income, as a student for instance, he only has to pay 1 RMB per month. If his salary is below 400 RMB a month, the due represents 0,5% of it. If his salary is above 400 RMB, the due amounts to 1% of it ("Regulation Regarding the Payment and Management of the CYL Membership Dues (*guānyu tuān fèi jiāo nà hé guān lǐ shì yòng de guī dìng*, 关于团费交纳和管理使用的规定)," CYL Central Committee, 8 March 1994).

⁴⁰⁸ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 7, academic 19, and cadre 33.

⁴⁰⁹ Research team of the CYL (*tuān zhōng yāng kè tí zǔ*, 团中央课题组), "Opportunities and Reactions Faced by the CYL Organization in a Liberalizing Economy (*shì chāng jīng jì tiào jiàn xià gōng qīng tuān zǔ zhī miǎn lín de jī yù, tiào zhān yú duì cè*, 市场经济条件下共青团基层组织面临的机遇、挑战与对策)," 152.

⁴¹⁰ The recruitment and management of 1.7 million volunteers for the 2008 Olympic Games was in large part supervised by the CYL (G. Pak Lei Chong, "Volunteers as the 'New' Model Citizens: Governing Citizens through Soft Power," *China Information* 25, no. 1 (March 2011): 33–59).

⁴¹¹ Interviews with cadre 2 and cadre 33.

⁴¹² I come back to this question of the sponsorship of CYL managed student activities in the Second Part.

行社) for projects with touristic implications. Still, these funds can only be used for specific activities and not for the day-to-day functioning of the organization.⁴¹³

To conclude, the CYL is highly dependent on the Party-State for its funding. In that respect the situation did not change with the reestablishment of the League in 1978 or with the economic reforms that followed. In addition to being organizationally dependent, the CYL does not set the agenda regarding the development of its own activities. As I develop in the section below, it responds to the Party's needs rather than developing its own projects.

3) Old wine in a new bottle: the League's modes of action

a) The League's activities evolve with the Party's needs

Since the founding of the PRC, the CYL has been active in a variety of sectors, from economy to education, depending on the Party-State's needs. With the first PRC five-year plan issued in 1953, the CYL became focused on the development of agricultural and industrial production as evidenced by the sending of 2,500 volunteers from Beijing to Heilongjiang Province in an operation starting in 1955 to "reclaim wastelands" (*kaihuang*, 开荒) for local agriculture. Between 1955 and 1956, 210,000 young volunteers from the coastal provinces were sent by the CYL to the North West provinces to participate in its local industrial development.⁴¹⁴ Taskforces of young people managed by the CYL were created to help establishing local factories. Around 7,500 of these groups were active during the first five-year plan, equaling to a total of 135,000 participants.⁴¹⁵ The League also established supervision teams in factories and mines to support the CCP and the local Trade Union units in monitoring labor discipline, avoiding accidents, and limiting resource waste.⁴¹⁶

Parallel to these production-oriented activities, the CYL was also very active in the development of education and cultural activities. It participated in a large-scale alphabetization campaign launched in 1955, sending educated young people to villages as teachers.⁴¹⁷ A joint directive from the Youth League and the Ministry of Culture, issued in 1956, also pushed for the development of cultural activities in rural areas. In every county, the Youth League

⁴¹³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 7 and cadre 33.

⁴¹⁴ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 67.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴¹⁶ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 44.

⁴¹⁷ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 69.

therefore participated in the establishment of local newspapers, libraries, cinemas and other cultural organs.⁴¹⁸

After 1978, the Youth League resumed its activities. Interestingly, the economic reforms which started in the 1980s, did not transform significantly its overall functioning. The League continued to answer the Party's needs in terms of education and production-boosting activities. It became active in the movement of the "four modernizations"⁴¹⁹ launched by Deng Xiaoping from 1979 onwards.⁴²⁰ The CYL organized numerous training programs or innovation competitions directed at rural or urban youth.⁴²¹

With the development of the reforms, new issues emerged and the Youth League had to adapt its activities consequently. For instance, in 1997, Beijing announced a reform of the State-owned enterprises. It aimed at reorganize the large SOEs to be able to operate following the market rules, while the smaller ones would be privatized. The reform created a major unemployment problem and the central Party-State called for diverse organs, including mass organizations, to help laid off workers to find new jobs.⁴²² As a result, the CYL launched in 1998 the "Chinese Young Entrepreneurs Operation" (*Zhongguo qingnian chuangye xingdong*, 中国青年创业行动). It provided training and financial help to a large number of entrepreneurs as a way to curb unemployment. Between 1998 and 2004, 2 million young entrepreneurs were trained and 200,000 received financial help.⁴²³

The Chinese economy was also facing the issue of environment protection. Starting in the late 1990s, it became a major problem from the Party-State's point of view. The State Environment Protection Administration was established in 1998 as a ministerial level government agency, taking over the function of the National Environmental Protection Agency

⁴¹⁸ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 47.

⁴¹⁹ Rosen, "Prosperity, Privatization, and China's Youth," 6.

⁴²⁰ The four modernizations launched by Deng Xiaoping in late 1978 aimed at developing four major fields of the Chinese economy: agriculture, industry, defense, as well as science and technology. On Deng's economic reforms, see: Ezra F Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 377.

⁴²¹ On these various projects, see : Luo Chengquan (罗成全), *The Communist Youth League in the high tide of China's reforms, 1978-1994* (*Zhongguo gaige dachao zhong de Gongqingtuan*, 中国改革大潮中的共青团, 1978-1994) (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1996); Li Yuqi (李玉琦), *Short Story of the Chinese Communist Youth League* (*Zhongguo Gongqingtuan shigao*, 中国共青团史稿), 300-320; Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League* (*zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 92-99.

⁴²² Xiaobo Hu, "The State, Enterprises, and Society in Post-Deng China: Impact of the New Round of SOE Reform," *Asian Survey* 40, no. 4 (2000): 641-57.

⁴²³ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League* (*zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 112.

which was of a lesser administrative ranking.⁴²⁴ As a result, the CYL became very active in environment protection. This is well symbolized by the “Mother River Protection Operation” (*Baohu muqin he xingdong*, 保护母亲河行动) launched in 1999 by the CYL and the central government to raise funds and recruit volunteers to protect the environment around the country’s main rivers. Between 1999 and 2005, 250 million RMB were collected and 300 million young volunteers participated in the project, in reforestation activities among others.⁴²⁵

This last example underlines a certain continuity in the content of the League’s activities, even though the framing changed. Reforestation was already a common practice of the CYL in the 1950s, and it reemerged in the 1980s, even before these new environmental projects. The main difference is that it was at the time considered as part of the agricultural modernization effort rather than environment protection.⁴²⁶ Focusing on specific programs of political education, I now get into the details and limits of this continuity in CYL’s actions.

b) From Lei Feng to volunteers

The continuity in the CYL’s modes of actions, though the framing has changed in the context of the reform era, is perfectly exemplified by the filiation between the “learn from Lei Feng campaign” and contemporary volunteering operations. In 1993, the CYL launched the “Young Volunteers Operation” (*Qingnian zhiyuanzhe xingdong*, 青年志愿者行动). The goal was to recruit a large number of young volunteers at various levels of the organization and to direct them at various projects, aiming for instance at poverty alleviation, education assistance, or environment protection. In 1994, a new association under the CYL’s supervision was created to manage the operation, the China Youth Volunteer Association (*Zhongguo qingnian zhiyuanzhe xiehui*, 中国青年志愿者协会). The operation implied several projects over the years, such as the “Chinese Youth Volunteers Poverty-Elimination Relay Project” (*Zhongguo qingnian zhiyuanzhe fupin jieli jihua*, 中国青年志愿者扶贫接力计划) initiated in 1996 to channel urban young volunteers to provide education and medical assistance in the country’s

⁴²⁴ In 2008, it became the Ministry of Environmental Protection (“SEPA Gets Stronger,” *China.org.cn*, March 10, 2008).

⁴²⁵ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 113.

⁴²⁶ In 1955 and 1956, one hundred twenty million young people managed by the CYL participated to the reforestation efforts across the country. Again between 1984 and 1991, two hundred million young people participated in reforestation work across the country (Ibid., 99).

poorest counties, or the “One-helps-One” (*yizhuyi*, 一助一) project, which has been aiming since 1994 at providing regular assistance to the elderly and disabled in local communities.⁴²⁷

As noted by Sofia Graziani, the Young Volunteers Operation also gained momentum as part of the emphasis on socialist morality and the construction of an “Harmonious Society” (*Hexie shehui*, 和谐社会) under Hu Jintao.⁴²⁸ Since then, other large scale projects have been put forward, such as the “CYL Volunteering Operation in Taking Care of the Children of Rural Migrant Workers” (*Gongqingtuan guan'ai nongmingong ziniu zhiyuanzhe xingdong*, 共青团关爱农民工子女志愿服务行动) initiated in 2010. More than 5 million volunteers have been mobilized at the county level to help in various forms and around 200 million RMB have been collected for this project. Volunteers have also been called for disaster relief operations and large international events, such as the Wenchuan earthquake of 2008 that mobilized more than 4 million volunteers. In 2008, 1.7 million volunteers took part in the Olympic Games, and they were largely recruited and managed by the CYL.⁴²⁹ In 2010, more than 2 million volunteers took part in the Shanghai World Expo. Overall, since a formalized registering system for volunteers has been established in 2001, more than 40 million have been recorded.⁴³⁰

The Young Volunteers Operation was launched as part of a larger CCP policy aiming at regaining control over young people after the evolution of the 1980s and the Tiananmen mobilizations.⁴³¹ Already in the early 1980s, the CYL officials were stressing how their work became harder due to the increasing influence of “western concepts” over young people.⁴³² In 1993, Li Keqiang, then CYL Central Committee First Secretary, launched the Volunteering Operation to tackle this issue. According to a senior academic of the Central Youth League School who was active in the central organization of the CYL at the time, it has largely been seen as a very clever way to attract more young people within the League’s grasp. It mixes a liberal framing, giving the young people the impression that the idea to be useful to the

⁴²⁷ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 41; Graziani, “A Study of China’s Communist Youth League Adaptation in the Reform Era (1978-2011).”

⁴²⁸ The Harmonious Society campaign, launched by Hu Jintao in 2005, has been largely described as a new approach toward governance in the Chinese context emphasizing social welfare policies and social stability. On the Harmonious Society campaign, see: Shambaugh, *China’s Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, 118–119.

⁴²⁹ G. Pak Lei Chong, “Volunteers as the ‘New’ Model Citizens: Governing Citizens through Soft Power,” *China Information* 25, no. 1 (March 2011): 33–59.

⁴³⁰ “Report on the 20 years of the China young Volunteers Operation (*Zhongguo qingnian zhiyuanzhe xingdong 20 nian baogao*, 中国青年志愿者行动20年报告),” *China Youth Daily*, December 5, 2013.

⁴³¹ On the broader conjuncture, see: Rosen, “Students and the State in China: The Crisis in Ideology and Organization,” 167–191.

⁴³² Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 149.

community comes from them, with classical references to socialist morality.⁴³³ The reference to the “Learn from Lei Feng” campaign (*xue Leifeng*, 学雷锋) of the 1960s is in fact omnipresent in the new volunteering program. The document initiating the operation stated that the “Young Volunteers Operation is the enrichment and development of the Learn from Lei Feng campaign under the conditions of a Socialist market economy.”⁴³⁴

The Learn from Lei Feng (*xue Leifeng*, 学雷锋) campaign was launched by Mao in 1963 and largely managed by the CYL. It was named after a soldier of the PLA who died in 1962. He was presented as a national hero, characterized by his selflessness and his devotion to the Party and the country.⁴³⁵ *The People’s Daily* published his diary in 1963 and an exhibition about his life was organized. It attracted 800,000 visitors.⁴³⁶ The campaign pushed for young people to give some of their time to take care of elderly, to teach people how to read, and other types of social work. May 5th officially became the Learn from Lei Feng day when people should be particularly active in such voluntary activities.⁴³⁷

Lei Feng later reemerged as a nationalistic emblem in the 1980s and even more clearly after 1989.⁴³⁸ In 2012, an “Opinion on deepening the development of the learn from Lei Feng campaign” (*guanyu shenru kaizhan xue Leifeng huodong de yijian*, 关于深入开展学雷锋活动的意见) was issued by the CCP. Highlighting that this campaign was far from dead, the document called for a strengthening of the propaganda regarding Lei Feng at the grassroots level, including, for instance, the installation of exhibitions in schools, the creation of artistic work about Lei Feng, the construction of memorial halls in various cities, or the establishment of an academic research center on Lei Feng. It also called for a widening of volunteering activities, underlining the filiation between the two campaigns.⁴³⁹

⁴³³ Interview with academic 21.

⁴³⁴ “Plan for the Strategic Development of Youth Work in the Course of Establishing the Socialist Market Economic System (*zai jianli shehui zhuyi shichang jingji tizhi jincheng zhong woguo qingnian gongzuo zhanlie fazhan guihua*, 在建立社会主义市场经济体制进程中我国青年工作战略发展规划),” Second Plenum of the Central Committee of the CYL’s 13th Congress, 7 December 1993.

⁴³⁵ On the campaign, see: Gay Garland Reed, “Moral/Political Education in the People’s Republic of China: Learning Through Role Models.,” *Journal of Moral Education* 24, no. 2 (1995): 99–111.

⁴³⁶ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 76.

⁴³⁷ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 68.

⁴³⁸ Rosen, “Prosperity, Privatization, and China’s Youth,” 1–28; Rosen, “The Effect of Post-4 June Re-Education Campaigns on Chinese Students,” 319.

⁴³⁹ “Opinion on Deepening the Development of the Learn from Lei Feng Campaign (*guanyu shenru kaizhan xue Leifeng huodong de yijian*, 关于深入开展学雷锋活动的意见),” Central Office of the CCP, 02 March 2012.

The continuity between the Learn from Lei Feng campaign and the contemporary Young Volunteers Operation goes beyond rhetoric. This filiation is also apparent in the way the campaigns are managed by the CYL. As shown by Reed, the different campaigns have in common to be based on role models, putting forward the personal history of Lei Feng or of exemplar young people in various locales.⁴⁴⁰ Also, in both cases, the voluntary activities are highly controlled by the CYL.⁴⁴¹ A CYL cadre who managed the volunteers in a Beijing district for the 2008 Olympic Games, stressed this control. The CYL set up centers in charge of controlling the volunteers at every echelons of the organization in order to supervise the recruitment and training of the volunteers. For major activities such as the Olympic Games, the agencies also have to report directly to the Party committees, which supervise their work.⁴⁴² In addition, organizational incentives are put forward to push young people to volunteer. In the Second Part of the dissertation I show for instance how students' grades can be influenced by their participation. Such continuity between the Mao era mass campaigns and the contemporary "managed campaigns" has been highlighted by Elizabeth Perry.⁴⁴³

Overall, while the framing of CYL activities evolved to fit with the new context, the content of the activities, and most importantly the control over them, did not fundamentally change. However, some studies have noted a progressive "NGOization" of the Chinese mass organizations.⁴⁴⁴ I question this assertion by looking more precisely into the new service oriented organizations created by the CYL.

c) The multiplication of sub-organizations and the extension of the League's domain

After the 1980s, a branch of literature has described the evolution of mass organizations in a newly competitive environment. For instance, Jude Howell showed in her various articles on the All-China Women Federation how it has been forced to evolve in the 1980s by the burgeoning of study groups and associations - semi-official or underground - on gender issues. For Howell, the ACWF had to find new ways to interact with women under a new competitive

⁴⁴⁰ Reed, "Moral/Political Education in the People's Republic of China: Learning Through Role Models," 102.

⁴⁴¹ Several academics who studied such campaigns have underlined this continuity: interviews with academic 12, academic 13, and academic 21.

⁴⁴² Interview with cadre 3.

⁴⁴³ Elizabeth J Perry, "From Mass Campaigns to Managed Campaigns: 'Constructing a New Socialist Countryside,'" in *Mao's Invisible Hand: The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China*, ed. Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J Perry (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2011), 30–61.

⁴⁴⁴ On this issue, see for instance: Jean-Louis Rocca, *La condition chinoise: capitalisme, mise au travail et résistances dans la Chine des réformes [The Chinese Condition]* (Paris: Karthala, 2006), 159.

situation. To survive, it began to develop its own issue-oriented organizations, and research centers on gender issues. As a result of such evolutions, the mass organization has been, for Howell, getting more autonomous and closer to a non-governmental organization. However, she also highlighted the limits of this emancipation process, which are particularly clear in the case of the CYL.⁴⁴⁵

The CYL has also been attracting new members and multiplying its activities through a web of sub-organizations which it has created or sponsored. In 2002, among the 8 million social organizations officially registered in China, 2.47 million were linked to the CYL.⁴⁴⁶ The China Youth Development Foundation (*Zhongguo qingshaonian fazhan jijinhui*, 中国青少年发展基金会), is a good example of this diversification of the League's activities through sub-organizations. Founded in March 1989, the China Youth Development Foundation quickly launched its "Project Hope" (*Xiwang gongcheng*, 希望工程) aiming at improving primary education in the poorest provinces of China. The project sponsored the reconstruction of a primary school in Anhui Province, which became the first Hope primary school (*Xiwang xiaoxue*, 希望小学). The project then started to gain momentum and to attract considerable private funds.⁴⁴⁷ According to official statistics, between 1989 and 2007, the China Youth Development Foundation raised 3.5 billion RMB to help fund the education of 2.9 million students. It participated in the renovation of 13,000 primary schools, 13,000 libraries and trained 35,000 rural teachers.⁴⁴⁸

Lu Yiyi showed how the relationship between the CYL and the China Youth Development Foundation has been mutually beneficial. The China Youth Development Foundation used the protection and the networks of the League to raise funds and to develop projects, which were sometimes opposed at first by local administrations. At the same time, the success of the Project Hope helped improve the CYL's image among the broader public.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ Jude Howell, "The Struggle for Survival: Prospects for the Women's Federation in Post-Mao China," *World Development* 24, no. 1 (1996): 129–43; Jude Howell, "Organising around Women and Labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 355–77.

⁴⁴⁶ Shaoguang Wang and Jianyu He, "Training Ground for Democracy : Associational Life in China," in *State and Civil Society the Chinese Perspective*, ed. Zhenglai Deng (Singapore; Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2010), 271–310.

⁴⁴⁷ Chengzhi Wang, "Project Hope and the Hope School System in China: A Re-Evaluation," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7, no. 28 (1999): 1–18.

⁴⁴⁸ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan, 社会变革中的共青团)*, 43; Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 103.

⁴⁴⁹ Yiyi Lu, *Non-Governmental Organizations in China: The Rise of Dependent Autonomy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 30–40.

Several of my interviewees, both CYL cadres and academics focusing on social organizations, underlined how this project has been a success for the League in terms of public image.⁴⁵⁰

While the China Youth Development Foundation has been successful in its projects and has attracted large amounts of private funds, it remains hard to describe it as an NGO. It is under the direct supervision of the CYL leadership: the President of the China Youth Development Foundation has always been a CYL leader.⁴⁵¹ This is also true at the local level, the branches of the China Youth Development Foundation being under the direct control of the local CYL secretaries.⁴⁵² Overall, the Project Hope could be understood as an indirect welfare policy of the Party-State. With the economic reforms, the Party-State pushed mass organizations towards taking over welfare services it did not provide anymore.⁴⁵³ The Project Hope is a result of this political decision. By creating the China Youth Development Foundation, the CYL was following, as always, the direction given by the Party. This is a facet of what Frolic called a “State-led civil society.”⁴⁵⁴

Overall, these new developments do not translate into an NGOization of the CYL. The Party-State remains in control of the organization. Similar accounts have been made regarding the continuous control of the Party over other mass organizations, such as the All-China Federation of Trade Union and the All-China Women Federation.⁴⁵⁵ Instead, the diversification of the mass organizations and the increasing role they play in providing welfare services, directly or through sub-organizations, is part of what Howell called a strategy of “welfarist incorporation.” By financing these organizations and their welfare activities, the Party-State actually “purchases services” (*goumai fuwu*, 购买服务) from them so it does not have to provide them directly anymore.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁰ Interviews with cadre 3, academic 3, cadre 15, and academic 21.

⁴⁵¹ At its creation, the China Youth Development Foundation was headed by Xu Yongguang, then Organization Department Director of the CYL, and its president is now He Junke, also CYL Central Committee Secretary (For Xu Yongguang’s official CV, see: http://news.xinhuanet.com/video/2007-03/09/content_5824469.htm; For He Junke’s official CV, see: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/gbzl/html/121000475.html>, both Consulted on 5 December 2015).

⁴⁵² Graziani, “A Study of China’s Communist Youth League Adaptation in the Reform Era (1978-2011).”

⁴⁵³ On this phenomena, see : Qiusha Ma, *Non-Governmental Organizations in Contemporary China: Paving the Way to Civil Society?* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁵⁴ B. Michael Frolic, “State-Led Civil Society,” in *Civil Society in China*, ed. Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 47–67.

⁴⁵⁵ Justina Ka Yee Tsui, “Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? : A History of the All-China Women’s Federation, 1949 to 1996” (PhD Dissertation, Concordia University, 1998); Howell, “Organising around Women and Labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances,” 355–377.

⁴⁵⁶ Jude Howell, “Shall We Dance? Welfarist Incorporation and the Politics of State-Labour NGO Relations,” *The China Quarterly* 223 (2015): 702–723.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to come back to the continuities I have stressed regarding the nature of the CYL and its relationship with the Party. In particular, we have seen that the League has been brought under the Party's control as soon as 1925, and this has not weakened overtime. It has clearly become and remained the Party's *assistant* since the foundation of the PRC: it imitates the organization of the Party and is responsive to its needs. Even after the economic liberalization of the 1980s, its organizational structure and its dependence on the Party did not change. The CYL's "lack of power and lack of funds" remain true over the whole period. Beyond these continuities in the structure itself, I underlined the similarities in the activities of the CYL since the foundation of the PRC. If the framing has changed, the content of the activities remains in large part the same. At the exception of one major evolution: the extension of the League's social work through the establishment of sub-organizations. However, this is to be understood as part of the Party-State "welfarist incorporation" strategy and therefore in line with the League's role as the CCP's *assistant*.

These organizational trends highlight what it means to be a mass organization. As noted by numerous publications by the CYL itself, or affiliated scholars, it is not a Youth Affairs Ministry, nor a NGO. It does not have the administrative power of the former, neither the autonomy of the latter. According to these publications, the CYL should keep its current hybrid status of mass organization, as becoming a State administration or a NGO would, in both cases, weaken its relationship with the CCP. Such transformation of its relationship with the Party is seen as a potential risk by the organization.⁴⁵⁷ CYL officials I interviewed also went in that direction, stating that the nature of the CYL as a mass organization under Party control, cannot be questioned.⁴⁵⁸

From the Party-State's perspective, maintaining such tight control is seen as a way to prevent a scenario similar to what happened to the Soviet Youth League, the Komsomol, in the 1980s. Just like the CYL, the Komsomol was under strict Party control which dictated the

⁴⁵⁷ See in particular: Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Research on the Transformations of the CYL Internal Democracy and Grassroots Personnel System (*tuanei minzhu shijian yu Gongqingtuan jiceng zuzhi zhidu bianqian yanjiu*, 团内民主实践与共青团基层组织制度变迁研究)"; Research team of the CYL (*tuan zhongyang ketizu*, 团中央课题组), "Opportunities and Reactions Faced by the CYL Organization in a Liberalizing Economy (*shichang jingji tiaojianxia Gongqingtuan zuzhi mianlin de jiyu, tiaozhan yu duice*, 市场经济条件下共青团基层组织面临的机遇、挑战与对策)"; Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 261.

⁴⁵⁸ Interviews with cadre 14 and cadre 19.

activities to be organized in order to maintain the ideological status quo among youth.⁴⁵⁹ The situation changed in the 1980s, under Gorbachev. The Komsomol was reorganized and gained a large autonomy at the local level. The local units of the organization became in charge of their own budgets, and were hence not anymore under the Party's control. According to Solnick, this led to a "bank run" phenomenon in 1987. The local Komsomol officials started to use the organization's resources in order to develop local businesses.⁴⁶⁰ With the development of this "Komsomol economy", the young cadres increasingly distanced themselves from the control of the Party-State, which accelerated the disintegration of the organization. As they were among the first to profit from the USSR's liberalizing economy, many of them later became major oligarchs.⁴⁶¹ I have shown in this chapter that the Chinese CYL is far from such a configuration, and, as reflected in the League's own research, the Soviet precedent pushes the CCP to be even more cautious with how it deals with the CYL in the context of a liberalizing economy.

⁴⁵⁹ Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*, 47.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 223; Olga Kryshatanovskaya and Stephen White, "From Soviet Nomenklatura to Russian Elite," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 5 (1996): 711–34; Loulia Shukan, "Les recettes d'une reconversion réussie. Étude de cas des Komsomols ukrainien et biélorussien à la fin des années 1980 [The formula for a successful conversion. Case studies of the Ukrainian and Belarussian Komsomols in the late 1980s]," *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 34, no. 2 (2003): 109–44.

Chapter 2: The CYL and the politics of age

As the Party's *reserve force*, the CYL has a dual function regarding the recruitment and training of CCP members and officials. First, as described in the previous chapter, it recruits numerous members between 14 and 28 years old. After being screened and trained, some of them eventually become CCP members. However, CYL membership itself is so broad that it is largely irrelevant in terms of political engagement and political career.⁴⁶² Second, the CYL recruits young cadres in charge of the life of the organization. As noted before, these cadres are generally considered equals to civil servants,⁴⁶³ and are both CYL and CCP members. A number of them later pursue their career in the Party-State. The CYL therefore brings new blood to the Party both in terms of members and officials. The focus of my research being political engagement and political elites, I study almost exclusively the recruitment of officials through the CYL.

While the Youth League has been officially defined as the Party's *reserve force* since 1949,⁴⁶⁴ I show in this chapter that its role has actually varied greatly overtime. These evolutions are related to the Party's policies regarding cadres' age. I detail how the politicization of age - as the age of cadres became a key selection criterion - has allowed the CYL to play an increasingly important role in post-Mao China. I understand politicization as the process through which an issue enters the political debate and becomes the focus of struggle among groups with specific interests.⁴⁶⁵ I underline how the recruitment of young officials became a key issue for certain fractions of the Party in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Recruiting and promoting young and educated cadres became a way to sideline competitors and their entourage.

Politicization of officials' age is far from unique to China or to the post-Cultural Revolution era. Bourdieu showed that it is quite common in political organizations to use young people as cannon fodder against more established cadres.⁴⁶⁶ Regarding youth organizations in

⁴⁶² The CYL had more than 87 million members in 2015 ("Over 87 Mln Chinese Communist Youth League Members.")

⁴⁶³ Regarding the status of CYL officials in the civil service system see the entry "civil service system" in the glossary.

⁴⁶⁴ "Charter of the New Democratic Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国新民主主义青年团章程)," Congress of the New Democratic Youth League, 17 April 1949.

⁴⁶⁵ On the issue of politicization and its various meaning, see : Jacques Lagroye, "Les processus de politisation [Politicization processes]," in *La politisation*, ed. Jacques Lagroye (Paris: Belin, 2003), 359–72.

⁴⁶⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, "La délégation et le fétichisme politique [Delegation and Political Fetishism]," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 52, no. 1 (1984): 54.

France, Bargel also stressed how age can become a debated issue: changing age limits is used as a way to set aside certain factions and groups.⁴⁶⁷ What is rather unique to our case is the extent to which the CCP has gone in establishing age-related rules for recruitment and promotion at every level of the administration, which facilitated the promotion of young officials especially those coming from the CYL.

A - The politicization of age in post-Mao China

The CYL has a special place in the Chinese political system due to the ephemeral nature of its membership. As a youth organization, its members have to exit the organization when they reach a certain age, 28 years old according to the current rule.⁴⁶⁸ It creates a constant turnover of CYL members that facilitates the organization's function as a *reserve force* for the Party. Due to this specific feature, age-related regulations are of key importance for CYL members and officials.

Since the early years of the organization, the age limits for CYL membership have been a highly conflicted issue. They varied several times before the current norm of 14 to 28 years old was fixed in 1982.⁴⁶⁹ At the organization's Third Congress of 1925, when it was officially named the Communist Youth League to symbolize its affiliation to the CCP, the maximum age limit for CYL membership went from 28 to 25 years old. Lowering the maximum age limit was a way for the Party to ensure a better control over the CYL as it would be constituted of younger and less experienced members.⁴⁷⁰ The age limit was further lowered to 23 years old in 1927, when the CYL was highly criticized for putting itself in competition with the Party.⁴⁷¹ Against the CYL's tendency towards "vanguardism", some Party officials even suggested to set at 18 years old the maximum for CYL membership. It would have lowered its membership and transformed it into an organization constituted only of inexperienced teenagers.⁴⁷² While this

⁴⁶⁷ Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 117–118.

⁴⁶⁸ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013.

⁴⁶⁹ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 24 December 1982.

⁴⁷⁰ Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 139.

⁴⁷¹ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan*, 社会变革中的共青团), 59.

⁴⁷² Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 53.

proposal was quickly abandoned, it highlights how age rules are a debated issue in the CYL-CCP relationship.

This politicization of age went beyond CYL membership age limits. I highlight in the first part of the chapter how in post-Mao China the age of Party-State officials in general became a key issue. As Ch'i pointed out, this can be traced to the Cultural Revolution, during which age started to become a relevant political factor as Mao used the younger Red Guards to overthrow established officials.⁴⁷³ The officials purged at the time, such as Deng Xiaoping, then tried after being rehabilitated to build a base of young supporters to establish their power. They developed new exit and entry mechanisms to accelerate cadres' turnover and rejuvenate the Party. In the first part of this chapter I detail how, in the context of post Cultural Revolution, politics Deng and his allies used age-based recruitment in order to build their support base. As a result, it magnified the role of promotion channel played by the CYL as the organization brought an increasing number of new cadres to the Party leadership. The transformation of the political configuration and the decreasing need at the Party's top level for the establishment of a new support base interestingly did not fundamentally alter the increasingly important role played by the CYL. It survived its political momentum.

1) Rehabilitations and rejuvenation as political weapons

a) Purges and rehabilitations against the heritage of the Cultural Revolution

After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping came back to national politics in 1977 as PCC deputy chairman, and started to progressively establish himself as the PRC's new leader.⁴⁷⁴ In order to impose himself as the national leader against Hua Guofeng, who was CCP chairman at the time, he accelerated the rehabilitation of officials who had been purged during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time, Deng also started a rectification campaign within the Party to set aside the officials who benefited from the Cultural Revolution.

A large scale rehabilitation process started as soon as 1977. Between late 1977 and early 1979 about 100,000 officials were cleared from previous accusations, and often rehabilitated in their positions. The rehabilitation of numerous cadres who have been purged during the Cultural

⁴⁷³ Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 51.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁷⁵ The rehabilitations started after Lin Biao's death in 1971, under Zhou Enlai's protection. Deng Xiaoping was rehabilitated for a first time at that moment. See: Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 93.

Revolution is largely seen as a way for Deng to bring back allies and expand his powerbase.⁴⁷⁶ This process was facilitated after the Third Plenum of the CCP's 11th Central Committee in 1978, as several of Deng's allies took up important positions in personnel management. Hu Yaobang became the Organization Department Director and Chen Yun was appointed as the First Secretary of the newly established Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. This Commission's mission at the time was to review the crimes committed by and against Party officials during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁷⁷ As a result of the growing influence of Deng and his allies, the rehabilitation accelerated in the 1980s. By the end of 1982, the Organization Department declared that around three million officials had been rehabilitated.⁴⁷⁸

While he pushed for rehabilitation efforts to bring back potential allies to power, Deng Xiaoping also launched in 1978 a criticism movement within the Party against the “whatever faction” (*fanshipai*, 凡是派).⁴⁷⁹ Targeting beneficiaries from the Cultural Revolution, the campaign was very disadvantageous to Hua Guofeng as several of his allies were purged. This led to the turning point of the Third Plenum of the CCP's 11th Central Committee in December 1978, during which Hua Guofeng himself, as well as four of his key supporters - Wang Dongxing, Wu De, Chen Xilian, and Ji Dengkui – were forced to make self-criticisms.⁴⁸⁰ The purge expanded down to the local level, and especially to CYL committees as they were full of young officials who were promoted during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁸¹

In 1983, Deng Xiaoping launched a rectification campaign against the “three types of people” (*sanzhongren*, 三种人): the ones who gained power as a result of engaging in rebellious actions during the Cultural Revolution, those who accepted the ideological line of the “Gang of

⁴⁷⁶ See for instance : William Mill, “Generational Change in China,” *Problems of Communism* 32, no. 6 (1983): 16–35; Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 163–192; Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 11–13.

⁴⁷⁷ The Commission later expanded its function to discipline management within the Party more broadly. See: Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 5.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁷⁹ The “whatever faction” which included Hua Guofeng and his allies was named after a statement in the Editorial of the People's daily of February 7 1977: “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions he gave” (translated and quoted by: *Ibid.*, 3. Criticizing this approach, Deng Xiaoping answered that “practice should be the only criterion to validate the truth” (Cited by: Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 156.

⁴⁸⁰ Shu-shin Wang, “Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party,” *Asian Survey* 22, no. 9 (September 1982): 809.

⁴⁸¹ Looking at nine provincial CYL committees between 1978 and 1979, Healy noted that close to 20% of the CYL secretaries or deputy secretaries were not reelected or known to be transferred to other positions (Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 102.).

Four,”⁴⁸² and those who committed serious crimes during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁸³ Deng Xiaoping was going after the remnants of the cadres who were promoted during the Cultural Revolution. According to Ch’i, such a crusade was particularly important for Deng as these cadres were often young and could become a “time bomb” if they were allowed to stay in their positions and potentially to reorganize their faction in the future.⁴⁸⁴ The question of age was therefore brought to the center of the picture.

In order to maintain his leadership overtime, Deng had to establish his own powerbase, constituted not only of rehabilitated officials from the 1950s and 1960s but also of younger cadres. The rehabilitations and purges went together with a new policy for recruiting and promoting young cadres. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping called for a “four-way transformation” of the cadres’ corps. The explicit objective was to promote officials who were “revolutionary, younger, more educated, and more technically specialized”.⁴⁸⁵ New promotion rules were implemented and the CCP stopped relying on class background as a criterion for political selection. It was a way for Deng to promote people who did not advance their political career under the protection of the Gang of Four. The revolutionary qualities of the new cadres were highly emphasized as to recruit people following the current Party line. The young cadres who had links with the Gang of Four were denied promotion.⁴⁸⁶

In the context of post-Cultural Revolution politics, such a push to rejuvenate the Party was not contradictory with the process of rehabilitating cadres attacked during the Cultural Revolution, which was still in progress until 1983. They were complementary from Deng’s perspective. First, he needed the support of experienced and loyal officials in order to minimize the chances that the younger cadres who emerged during the Cultural Revolution would become leaders. Second, as he could not rely only on rehabilitated cadres who would soon become too old to remain in office, he pushed for the cultivation of a new generation of cadres.⁴⁸⁷ He therefore developed a sequenced transformation of the cadre corps. The rehabilitated cadres

⁴⁸² The “Gang of Four” (*sirenbang*, 四人帮) was a political coalition which controlled the CCP top hierarchy in the later stages of the Cultural Revolution. It was constituted of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen. After Mao’s death in September 1976 they were accused of a coup attempt and were arrested in October 1976. This was the starting point of a massive national criticism campaign of the Gang and their allies, which culminated in their show trial in 1981 (Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996), 27–47.

⁴⁸³ Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 46; Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 246.

⁴⁸⁴ Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 46.

⁴⁸⁵ Balme, *Entre soi: l’élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 170.

⁴⁸⁶ Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 73–76.

⁴⁸⁷ Manion, *Retirement of Revolutionaries in China: Public Policies, Social Norms, Private Interests*, 46–48.

would keep their positions for a few years, during which they would recruit their own successors, screen and train them.⁴⁸⁸ This two-fold sequence was palpable at the national level: as underlined by Mill, while the 11th CCP Congress of 1977 was the “era of the returned veterans”, the 12th Congress of 1982 marked the “era of transition.”⁴⁸⁹ I now get into the details of the organizational tools which allowed such a transition.

b) Rejuvenating the Party to build a support base

Deng’s push for a rejuvenation of the CCP implied a transformation of the rules regulating the recruitment and promotion of Party-State officials. Both exit and entry mechanisms evolved, through the implementation of retirement and age-related regulations, as well as through the promotion of a “third echelon” of cadres.

In the early 1980s, rules regarding retirement age and age limits were promulgated for officials. While the idea to establish a retirement system for Party-State officials was raised in the 1960s, it was never implemented. Until the 5th Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee in 1980, officials had a life-tenure. A retirement system was progressively established starting from lower level cadres upward. In 1982, a comprehensive system was formally adopted, retirement age being 60 or 65 years old depending on the cadres’ ranks.⁴⁹⁰

Interestingly, retirement rules did not apply to the Party’s top leadership, who therefore created less resistance to their implementation. According to Manion, several dozens of top leaders were exempt from the retirement policy in 1982.⁴⁹¹ Even when they did retire, it often remained only partial. Advisory committees were established in the early 1980s at the local and central levels so the leading cadres could keep a supervisory function in the political system and would accept the reform. The Central Advisory Committee was established in 1982 and offered a way for top leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, to apparently step down from office while they would remain in charge of key Party-State issues.⁴⁹² Later on, unwritten norms were gradually established regarding the retirement of national Party leaders. At the 15th

⁴⁸⁸ Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 233.

⁴⁸⁹ Mill, “Generational Change in China,” 26.

⁴⁹⁰ On the establishment of the retirement system, see: Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 51–55; Manion, *Retirement of Revolutionaries in China: Public Policies, Social Norms, Private Interests*, 45–76.

⁴⁹¹ Manion, *Retirement of Revolutionaries in China: Public Policies, Social Norms, Private Interests*, 54.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 55; Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 60; Balme, *Entre soi: l’élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 164.

Party Congress in 1997, a limit of 70 years old was first applied to the election of Politburo members.⁴⁹³ The limit became 67 years old after the 12th CCP Congress in 2002.⁴⁹⁴

If the implementation of retirement rules facilitated turnover, the establishment of new entry mechanisms was needed in order to push forward the rejuvenation process. As noted by Ch'i, there was a certain sense of urgency at the time, as Deng feared the remnant supporters of the Gang of Four would try to retake power.⁴⁹⁵ For this reason, the rejuvenation policy went hand-in-hand with the rectification efforts. The campaign against the “three types of people” launched in 1983 also accelerated the process as the purged cadres had to be replaced.⁴⁹⁶ As a result, Hu Yaobang, then CCP Central Committee General Secretary and close ally of Deng, proposed in 1983 the idea of grooming a group of officials in their 50s or 40s to take up leadership positions. These younger officials became the “third echelon of cadres” (*di san tidui*, 第三梯队).⁴⁹⁷ To paraphrase Balme, it equaled a generational structuring of the leadership by the leadership itself.⁴⁹⁸

The “third echelon” policy diverged from previous CCP personnel policies in the way it was meticulously organized and scheduled. The idea was for young cadres to be promoted to leadership positions at all level and to make them coexist with the older leaders until 1985, when they would retire. The overall plan was to promote 130,000 young leaders by 1985.⁴⁹⁹ Youth Cadre Bureaus affiliated to the CCP's Organization Department were established at every level of the polity in order to supervise the implementation. For each echelon, lists of potential candidates were established. They were made of acting cadres from the level right below. When the time of promoting leading cadres came, they were selected from these lists. This “third echelon” policy established the basis of the “reserve cadre system” (*yubei ganbu zhidu*, 预备干部制度), which continues to work according to these rules today. The list system was further developed in the 1990s and 2000s on the basis of five-year plans. In 2010, the

⁴⁹³ Lin, “Leadership Transition, Intra-Party Democracy and Institution Building in China”; Kou and Zang, “Informal Politics Embedded in Institutional Contexts.”

⁴⁹⁴ Yu-Shan Wu, “Rejuvenation of the Party-State: The Virtues and Limits of an Age-Based Political System,” *Issues and Studies* 51, no. 1 (March 2015): 105.

⁴⁹⁵ Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 71.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴⁹⁷ The revolutionary Party elders such as Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun constituted the “first echelon of cadres”, while the national Party-State leaders at the time, like Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, were the “second echelon of cadres” (*Ibid.*, 74–79).

⁴⁹⁸ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 165.

⁴⁹⁹ Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 77.

reserve cadre lists included 50,000 officials at the different administrative levels.⁵⁰⁰ I come back to the reserve cadre system in Chapter Six.

Age became an increasingly institutionalized criterion for the selection of reserve cadres from the 1990s onwards. The promotion criteria also evolved beyond the issue of age. Contrary to the Mao era, class origin was no longer emphasized whereas education became key.⁵⁰¹ It was a political decision aiming at preventing the promotion of cadres who benefited from the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, promotion criteria favored cadres coming from worker or peasant families who were rewarded for their activism but who generally did not receive a formal education, as educational institutions were closed during the late 1960s.⁵⁰²

All in all, the combination of retirement policies and the push for the promotion of a “third echelon of cadres” led to a transformation of the cadre corps during the first half of the 1980s. Between 1982 and 1985, 469,000 cadres were promoted at the county level and above. Over the same period, the average age of the forty one ministers and deputy ministers declined from 65.7 to 59.5 years old.⁵⁰³ We now turn to the role the CYL played in this transformation.

2) Bringing the *reserve force* back in

a) Upgrading the CYL’s official status as a promotion channel

With the CCP’s rejuvenation policy, the CYL’s role as the Party’s *reserve force* is brought back to the center of the picture. This official mission of the organization stated in the charter of the Youth League in 1949, had been removed in 1957.⁵⁰⁴ It is only in 1982 that this function is once again added to the CYL charter, emphasizing the role the organization had to play in the rejuvenation process.⁵⁰⁵

This evolution was first visible concerning the members of the organization. A framework through which the CYL should “recommend talented CYL members for Party membership” (*tuijian youxiu tuanyuan rudang*, 推荐优秀团员入党) was established in

⁵⁰⁰ On the reserve cadre system, see : Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Chien-Wen Kou, “The Party’s Disciples: CCP Reserve Cadres and the Perpetuation of a Resilient Authoritarian Regime,” *The China Quarterly* 221 (March 2015): 1–20.

⁵⁰¹ Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 76.

⁵⁰² Mill, “Generational Change in China,” 34.

⁵⁰³ Ch’i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 80.

⁵⁰⁴ Liu Shaoqi, then deputy chairman of the CCP, explained this removal in 1957 by the fact that the term *reserve force* might let young people think that any CYL member would eventually become CCP member. He wanted to further emphasize the “advanced” nature of CCP and its superiority toward the CYL (Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu*, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究), 17–23.

⁵⁰⁵ “Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程),” Congress of the CYL, 24 December 1982.

1982.⁵⁰⁶ The recommendation process became then crucial as anyone under 28 years old willing to enter the Party should be recommended by the CYL.⁵⁰⁷ It has become, and remains until today, the main channel for becoming a Party member.⁵⁰⁸ In fact, among the 2.1 million new members recruited by the Party in 2002, 1.3 million were recommended by the CYL.⁵⁰⁹ This is very different from the Mao era: in 1957 for instance, only 20% of the new CCP members came directly from the CYL.⁵¹⁰ More recently, between 2003 and 2008, 4.8 million recommended CYL members joined the Party.⁵¹¹ Interestingly, no official figure regarding this recommendation process was given at the 17th CYL Congress in 2013. According to a CYL official, this could be linked to a lesser increase in CYL and CCP memberships, due to the rectification campaign Xi Jinping launched when he took power.⁵¹²

Beyond the mere members, the CCP's rejuvenation policy had a strong impact on the careers of CYL officials. The CCP charter was amended in 1982 to add a new article devoted to the "relationship between the Party and the CYL" (*dang he gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan de guanxi*, 党和共产主义青年团的关系). It emphasized the CYL's important role regarding the training and promotion of cadres. More specifically, it stated that at the county level and below, including within enterprises or service units, the CYL secretaries must be CCP members and that they should attend as observers (*liexi*, 列席) the meetings of the CCP committees and Standing Committees at the same level.⁵¹³ I come back in Chapter Seven to the implications of this last measure, particularly in terms of network building. These evolutions in the CCP charter were consequently inscribed in the CYL charter. A new article dedicated to "CYL cadres" (*tuan*

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu*, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究), 125. However, a small number of CYL members who join the CCP do not in practice go through this recommendation process. In 2012, this was true for 7.4% of the CYL members who joined the Party in Jiangsu Province (Central Communist Youth League, *Yearbook of the Chinese Communist Youth League 2012 (Zhongguo Gongqingtuan nianjian 2012*, 中国共青团年鉴 2012) (Beijing: China Youth Press, 2013), 306.

⁵⁰⁸ This does not mean that the other newly recruited CCP members have never been CYL members but that they were not directly recommended by the organization. They might for instance have applied to Party membership only after they lost their CYL membership as they were too old.

⁵⁰⁹ Gang Guo, "Organizational Involvement and Political Participation in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 4 (April 2007): 465.

⁵¹⁰ Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 50.

⁵¹¹ Lu Hao, "Report at the 16th Congress of the Communist Youth League (*zai Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiliu daibiao dahui shang de baogao*, 在中国共产主义青年团第十六次全国代表大会上的报告)," Congress of the CYL, 10 June 2008.

⁵¹² Interview with cadre 16. On the campaign, see: Jérôme Doyon, "The End of the Road for Xi's Mass Line Campaign: An Assessment," *China Brief*, October 23, 2014.

⁵¹³ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhangcheng*, 中国共产党章程)," Congress of the CCP, 6 September 1982.

de ganbu, 团的干部) was added in 1982, underlining the organization's role in "continuously transferring officials to the Party-State."⁵¹⁴ As showed in the next section, the changes in official documents were largely echoed in the transformation of promotion prospects for CYL officials.

b) An upsurge of CYL affiliates in the Party leadership as a result of the rejuvenation policy

Since the 1920s, numerous CYL cadres have become Party leaders later in their career. According to Zheng Changzhong, between 1921 and 2002, 22.76% of CCP Central Committee members had an experience as CYL official at various levels.⁵¹⁵ Still, such phenomenon increased since the end of the Cultural Revolution. Figure 2.1 illustrates this evolution. It represents the ratio of former central CYL officials in the CCP Central Committee and Politburo from the 8th CCP Congress of 1956, until the 18th Congress of 2012. Contrary to other studies focusing on officials with a working experience at the various levels of the CYL,⁵¹⁶ I chose to only include officials with experience in the central administration of the CYL. In contrast to local CYL leaders who are managed by the local CCP committees, the promotion of central CYL leading cadres is decided by central CCP leaders.⁵¹⁷ The promotion or not of central CYL officials to leadership positions in the CCP therefore gives a clearer account of the decisions taken in Beijing at the time.

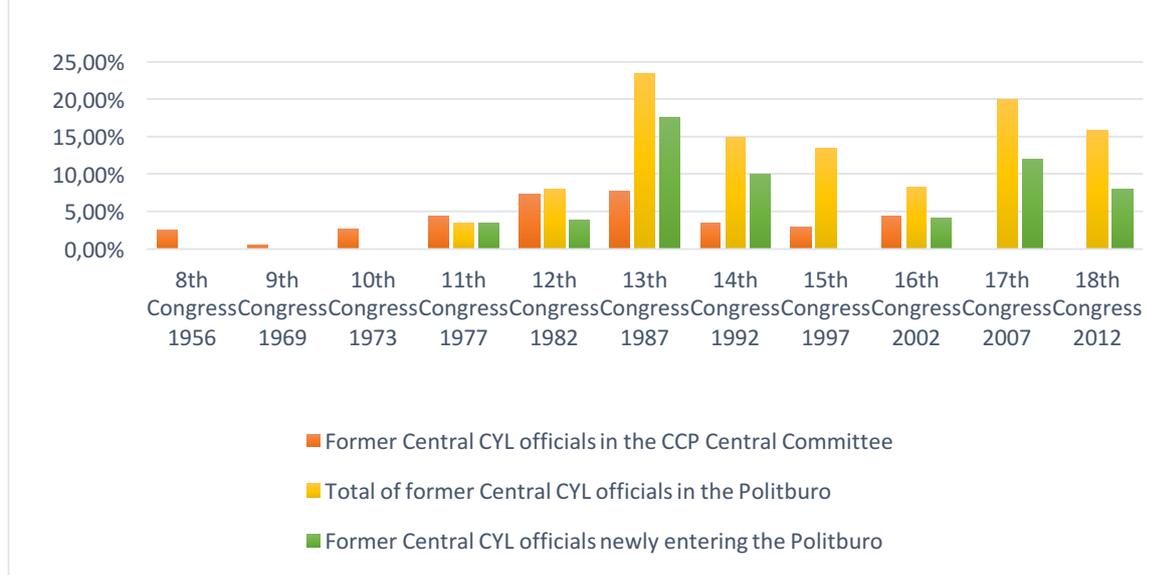
⁵¹⁴ "Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程)," Congress of the CYL, 24 December 1982.

⁵¹⁵ This figure includes officials with an experience as CYL cadre and not the ones who have been only member of the organization. It would include a much larger proportion of the Central Committee members. Source: Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 214.

⁵¹⁶ Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres"; Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top."

⁵¹⁷ See Chapter One regarding the decentralized way in which are managed the CYL officials.

**Figure 2.1: Former central level CYL cadres in the CCP
Central Committee and Politburo**



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Looking at Figure 2.1, the ratio of former central level CYL officials who made it later to the CCP Central Committee clearly increased in 1977 and even more significantly in the 1980s. Although it declined in the 1990s and 2000s, the ratio remained higher than during the 1950s and 1960s. The contrast is even clearer when looking at the ratio of former central level CYL officials who joined the Politburo. While none can be found during the Mao era, such appointments became fairly common in the 1980s. In 1987, almost a quarter of the Politburo was constituted of former central level CYL officials. With some variations, the overall phenomenon remains true today as at the last CCP congress in 2012 more than 15% of the Politburo members had an experience in the central CYL.

Looking more carefully at the former CYL officials promoted to top Party positions in the early 1980s, we can see that they were constituted of two groups of cadres: top CYL officials from before 1966 who have been rehabilitated, and younger cadres appointed to CYL leadership positions in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Mill noted that at the 12th CCP Congress in 1982, twenty-one elected Central Committee members had extensive experience in the Youth League before 1966.⁵¹⁹ At the same time, eleven post-Cultural Revolution central

⁵¹⁸ For the 17th and 18th CCP Congresses, I only have the data regarding Politburo members and not Central Committee ones. Sources: Data base compiled by Victor Shih et. Al., (which can be found here: <http://faculty.washington.edu/cadolph/index.php?page=61>, consulted on January 27 2016) and the website *Chinavita* (<http://www.chinavita.com>, consulted on 18 August 2016).

⁵¹⁹ Mill, "Generational Change in China," 35.

CYL secretaries entered the CCP Central Committee between 1977 and 1986.⁵²⁰ The sequenced phenomenon discussed earlier, coupling rehabilitation and promotion of younger officials, is therefore reflected in the case of CYL officials. These two groups of officials also had in common specific ties to Hu Yaobang. With his long experience in the CYL and his position as Deng's right hand, Hu was a key protagonist in the promotion of these officials.

c) Is the fate of the Youth League linked to Hu Yaobang's?

Hu Yaobang (1915-1989) joined the CYL in 1930 when he was fifteen. In 1933 he was appointed General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth Central Bureau. During the civil war against the Kuomintang, he worked under Deng Xiaoping's order in the South West regions before being transferred in 1952 with Deng to Beijing and became the First Secretary of the CYL.⁵²¹ Hu Yaobang was criticized at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution for being an ally of Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi. He was specifically accused of being too bureaucratic in his management of the CYL, and of recruiting members too widely, including from "bad" family origin.⁵²² Dismissed from the central CYL leadership in August 1966,⁵²³ he was recalled to Beijing in 1972 under Zhou Enlai's initiative. As a supporter of Deng, he was purged along with him for a second time in 1976. Then Deng and Hu were rehabilitated in 1977. In December 1977, Hu was appointed Director of the Organization Department, and in 1981 became CCP chairman, replacing Hua Guofeng.⁵²⁴

Along with Deng, Hu Yaobang pushed for the rehabilitation of officials attacked during the Cultural revolution.⁵²⁵ Given his past experience within the CYL, he helped to promote rehabilitated cadres who had served with him and who were purged from the League along with him. The best example of this is Hu Qili, who was All-China Student Federation Chairman in 1966 and CYL Central Committee Alternate Secretary when he was purged. He came back to

⁵²⁰ These eleven CYL secretaries were: Han Ying, Wang Zhaoguo, Gao Zhanxiang, Li Ruihuan, Wang Jiangong, Wang Minsheng, Hu Qili, Liu Weiming, Song Defu, Hu Jintao, and Keyum Bawudun (the compilation was made by the author based on the CYL leaders' official CVs)

⁵²¹ On Hu Yaobang's career, see : Wang, "Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party"; Merle Goldman, "Hu Yaobang's Intellectual Network and the Theory Conference of 1979," *The China Quarterly* 126 (June 1991): 219-42; Zhongmei Yang, *Hu Yaobang: a Chinese Biography*. (Armonk, N.Y. u.a.: Sharpe, 1988), 18-159.

⁵²² In Mao China, one's class label was largely based on one's family class origin before the land reform of 1948-1950. To summarize, coming from a family without property put a person in a good class background while having property-class origins put a person in one of the bad categories. On the class label system and young people's opportunities, see : Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 100-107.

⁵²³ On the criticisms made towards Hu Yaobang, see: Townsend, *The Revolutionization of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-Nien*, 65; Healy, *The Chinese Communist Youth League, 1949-1979*, 81.

⁵²⁴ Wang, "Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party," 807-809.

⁵²⁵ Goldman, "Hu Yaobang's Intellectual Network and the Theory Conference of 1979," 222.

Beijing in 1977 and, when Hu Yaobang became the Director of the Central Organization Department, he was appointed as CYL Central Committee Secretary.⁵²⁶

Hu Yaobang was also one of the main instigators of the CCP rejuvenation policy and he designed the “third echelon” policy. Pushing for the promotion of young cadres, he appointed promising officials to central CYL positions and helped their future promotions. Wang Zhaoguo is a good example of such trajectory. Wang was deputy foreman within a car factory when Deng Xiaoping noticed him during an inspection tour in 1982.⁵²⁷ According to a senior academic from the Central CYL School who witnessed the CYL leadership operations at the time, Hu Yaobang took great care in screening and promoting cadres such as Wang Zhaoguo. The Deputy Director of the CCP Organization Department, Wang Zhaohua, who served with Hu Yaobang in the CYL in the 1960s, was put in charge of the process that led to the appointment of Wang Zhaoguo as CYL Central Committee First Secretary in 1982.⁵²⁸

Overall, Hu Yaobang used the CYL as a way to promote officials he could trust, within the framework of the rehabilitation process and of the rejuvenation policy. While these promotions were going into the same direction as Deng’s wish to transform the cadres’ corps, Hu also pushed for people with whom he built strong personal ties. According to Bachman, Hu faced the “dilemma of the successor”: he had to show his loyalty to the top leader, in that case Deng, but also to develop power bases of his own as the patronage of the old leader could not hold forever.⁵²⁹ According to Jing Huang, the constant emphasis Hu Yaobang put on to promoting young cadres was eventually interpreted by Deng Xiaoping as a threat. This weakened Deng’s support for Hu Yaobang and contributed to facilitate his purge in 1987 under the pressure of the Party’s conservatives.⁵³⁰ Confirming that such promotions by Hu Yaobang were perceived as an attempt to build a political base, Zhao Ziyang, who replaced Hu Yaobang after his fall as head of the Party, mentioned in his journal that in 1987 Party elders internally criticized Hu Yaobang for forming a political faction constituted of former CYL leaders.⁵³¹

The fall of Hu Yaobang had a negative impact on several officials he helped to promote from the CYL. Wang Zhaoguo was demoted from the CCP Central Secretariat to a lesser

⁵²⁶ Mill, “Generational Change in China,” 35.

⁵²⁷ Li, “China’s Youth League Faction: Incubus of Power?”

⁵²⁸ Interview with academic 21.

⁵²⁹ David Bachman, “Institutions, Factions, Conservatism, and Leadership Change in China: The Case of Hu Yaobang,” in *Leadership Change in Communist States*, ed. Ray Taras (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 95.

⁵³⁰ According to Jing Huang, this was a key factor of Hu Yaobang’s fall, in addition to being judged too sympathetic to the 1986 student protests (Huang, *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics*, 403).

⁵³¹ Ziyang Zhao, *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Zhao Ziyang*, ed. Pu Bao, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 192–193.

position in Fujian Province.⁵³² Two years later, the death of Hu Yaobang triggered the Tiananmen movement that was heavily repressed.⁵³³ Hu Qili, known for his affiliation with Yaobang and who opposed the proclamation of the martial law, was purged in June 1989 from his position in the CCP Central Secretariat.⁵³⁴ Also, according to Li Datong, former journalist for the *China Youth Daily*, the CYL leadership appeared too favorable towards the student movement, and, as stressed in the previous chapter, it has been criticized for it.⁵³⁵ Against this background, Kou Chien-wen noted that between 1987 and 1992 there were no promotion of CYL leaders to ministerial level positions.⁵³⁶

In the late 1980s, the promotion of CYL officials to top Party positions therefore seemed to have lost its political momentum. Still, coming back to Figure 2.1 we can see that the phenomenon did not stop with Hu Yaobang's fall in 1987. While a decrease is visible at the time, numerous central CYL officials have been promoted to the CCP Central Committee and Politburo up to today. I now get into the mechanisms explaining such continuity.

B - Age as the new basis of the cadre system

In the second part of this chapter I develop the mechanisms explaining why the CYL remained a springboard to Party leadership, even after its political momentum of the 1980s. I review and question the factional explanations that have been suggested to explain the increasing number of CYL affiliates rising within the Party-State hierarchy. Factional arguments in this case over simplify the situation and I argue instead that the continuous promotion of CYL leaders to top positions within the Party can be understood as a result of the institutionalization of the CCP's rejuvenation policy. The age-related policies implemented in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang, as part of their political strategy to build a support base, survived their short-term purpose and became the basis of an institutionalized cadre system with age rules at its core.

While the rejuvenation policy launched by Deng and Hu was a politically motivated move, the age-based rules developed a life of their own and survived their initiators. Implemented at every echelon of the Party-State, these rules structurally advantage CYL

⁵³² Bo, *China's Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing*, 187.

⁵³³ On April 16th 1989, one day after Hu Yaobang's death, began the first student marches which started Tiananmen movement, repressed in blood in June 1989.

⁵³⁴ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 150.

⁵³⁵ Li, "China's Youth League Faction: Incubus of Power?"

⁵³⁶ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 150.

officials. As a result, early promotion and specialization within the CYL became increasingly valuable for young cadres, and the organization became a grooming ground for future CCP leaders. At every level of the polity, local Party-State leaders have power of nomination of CYL leaders and can use this springboard to promote potential followers. Instead of one unified faction emerging from the CYL, the decentralized nature of the polity allows for a multiplicity of networks at the various levels. All Party leaders, from the grassroots to the central level, can therefore use the League to their advantage. The structural transformations brought by the rejuvenation policy as well as the decentralized system of incentives overall allow the CYL to remain on the long run a key promotion channel in the Party-State.

1) Is there a Youth League Faction?

a) Beyond interest group politics

A literature explained the high number of former CYL officials promoted to top positions in the Party by the formation of a Youth League faction (*tuanpai*, 團派) in the 2000s.⁵³⁷ This *tuanpai* is, according to them, constituted of the former leaders of the Chinese Communist Youth League and led by Hu Jintao, the retiring CCP General Secretary, who has been the CYL Central Committee First Secretary in the 1980s. Cheng Li described the *tuanpai* as a group of like-minded officials, particularly interested in social initiatives. In several articles he overlapped the *tuanpai* with what he called the “populist coalition” in the Chinese leadership. He described this coalition as competing with the “elitist” one, represented mainly by the princelings, the offspring of Party and Military leaders from the Mao era.⁵³⁸

This literature implicitly developed a cyclical narrative of the CYL affiliates’ rise in the CCP leadership. The first phase included the 1980s, a period favorable to the promotion of CYL affiliates in the CCP, and ended with Hu Yaobang’s fall. The second main phase of the *tuanpai*’s rise then took place when Hu Jintao became the national leader. This second phase was then supposed to start fading when Xi Jinping replaced Hu Jintao.⁵³⁹

This cyclical narrative is not really supported by the data regarding the promotion of central CYL officials to the CCP Central Committee and Politburo. Coming back to Figure 2.1,

⁵³⁷ On the Youth League faction, see in particular : Li, “The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites”; Bo, *China’s Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing*, 139–201; Huang, *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics*, 350–410.

⁵³⁸ Li, “The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites,” 25.

⁵³⁹ Ai Yanghua (艾仰樺) and Chen Xiaoming (陳曉銘), *The Power of the Communist Youth League (Gongqingtuan Shili, 共青團勢力)* (Carle Place, N.Y: Mirror Books, 2009), 78.

the main variation is between the Mao era (from 1956 to 1976 in this figure) and the post-Mao one (after 1976). This distinction is much more significant than the differences within the post-Mao period that the factional struggle is supposed to explain. Regarding the 1980s, an increasing number of former central CYL officials were promoted in both the Central Committee and the Politburo at the 12th Congress of the CCP, when Hu Yaobang was in power. Still, over the whole period, the main upsurge of former CYL officials took place at the 13th Congress of 1987, around ten months after Hu Yaobang's fall. Therefore, while we have seen that some cadres were indeed put in weak positions by the purge of Hu Yaobang, the overall trend was not reversed.

Regarding the post Hu Yaobang period, while there was a decline after the 13th Congress in the amount of former CYL officials in the CCP Central Committee, the increase at the 16th Congress of 2002, following the nomination of Hu Jintao as Party leader, was very limited. This is even more surprising when we look at the number of former CYL officials promoted to the Politburo at the 16th Congress: it is one of the lowest ratios for the whole post Hu Yaobang period. Moreover, while the amount of former CYL cadres was very high under Hu Jintao at the 17th Congress, a relatively high proportion of these cadres were also promoted at the 18th Congress of 2012, even if Hu Jintao was not in power anymore.

In addition to this factual discussion of the *tuanpai* narrative, I think the approach itself is problematic. Witnessing the rise of Hu Jintao and of the people he brought with him from the CYL to top Party positions, some researchers have supposed the existence of a *tuanpai*. The existence of the *tuanpai* then becomes the explanatory factor for the promotion of any CYL leader. This reasoning is highly tautological. In addition, the arguments are rather thin as the only feature common to these officials is to have worked together at the central CYL. Without first-hand information, we cannot even know if they had good personal relationships while working together. The like-mindedness of the *tuanpai* affiliates, put forward by Cheng Li, is extremely hard to assess. It is, for instance, far from obvious if they shared or not a common political agenda.

It is also problematic to oppose the supposed *tuanpai* with the princelings, the offspring of leaders from the Mao era. Several researchers have noted that these two groups have emerged as major political forces in the 1990s and 2000s.⁵⁴⁰ Alongside the CYL affiliates, the princelings greatly benefited from the rejuvenation policies in terms of promotion. As

⁵⁴⁰ Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 284; Li, *China's Leaders: The New Generation*, 25–50.

underlined by Balme, in the 1980s they were among the only ones who fitted the new recruiting criteria. They went to the best domestic and foreign schools. Politically, they often entered the Party very young and they could use their parents' connections in order to get promoted.⁵⁴¹

While some princelings have been probably competing with CYL affiliates for positions, I think the view that these groups are fundamentally separate should be questioned. First, several key members of the supposed *tuanpai* faction also have a princeling background. This was true of Chen Haosu as well as He Guangwei in the 1980s, and later of Liu Yandong or Li Yuanchao.⁵⁴² Second, while a statistical account of the CYL officials' family background is missing, several of the cadres I interviewed noted that, since the 2000s, an increasing number of children of high ranked officials started to work for the CYL, especially at the central level.⁵⁴³ Taking these overlaps into account, as well as the difficulty to distinguish these groups' supposedly competing political agendas, the clear separation between a "populist" *tuanpai* and a group of "elitist" children of officials should be questioned.

Interestingly, Andrew Walder argued against a similar analysis of Red Guards factions during the Cultural Revolution. Through a careful analysis of the period, he refuted the common idea that the more conservative groups of Red Guards were constituted of children of officials eager to defend the current system, while the more radical groups included people with lesser familial status and with more to gain from the mobilizations. Walder showed that the situation was far more complex, and that every personal decisions was to be understood not based on the preexisting group one was supposed to come from, but the sequenced interactions and decisions which shaped his trajectory.⁵⁴⁴

Coming back to our question at hand, my goal is not to completely negate the potential factional elements in the rise of CYL affiliates to top Party positions, but to show that it far from explains the overall phenomenon. The presupposition that all CYL leaders since the 1980s constitute an overall faction with a common enemy has to be questioned. As highlighted by an academic who was close to Hu Yaobang, the idea of the *tuanpai* as a unified group is a construction of the observers themselves, who mechanically think in terms of factions and interest groups as it artificially clarifies the political field.⁵⁴⁵ We have therefore to analyze the

⁵⁴¹ Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 169–174; Jean-Luc Domenach, *Les fils de princes [The princelings]* (Paris: Fayard, 2016), 119.

⁵⁴² Bo, *China's Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing*, 195.

⁵⁴³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 24, and cadre 27.

⁵⁴⁴ Walder, *Fractured Rebellion the Beijing Red Guard Movement*.

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with academic 20.

other factors which, coupled or not to these factional ties, explain why so many CYL affiliates continuously became CCP leaders in post-Mao China.

b) Factions as trellises: comparing the Youth League and the Kuomintang's youth organizations

Focusing on the massive promotion of CYL affiliates since the 1990s, Kou Chien-wen argued that both a factional effect and an organizational effect were at play. For Kou, the CYL, as the Party's *reserve* force, produces a talent pool from which the faction can recruit followers.⁵⁴⁶ Kou's analysis tries to analyze the effect of the CYL as an organization on the promotion of officials without nullifying the factional approach. Still, it remains unclear how the two effects are interacting.

Kou's argument can be understood as an application to the CYL of Andrew Nathan's point regarding factions developing like "trellises" on organizations. For Nathan, external factional networks, based on clientelist ties, can attach themselves to, or emerge from, organizations. This facilitates the development of the faction as it can use the communication and authority flow of the organization, and it can also recruit among its members.⁵⁴⁷ Like in Kou's argument, the faction and organization are mutually reinforcing. The main issue is that such a configuration implies a certain autonomy of the organization itself, and therefore of the faction, from other political organizations and networks. However, as explained in the previous chapter, the CYL has no autonomy over the recruitment of its leaders. The CYL leaders are accountable to the relevant CCP committee at every level. Even at the central echelon, the first secretary cannot directly choose the other CYL secretaries. While he can influence it, the decision remains in the hand of the Party leaders.⁵⁴⁸ The trellis configuration does not perfectly fit the CYL case.

A main issue with the literature on the *tuanpai*, which is also the case in Kou's work, is an unclear definition of what this faction would be constituted. Does it include only a few CYL leaders at the time of Hu Yaobang, and then some others who were promoted under Hu Jintao, or does it include all CYL leaders? When looking more carefully at Kou's examples, one may realize he focused on a very specific configuration, under Hu Jintao. He underlined how after being the CYL Central Committee First Secretary in 1984-1985, Hu became in 1992 the

⁵⁴⁶ Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres," 77-116.

⁵⁴⁷ Nathan, "A Factionalism Model for CCP Politics."

⁵⁴⁸ Interviews with cadre 9, cadre 28, cadre 37, and cadre 42.

Politburo Standing Committee member in charge of the relationship with the CYL, as well as in charge of personnel management. He was in a perfect position to appoint to the CYL leadership his potential affiliates, and to then promote them within the Party.⁵⁴⁹ Kou highlighted the correlation between this appointment of Hu Jintao and the rise of former CYL leaders at the 14th CCP Congress in 1992. Coming back to Figure 2.1, we can see a certain number of CYL affiliates promoted to the Politburo. It remains still lower than at the previous congress. Hu was then appointed as Party General Secretary in 2002, a position from which he was obviously able to promote people through the CYL.

Kou focused here on a very specific sequence in which the CYL's lack of autonomy played in favor of Hu Jintao. It is reasonable to think that Hu Jintao, while he was capable of doing so, promoted some people from an organization that he used to run, and within which he had personal relationships with several officials. Still, it does not show in any way that all CYL leaders are part of this *tuanpai*, especially the one who were appointed after Hu Jintao stepped down from office.⁵⁵⁰ It does not imply that the trellis survives overtime.

Comparing with the case of Chiang Ching-kuo's network within the KMT's youth organizations allows a better understanding of what would imply such a surviving trellis, and how it varies from the CYL's situation. In 1938, amid the Sino-Japanese war, the KMT established the Three People's Principles Youth Corps (*Sanmin zhuyi qingniantuan*, 三民主义青年团) as its main youth organization. Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-Shek, became a member of its Central Committee and head of its Jiangxi Branch. In 1944, Chiang Ching-kuo was put in charge of the Youth Corps' Youth Cadre Training Class, which later became the Central Cadre School (*Zhongyang ganxiao*, 中央干校). Within the Youth Corps and the school, Chiang Ching-kuo was able to recruit followers who would remain key supporters in his later career in Taiwan, such as Lee Huan or Pan Zhenqiu.⁵⁵¹ Due to its organizational features and to factional politics, the Youth Corps had a certain degree of

⁵⁴⁹ Kou, "CYL Cadres Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Considerations or Organizational Mission of Channeling Cadres," 92.

⁵⁵⁰ In addition, Hu Jintao's links to the CYL should not be overestimated. Contrary to Hu Yaobang, who headed the CYL for ten years from 1957 to 1967, Hu Jintao remained CYL Central Committee Secretary and then First Secretary for less than three years combined. This is reflected in Bo Zhiyue's work, who developed an index quantifying the time supposed members of the *tuanpai* worked together in the CYL. In fact, Hu Jintao stood at the second last in this index, as he spent very few time in the same organization with his supposed affiliates. If this index did not tell us anything about the content of the relationship, it underlined that these relationships should not be overestimated (Bo, *China's Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing*, 148).

⁵⁵¹ On Chiang Ching-kuo and the Youth Corps, see : Liu, "Indoctrinating the Youth: Guomindang Policy on Secondary Education in Wartime China and Postwar Taiwan, 1937-1960," 103-108.

autonomy from the KMT⁵⁵² contrary to the CYL from the CCP, which allowed Chiang Ching-kuo to recruit and promote the people he liked within the organization.

While intra-party conflicts led to the demise of the Three People's Principles Youth Corps in 1947,⁵⁵³ the network built by Chiang Ching-kuo survived and moved to Taiwan. The KMT established another youth organization in 1952, the China Youth National Salvation Corps (*Zhongguo qingnian jiuguo tuan*, 中国青年救国团), and Chiang Ching-kuo was put in charge of the organization. According to Jennifer Liu, besides his functions in the military, this organization was the only source of power in Chiang Ching-kuo's hands, which eventually helped him to succeed to his father as the KMT leader.⁵⁵⁴ Chiang Ching-kuo headed the Youth Corps during twenty years in Taiwan, and used the organization to promote to leadership positions some of his former affiliates, as well as to establish a base of young supporters. After him, Chiang's former allies Lee Huan or Pan Zhenqiu were alternatively appointed Director of the Corps in the 1970s and 1980s. Lee Huan then became Premier of Taiwan in 1989.⁵⁵⁵ Interestingly, after Chiang Ching-kuo's death, the China Youth National Salvation Corps lost of its importance as a promotion channel for KMT officials and increasingly focused on recreational youth activities.⁵⁵⁶

The contrast in the ways the KMT's youth organizations and the CYL functioned as promotion channels is revealing. In the first case, Chiang Ching-kuo's personal faction survived the organizations themselves. As argued by Kou and Tsai, it was above all a personal network, using the youth organizations as instruments.⁵⁵⁷ On the contrary, the CYL as a promotion channel survived Hu Yaobang's or Hu Jintao's disappearances and has continuously brought new blood to the CCP.

While factional networks exist in the organization, as we have seen in the cases of Hu Yaobang and Hu Jintao, the CYL's lack of autonomy prevents the formation of a united faction attached to the organization that would be consistent overtime. As the Party leaders select the CYL leaders, whoever is in charge can use it to promote potential followers, they can all

⁵⁵² Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration*, 124.

⁵⁵³ Liu, "Indoctrinating the Youth: Guomindang Policy on Secondary Education in Wartime China and Postwar Taiwan, 1937-1960," 103.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁵⁵⁶ On the Youth Corps in the 1990s, see : Thomas A Brindley, *The China Youth Corps in Taiwan* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

⁵⁵⁷ Tsai and Kou, "The Party's Disciples: CCP Reserve Cadres and the Perpetuation of a Resilient Authoritarian Regime," 15.

develop their own *tuanpai*. This is also true at the local levels and I come back in Chapter Seven to the implications of the existence of this multiplicity of networks.

It implies that when a new leader comes to power, it is in his interest to purge the CYL, in order to sideline his predecessor's affiliates and to once again use the organization to promote his own. It was true in the years following Hu Yaobang's fall and it repeats itself now that Hu Jintao is no more in power. The demise of Ling Jihua, arrested for corruption in 2014, is a good symbol of such political turnover.⁵⁵⁸ He served in the central CYL while Hu Jintao was heading the organization and later became his personal secretary.⁵⁵⁹

At the same time, investigation teams have been sent to the central CYL at the end of 2015 as part of Xi Jinping's anticorruption campaign launched in 2013. As a result, the CYL was accused of "becoming more and more bureaucratic, administrative, aristocratic and entertainment-oriented" (*jiguanhua, xingzhenghua, guizuhua, yulehua, 机关化, 行政化, 贵族化, 娱乐化*).⁵⁶⁰ Given the political nature of such anti-corruption campaigns, this cannot help being perceived as a sign that the central CYL cadres are directly targeted by Xi Jinping.⁵⁶¹ Wan Qingliang, Pan Yiyang and Yu Yuanhui, all former members of the CYL Central Committee, have already been purged during this campaign.⁵⁶² In August 2016, the CCP Politburo Standing Committee adopted a reform project of the League: the "Proposal on the Reform of the Central Youth League" (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang gaige fang'an, 共青团中央改革方案*). It emphasizes the Party's control over the League and calls for a drastic decrease of the CYL personnel at the central and provincial levels.⁵⁶³ It also exemplifies Xi's taking full control over the organization. I come back in the Conclusion to these various evolutions that

⁵⁵⁸ On Ling Jihua demise and trial, see : Edward Wong, "Ling Jihua, Ex-Presidential Aide in China, Gets Life Sentence for Corruption," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2016.

⁵⁵⁹ Ling Jihua's CV can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Ling_Jihua/career, consulted on 20 February 2016.

⁵⁶⁰ "The 2nd Central Inspection Team Gives Feedback Regarding the Circumstances of the Special Inspection of the Central Communist Youth League (*zhongyang di'er xunshizu xiang gongqingtuan zhongyang fankui zhuanxiang xunshi qingkuang, 中央第二巡视组向共青团中央反馈专项巡视情况*)," Website of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, February 4, 2016 (http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yw/201602/t20160203_73930.html, consulted on 20 February 2016).

⁵⁶¹ As it is still an ongoing phenomenon, no academic research studied Xi Jinping's anticorruption campaign in comparison with previous equivalents. Still, some analysts have written on the topic, see in particular : Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "China's Anti-Graft Campaign in Review," *China Brief* 15, no. 23 (December 2015).

⁵⁶² Daniel Ren, "Strike Two: Communist Youth League 'aristocracy' under Fire Again," *South China Morning Post*, February 9, 2016.

⁵⁶³ "Proposal on the Reform of the Central Youth League (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang gaige fang'an, 共青团中央改革方案*)," Central CYL, 2 August 2016.

influence CYL officials' trajectory in the Xi Jinping era, and what it tells us about the direction taken by the regime.

Looking at the whole picture, analysis based purely on factional politics cannot explain the CYL's resilience overtime as a promotion channel and how it survived the various networks that populated the organization. In order to do so, I consider the CYL as an organization rather than a faction, and I take seriously the type of opportunities it provides to young officials.

2) How did the standardization of the cadre system favor CYL officials?

a) The issue of age at the center of the Chinese cadre system

After the reforms of the 1980s that we already mentioned, the CCP continued to transform its recruitment and promotion standards in order to improve the education level of its cadres and facilitate turnover.⁵⁶⁴ One of the key changes has been the implementation of rules concerning the age of leading officials. Quotas of young people and age limits above which cadre could not be appointed to leading positions, were progressively implemented at all levels of the polity. In the line of Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang's measures in order to build a support base of young officials, the goal was to accelerate the rejuvenation of the cadres' corps started in the 1980s and to constantly renew the Party leadership.⁵⁶⁵

In 1995, the "Notice regarding the CCP's control, cultivation and selection of talented young cadres" (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhuajin peiyang xuanba youxiu nianqing ganbu de tongzhi*, 中共中央关于抓紧培养选拔优秀年轻干部的通知) underlined the evolution in terms of Party rejuvenation since the 1980s but emphasized that progress should be made. To do so, it established specific rules regarding the age of officials, which were supposed to be met within five years. At the provincial level, a certain number of leading officials should be around 50 years old and there should be at least one around 45. At the city level, the aim was to have at least two leading officials under 45 and one around 40. At the county level, there should be at least one under 35 years old.⁵⁶⁶ In 2000, the rules became more precise in order to accelerate the process. The new objective for the coming years was to have five leading officials around

⁵⁶⁴ Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China."

⁵⁶⁵ On the question of age rules for leading officials, see : Kou and Tsai, "'Sprinting with Small Steps' Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System," 153–170; Tsai and Kou, "The Party's Disciples: CCP Reserve Cadres and the Perpetuation of a Resilient Authoritarian Regime," 1–20.

⁵⁶⁶ "Notice Regarding the CCP's Control, Cultivation and Selection of Talented Young Cadres (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhuajin peiyang xuanba youxiu nianqing ganbu de tongzhi*, 中共中央关于抓紧培养选拔优秀年轻干部的通知)," Central Office of the CCP, 7 January 1995.

50 years old at the provincial level, four of around 45 years old at the city level, and one of around 35 at the county level.⁵⁶⁷

Following this trend, numerous local rules were developed, including quotas and ages of ineligibility for leading positions. As highlighted by Kou and Tsai, age limits became a complicated system affecting promotions at every level of the Chinese polity. For instance, an official cannot be appointed to a position of minister or provincial governor after 63 years old. For a bureau director, or the mayor of a medium city, the limit would be set at 55 years old.⁵⁶⁸ Going through the various local rules, the authors highlight an average age of ineligibility for leading cadre positions at the different ranks, reproduced in Table 2.1.⁵⁶⁹ As developed in the Introduction, ranks for leading cadres start at the section leadership level (*keji*, 科级), the equivalent of a township leader or a department director in a county level government, and go up to the State leadership level (*guoji*, 国级).

At the same time as these age-related rules, regulated periods for cadre tenure as well as step-by-step promotions were implemented. The idea was to fix a minimum of years the cadres had to serve in every position they hold in order to prevent accelerated promotions based on favoritism.⁵⁷⁰ These regulations were progressively developed and the “Interim Provisions for Party and Government Leading Cadre Tenure” (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu zhiwu renqi zanxing guiding*, 党政领导干部职务任期暂行规定) of 2006 established that all Party-State leading cadres must stay a full five-year term in each position before they can be promoted. In addition, the cadres cannot skip ranks and have to be promoted from one level up to the next.⁵⁷¹ If these regulations are not always fully implemented, they rule the overall cadres system.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁷ “Opinion of the CCP Central Organization Department Regarding the Improvement of the Cultivation and Selection of Talented Young Cadres (*Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhibu guanyu jinyibu zuohao peiyang xuanba youxiu nianqing ganbu gongzuo de yijian*, 中共中央组织部关于进一步做好培养选拔优秀年轻干部工作的意见),” Central Office of the CCP, 5 September 2000.

⁵⁶⁸ Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 157.

⁵⁶⁹ Leading cadres are the ones holding the top positions within a locale or a unit, such as a minister or a mayor. See the entry “civil service system” in the glossary for more details regarding the difference between basic cadres and leading cadres.

⁵⁷⁰ On regulated tenure and step by step promotions, see : Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 158.

⁵⁷¹ “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例),” Central CCP, 29 February 1995.

⁵⁷² On the exceptions, see : Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 162–170.

It is interesting to note that when combined, these rules regarding promotion age, tenure period and step-by-step promotion, make an appointment to highly ranked positions almost impossible. In order to get to top positions one has to start his career very young or to use shortcuts.⁵⁷³ Kou and Tsai illustrated this phenomena taking as an example a young university graduate who becomes at 30 years old a deputy section director and who is always promoted in his later career. They underlined that if he follows the rules he will never be able to become deputy minister. He would be 60 years old when rising to this rank while the age of ineligibility is 58.⁵⁷⁴ In Table 2.1 below, the column “expected age of promotion based on regulated tenure” presents this phenomena.

The CYL is an organization where one can start his career very young, but it has also become in post-Mao China a shortcut in terms of age promotion. In 1982 and under Hu Yaobang’s initiative, the CYL established age limits for its own cadres, at the different levels of the hierarchy.⁵⁷⁵ The ages of ineligibility for promotion of leading cadres within the CYL can be found in Table 2.1.⁵⁷⁶ While the official reason was that as a youth organization its leaders should not be too much older than its members, it had a major impact on the promotion of its cadres. Starting in the 1980s, it forced them to look for promotion opportunities as they could not stay in the organization too long. It accelerated the turnover within the organization.

More importantly, when the age rules were developed within the Party-State, the CYL leaders found themselves with an age advantage when transferring to Party-State positions. For instance, as a CYL Central Committee First Secretary cannot be older than 45 when appointed, he has to transfer while relatively young to a similarly ranked position within the Party-State. Between 45 and 50 years old he would therefore become a central minister or a provincial governor. Similar situations are found at lower echelons of the polity.

⁵⁷³ On the shortcuts, see: Ibid. 162–170.

⁵⁷⁴ The age of 30 is based on the idea that it takes around 8 years after graduation from college to reach the rank of deputy section director (Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 157.

⁵⁷⁵ Rosen, “Prosperity, Privatization, and China’s Youth,” 28.

⁵⁷⁶ “Opinion Regarding the Question of the Age of the CYL Committee Leading Cadres at the Different Levels (*guanyu geji tuanwei lingdao ganbu wenti de yijian*, 关于各级团委领导干部年龄问题的意见),” CCP Organization Department, 14 May 1982.

Table 2.1: Age rules for leading cadres and the CYL officials' age advantage⁵⁷⁷

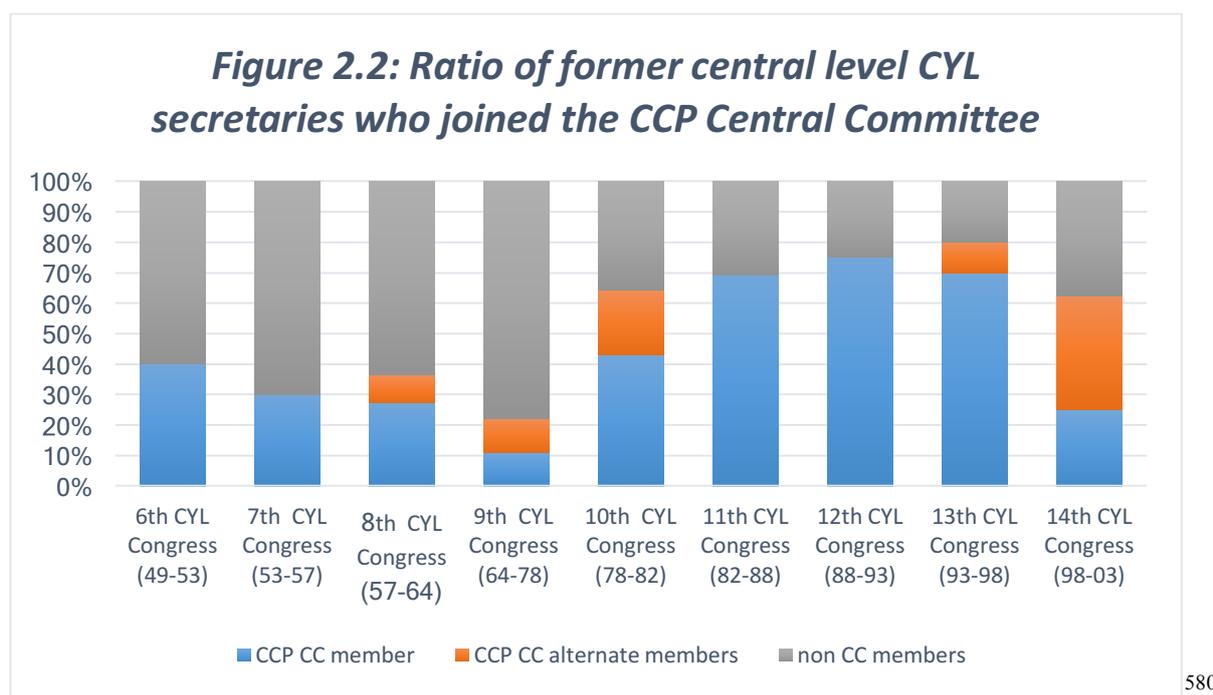
| Position Rank | Expected age of promotion based on regulated tenure | Age of ineligibility for promotion in the Party-State | Age of ineligibility for promotion in the CYL | Example of corresponding Party-State position |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| State Leader (<i>zheng guoji</i> , 正国级) | 75 | 67 | none | Premier |
| Deputy State Leader (<i>fu guoji</i> , 副国级) | 70 | 67 | none | State Counsellor |
| Minister (<i>zheng buji</i> , 正部级) | 65 | 63 | 45 | Provincial Governor |
| Deputy Minister (<i>fu buji</i> , 副部级) | 60 | 58 | 45 | Provincial Vice-Governor |
| Bureau Director (<i>zheng tingji</i> , 正厅级) | 55 | 55 | 40 | City Mayor |
| Deputy Bureau Director (<i>fu tingji</i> , 副厅级) | 50 | 52 | 38 | City Deputy Mayor |
| Division Director (<i>zheng chuji</i> , 正处级) | 45 | 50 | 35 | County Governor |
| Deputy Division Director (<i>fu chuji</i> , 副处级) | 40 | 45 | 32 | County Vice-Governor |
| Section Director (<i>zheng keji</i> , 正科级) | 35 | 40 | 30 | Township Head |
| Deputy Section Director (<i>fu keji</i> , 副科级) | 30 | 40 | 28 | Township Vice-Head |

Against this background, the CYL cadres are promoted to relatively high ranked positions within the CYL while still young, and they have a clear age advantage compared to their counterparts from outside the CYL when they transfer to other positions. In fact, the CYL counts a lot of medium and highly ranked positions allowing such transfers. According to Kou,

⁵⁷⁷ There is no State Leader level position in the CYL (sources for the table : Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 69; Kou and Tsai, "'Sprinting with Small Steps' Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System," 157–161).

in 2013 it included more than 220 positions ranked as deputy bureau director and above.⁵⁷⁸ Still, such transfers can happen at very different moments in a cadres' career and at various ranks.⁵⁷⁹

Overall, under a system with strict age restrictions, such an advantage is very valuable in a cadre's career and it highly facilitates the future career of CYL officials. Since the 1980s, this specific configuration has allowed the CYL leaders to be continuously promoted to top positions in the Party-State. Looking at the future career of central CYL secretaries, one can notice that the vast majority of them eventually became CCP Central Committee members. This is represented in Figure 2.2.



In Figure 2.2, we can see that during the Mao era, the promotion of former CYL leaders to the CCP Central Committee varying between 20% and 40% is far from the rule. From 1949

⁵⁷⁸ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 152.

⁵⁷⁹ Looking at the member of the 15th CCP Central Committee (1997) who had a working experience in the CYL, Zheng Changzhong counted that half of them left the CYL at a position below deputy bureau director, on average between 25 and 32 years old, while the other half left while holding a higher ranked position, approximately between 38 and 46 years old (Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 201).

⁵⁸⁰ For each CYL congress, from the 6th to the 14th, I went through the future career of the different central CYL secretaries, up to 2012, to see if they eventually became members of the CCP Central Committee. It includes the CYL Central Committee First Secretary as well as the rest of the team of CYL secretaries, which represents around ten people per congress (n=93). To prevent confusion, the congresses here mentioned are the CYL ones and not the CCP's. Data sources: The name list for central CYL secretaries can be found here : "Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央)." The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by *baidu.baik*e, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites.

to 1978 only a few leaders of the CYL made it to the Central Committee at all. Looking at the details of their careers only two CYL secretaries became CCP Central Committee members before the Cultural Revolution, Liao Chengzhi and Hu Yaobang. As described earlier, a few additional CYL secretaries from the 1950s or 1960s reached the Central Committee after 1978. This situation changed after the Cultural Revolution. Starting with the 10th Congress of the CYL, and especially after the 11th, almost all of the central CYL secretaries made it later in their career to the Party Central Committee. Few exceptions aside, it became a pattern. For instance, of the eight CYL secretaries nominated at the 11th Congress of the CYL, only two did not make it, among whom one died at 44 years old, too young to possibly have reached the Central Committee.

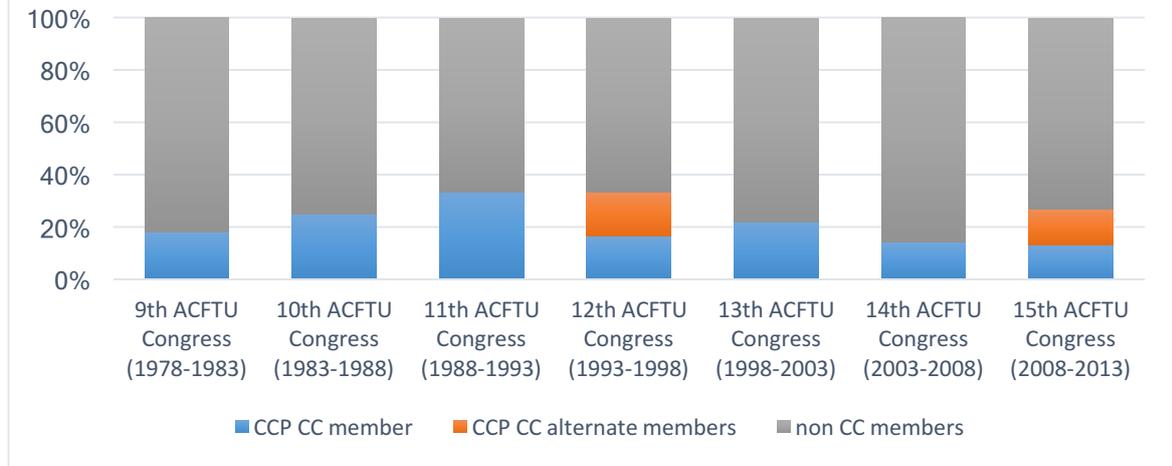
The same pattern holds for the 12th and 13th Congress. It clearly survived Hu Yaobang's fall, previous to the CYL 12th Congress. Regarding the 14th CYL Congress of 1998, one should note that most of the concerned officials are still relatively young and might make it to the Central Committee in the future. I did not include the 15th Congress (2005), 16th Congress (2008) and the 17th Congress (2013) of the CYL to the current analysis for the obvious reason that most of the subsequent CYL leaders are still too young to be appointed to the CCP Central Committee.

In addition to be promoted to these top positions, they are appointed there earlier than other officials. Looking at the previous career of the youngest Chinese officials, the ones born in the 1960s, who were holding a ministerial level position in 2013, Kou Chien-wen showed that 43% of them had a working experience in the CYL.⁵⁸¹ The age advantage CYL officials have, compared with other high-ranking officials, structurally plays in their favor in terms of promotion pace. The CYL therefore became since the 1980s an institutionalized channel for promotion to the top Party positions. The consistency of the phenomenon overtime does not follow the cyclical factional narrative I discussed earlier.

Comparing with other mass organizations, we can see that this function as promotion channel is specific to the CYL. In Figure 2.3, I look at the future career of the All-China Federation of Trade-Unions (ACFTU) leaders since 1978. As we can see, only a small ratio of them, generally around 20%, eventually made it to the CCP Central Committee during their career.

⁵⁸¹ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 157.

Figure 2.3: Ratio of former ACFTU leaders who joined the CCP Central Committee



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The CYL leaders are generally lesser ranked than the ACFTU leaders⁵⁸³ but they are younger and often have a brighter future ahead. Such difference was reflected in my interviews, as the ACFTU, as well as the Women Federation, were presented as “less political” organizations by various interviewees, in the sense that they are less relevant for one’s political career, both at the local and central levels.⁵⁸⁴ I now show how the CYL’s political features implies an early specialization of its leaders.

b) The Youth League as a venue towards leadership positions

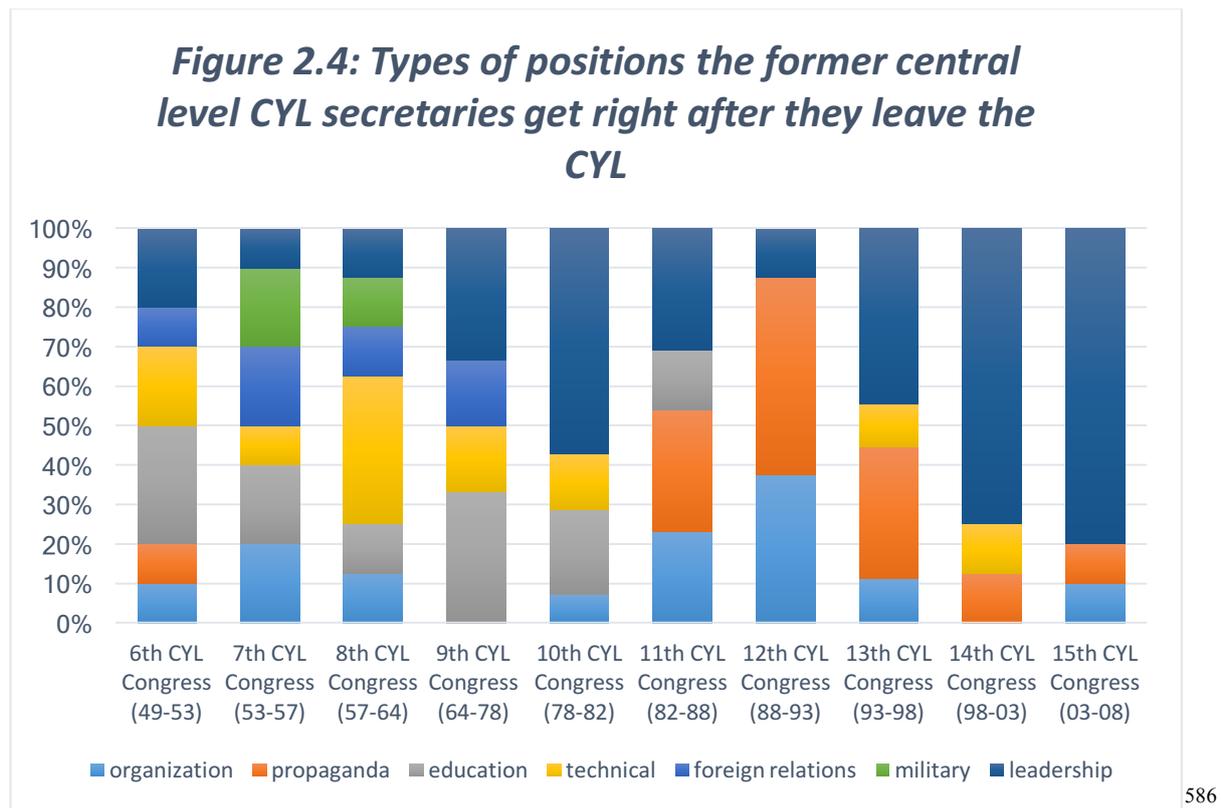
As developed in Chapter One, the Youth League is very similar to the Party in the way it is organized. In addition, it manages a large range of activities encompassing various groups and objectives. In this regard, it can be described as a generalist organization, a kind of smaller version of the Party dedicated to a large range of issues, as long as they are related to youth. For this reason, when the CYL leaders leave the organization, they are largely transferred to

⁵⁸² For each ACFTU congress, from the 9th to the 15th, I went through the future career up to 2012 of the different ACFTU Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen, around eight individuals per congress, to see if they eventually became members of the CCP Central Committee (n=67). To prevent confusion, the congresses here mentioned are the ACFTU ones and not the CCP’s. Data sources: Several name lists for former ACFTU leaders can be found on the internet, I cross-examined them. See in particular: http://www.360doc.com/content/13/0209/10/7499155_264934298.shtml (Consulted on 15 June 2016). The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites.

⁵⁸³ For instance, the CYL Central Committee First Secretary is a ministerial level official whereas the ACFTU Chairman is generally a Politburo member with a rank of Deputy State Leader (Source: The official CVs of the cadres found on *Xinhua*).

⁵⁸⁴ Interviews with cadre 1, academic 16, and cadre 34.

specific positions within the Party-State that are not highly specialized or technical.⁵⁸⁵ As shown in Figure 2.4, this functional specialization has strengthened and changed over time. Looking at the kind of positions central CYL secretaries transfer to right after they leave the CYL, we can see that an increasing number of them are being appointed to generalist leadership positions (e.g. local Party secretaries or governors).



In line with the elite dualism theory which argues for an increasing separation of officials between more political and generalist ones and more technically specialized ones,⁵⁸⁷ we can see in Figure 2.4 a clear tendency towards an increasing specialization overtime of cadres' careers. By contrast to more technocratic and specialized positions, within a functional

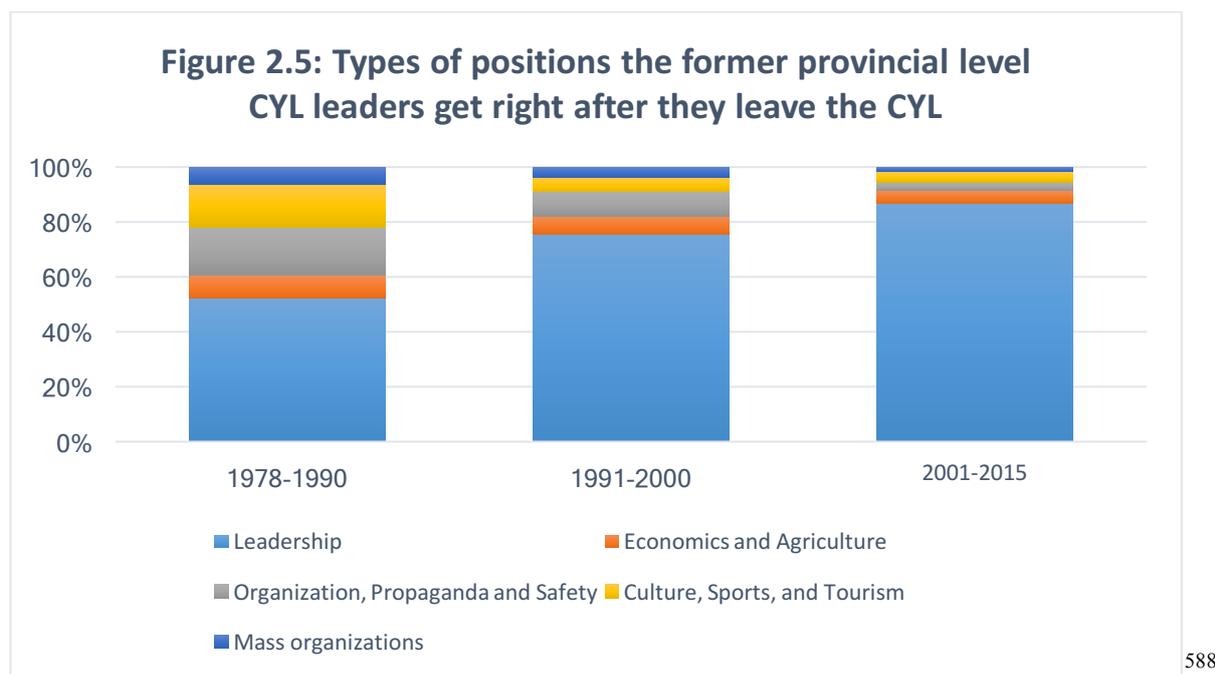
⁵⁸⁵ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 144.

⁵⁸⁶ For each CYL congress, from the 6th to the 15th, I went through the future career of the different central CYL secretaries to see to what position they got appointed right after they left the CYL. It includes the CYL Central Committee First Secretary as well as the rest of the team of CYL secretaries which represents around ten people per congress (n=103). I coded these positions in various categories depending on the administration they were working in. To prevent confusion, the congresses here mentioned are the CYL ones and not the CCP's. Data sources: the name list for central CYL secretaries can be found here : "Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央)," Website of the PRC Government. It can be accessed here: http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-01/27/content_173796_6.htm (Consulted on 15 June 2016). Their CVs can be found on *Xinhua.cn*.

⁵⁸⁷ See the Introduction for more details on elite dualism theory.

ministry for instance, the CYL officials are increasingly promoted to generalist positions as local political leaders. Before the Cultural Revolution, career specialization was far from obvious. The central CYL leaders were promoted to positions in the Organization Department or the Propaganda Department, but also to technical, educational or military ones. Only a few were actually promoted to leadership positions, generally as local CCP secretaries. After the Cultural Revolution, the ratio of former CYL leaders being promoted to such positions has increased considerably. While some of them were still promoted to positions in the Propaganda Department or the Organization Department, which symbolize core Party work, becoming a local leader became usual.

This tendency towards increased specialization, clear at the central level, was also progressively developed at the local one. Looking at what kind of positions the provincial level CYL leaders (secretaries and deputy secretaries of CYL committees in provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities) were transferred to when they left the organization, we can see a similar trend. This is represented in Figure 2.5.



⁵⁸⁸ I went through the future career of the different provincial CYL secretaries and deputy secretaries, from 1978 to 2015, to see to what position they transferred to right after they left the CYL (n= 230). I coded these positions in various categories depending on the administration they were working in. Data sources: Several name lists for former provincial CYL secretaries can be found on the internet, I cross-examined them and verified them with local CYL officials. See in particular: http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=pg3Z-9wNGpnu_KwwZTp3JhPgnOVgF1PmAe8qKkHUy8OmhmITp3LgJeleRAXjb_CTQMSQ-bFXmj117HfGt2qS0LpY_NsSIf12N_SrCWVkvN7 (Consulted on 18 August 216). See for instance in the case of Guizhou Province: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_607ad7e80102w7j3.html (Consulted on 15 June 2016). The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on

As we can see in Figure 2.5, the type of positions provincial CYL leaders would get in the 1980s were diverse, ranging from agriculture to culture. The beginning of the specialization process is particularly clear in the 1990s onwards, as almost 80% of the provincial CYL leaders appointed between 1991 and 2000 directly became local Party-State leaders. This specialization went even farther in the 2000s. This trend had a large impact on the Party-State leadership as numerous former CYL cadres entered local leadership structures. Between 2001 and 2005, 37.82% of the members of provincial CCP committees had a working experience in the CYL at various levels.⁵⁸⁹ More recently, 45% of the provincial Party secretaries and governors in charge by March 2015 had such an experience in the CYL.⁵⁹⁰

Such high ratios show that the CYL has become a grooming channel for future local CCP leaders. I come back in the Third Part of this dissertation to the actual process through which these cadres are transformed into local politicians and how they qualify themselves. While defining such positions as generalist is here useful to highlight the evolution of the CYL officials' careers overtime, the superficiality of this categorization should not be forgotten. Questioning the unicity of this category I focus in Chapter Six on the evolution overtime of the profiles of cadres going through the CYL and being appointed to leadership positions.

In this chapter I have shown how the CYL's function as a promotion channel to Party leadership evolved with the CCP's rejuvenation policy. It was first used as a political tool by Hu Yaobang and Deng Xiaoping in order to promote young supporters. The politicization of age within the CCP was therefore linked to a specific political context in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Still, the rejuvenation policy, and with it the CYL's function as a key promotion channel, survived its political momentum through the institutionalization of specific age-based rules which transformed the Party-State cadre management system. These rules were institutionalized at every hierarchical echelon of the Party-State and they developed a life of their own. They survived their initiators and the initial purpose of creating a personal power base.

the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites.

⁵⁸⁹ Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 147.

⁵⁹⁰ Data sources: The official CVs of the cadres found on *Xinhua*.

The PRC became the only Leninist regime to develop such a strict system of age rules for its officials.⁵⁹¹ The CCP's rejuvenation policy was very different from what had been implemented before in the USSR for instance. In the post-Stalin era, Khrushchev (1953-1964) pushed for a higher turnover in the Party apparatus and for recruitment based on technical skills.⁵⁹² This could appear similar to what happened after the Cultural Revolution. However, Khrushchev pushed for the cooptation of a specialized elite who often had a previous professional experience outside the Party, rather than recruiting young cadres who would spend their career in the Party-State as has been the case in China. He targeted a different support base than Deng Xiaoping.⁵⁹³ Clear age-based rules were not established for promotion at every level of the polity. In that configuration and by contrast with the Chinese case, the classical Leninist organizations such as the Youth League played a lesser role in recruitment. Gehlen showed that in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the number of central and local Party leaders who previously had a position in the Komsomol went from 34% in 1952 to 8% in 1968.⁵⁹⁴

Brezhnev (1964-1982) took another approach than his predecessor. He nurtured his support based among established Party officials, rather than promoting technical specialists. He therefore came back on the practices developed under his predecessor, but also did not choose to implement age-based rules or a rejuvenation policy. As a result, without even clear retirement regulations, the Party leadership drastically aged under his leadership, leading to what have been called a "gerontocracy". In 1980, 75% of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Politburo had more than 60 years old and 30% had more than 70.⁵⁹⁵ This situation contrasts with the Chinese case. However, the Chinese uniqueness in the matter might be challenged on the long run with the evolution of the political context. It appears that the importance of age as a criterion in cadres' recruitment and promotion has been decreasing under Xi Jinping, which could eventually lead to an overall aging of the cadres corps.⁵⁹⁶ The most recent development

⁵⁹¹ Pierre F Landry, "The Political Management of Mayors in Post-Deng China," in *Bringing the Party Back in: How China Is Governed*, ed. Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Yongnian Zheng (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004), 141–74.

⁵⁹² Carrère d'Encausse, *Le pouvoir confisqué: gouvernants et gouvernés en U.R.S.S. [Confiscated power: rulers and ruled in USSR]*, 243.

⁵⁹³ On the difference between coopted rather than recruited cadres under Khrushchev, see : William A Welsh, "The Comparative Study of Political Leadership in Communist Systems," in *Comparative Communist Political Leadership*, by Carl Beck et al. (New York: D. McKay Co., 1973), 1–42.

⁵⁹⁴ Gehlen referred to the apparatchiki in the Central Committee, who include the Central Committee members who were Party secretaries at the central, republic or province levels (Gehlen, "The Soviet Apparatchiki," 143).

⁵⁹⁵ Carrère d'Encausse, *Le pouvoir confisqué: gouvernants et gouvernés en U.R.S.S. [Confiscated power: rulers and ruled in USSR]*, 242.

⁵⁹⁶ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 35, and cadre 36.

program regarding leading cadres has in fact noted that age limits should not be used too strictly for individual personnel transfers.⁵⁹⁷ However it is still too soon to clearly assess the actual impact of these measures, to which I come back in the Conclusion.

Despite some potential changes to come, and in contrast to the Soviet case, we have seen how post-Cultural Revolution politics led to age becoming a key political issue in China. By opposition to the young activists promoted under Mao, Deng had to cultivate his own support base of young officials. After ten years of Cultural Revolution he also could not rely solely on the promotion of intellectuals and technical specialists, largely older and purged.⁵⁹⁸ The rejuvenation policy then initiated led to the development of a system of age-based rules managing recruitments at all levels. Besides the CCP, it seems that such developed system of age limits for recruitment and promotion can only be found in military organizations.⁵⁹⁹ However, the rationale for age limits in militaries, largely based on the idea that the recruits must be physically fit for combat, is very different from our case.

The unique age-based rules developed by the CCP give a structural advantage to CYL officials. At the same time, the decentralized nature of the Chinese polity allows for Party leaders to appoint the CYL leadership at the various levels and therefore to use it as a way to promote affiliates. Instead of a unified Youth League faction, CYL officials are included in multiple networks. I hence argue that the survival of the CYL as a key promotion channel is not the result of the emergence of an overarching Youth League faction. Rather, it is the product of the institutionalization of the CCP's rejuvenation policy and its alignment with the personal interest of various Party leaders who can use this springboard to their advantage. I come back in Chapter Seven to the various networks created by CYL officials and what it tells us about the overall functioning of the Chinese Party-State.

Since the 1980s, the focus on age has gone hand in hand with an increasing specialization of cadres' careers. Officials take a specific professional path early in their career, especially between technocratic or generalist positions. Hence, political trajectories are increasingly separated from administrative ones, and the CYL is an early promotion channel towards the

⁵⁹⁷ "Development Program Concerning the Establishment of a National Party and State Leadership for 2014-2018 (2014-2018 nian quanguo dangzheng lingdao banzi jianshe guihua gangyao, 2014-2018 年全国党政领导班子建设规划纲要)," Central Office of the CCP, 25 December 2014.

⁵⁹⁸ On the purges during the Cultural Revolution, see: Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁵⁹⁹ For example, the French military has a system of age limits for every rank of noncommissioned officers and officers. Regarding the rules, see: <http://legimobile.fr/fr/lr/code/defense/20150131/sec6182637/> (Consulted on 22 August 2016).

former. In line with the concept of elite dualism developed in the Introduction, the separation between careers as bureaucrats and politicians, fundamental in democratic systems, has been emerging as a clear feature of the Chinese political system. This echoes the literature underlining a progressive normalization of the Chinese political system while it keeps its overall structure.⁶⁰⁰

Against this background, the CYL became a channel for early political professionalization. Young officials specialize themselves early on as CYL leaders, and are eventually promoted to generalist leadership positions in the Party-State. The literature on elite dualism has focused on this kind of early specialization and highlighted that only officials who have become CCP members very early in their career actually have a chance to reach important positions in the Party. This is presented as an early commitment to the Party symbolizing an official's loyalty.⁶⁰¹ Similar analyses have been made in the case of western communist parties. Comparing such parties in Italy, France, and the US, Holt has, in the 1950s, showed that their leaders had been recruited very young by the organization. He hypothesized that this was linked to the type of loyalty this parties demanded from their militants. Still, he did not really get into the details of the commitment process.⁶⁰²

At the end of this First Part, the CYL appears as an organization through which officials can commit themselves early on to a political career, and eventually be promoted to top positions in the Party-State. Still, the mechanisms through which this commitment is developed and sustained overtime remains unknown. What are the implications at the agents' level of the CYL's evolutions that we developed in this First Part of the dissertation? What are the mechanisms through which they become committed to a career in the Party-State and how does it influence their future trajectory? These questions are the core of the Second and Third Parts of the dissertation, focusing on various stages in the career of youth organization cadres.

⁶⁰⁰ See in particular : Jean-Louis Rocca, "Is China Becoming an Ordinary State?," in *Privatising the State*, ed. Béatrice Hibou (C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2004), 169–82.

⁶⁰¹ Li and Walder, "Career Advancement as Party Patronage: Sponsored Mobility into the Chinese Administrative Elite, 1949-1996."

⁶⁰² Robert T. Holt, "Age as a Factor in the Recruitment of Communist Leadership," *The American Political Science Review* 48, no. 2 (June 1954): 486–99.

II. “L’Ecole du Vice”

In the First Part, I detailed the evolution of the CYL as an organization and examined how it became from the 1980s onwards a major channel for promoting young officials within the Party-State. I am now completely changing my perspective, switching from a focus on the organization itself towards an analysis of the recruits’ trajectories. I turn to the mechanisms through which they become committed to a career in the Party-State.

Part Two is entitled “l’école du vice,” which can be roughly translated as “school of vice,” in reference to former French President François Mitterrand’s depiction of the youth organization in his own party. Mitterrand saw it as a place where young people learned all the tricks and vices of politicians. Similarly, I demonstrate in the following lines that volunteering for Party-related organizations while studying in a Chinese university implies diving into the world of officials.

Studies regarding different types of social mobility prove particularly useful to understand how the elite’s commitment is cultivated overtime. Turner developed the concept of “sponsored” mobility to describe the British educational system, in contrast to the “contest” mobility which is characteristic of the American one. Sponsored mobility is based on controlled selection rather than competition. Some individuals are selected and placed early on a mobility path towards elite status. They are trained and slowly inducted within the elite.⁶⁰³ This concept geared towards the description of educational systems can be transposed to analyze political professionalization. Sponsored mobility is commonly used in communist parties since it enables the promotion of people who have been educated within the party and have little capital outside the system. Having few exit options, they tend to remain loyal to the organization.⁶⁰⁴ The concept of sponsored mobility has been used by Li and Walder to describe political mobility in post-Mao China. They showed that early recruitment in the CCP was crucial to

⁶⁰³ Turner, “Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System,” 855–867.

⁶⁰⁴ Holt, “Age as a Factor in the Recruitment of Communist Leadership”; Bernard Pudal, *Prendre parti: pour une sociologie historique du PCF [Choose your party: for a historical sociology of the French Communist Party]* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1989), 51; Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l’État: cours au Collège de France, 1989-1992 [On the State: lectures at College de France, 1989-1992]* (Paris: Raisons d’agir-Seuil, 2011), 413.

attain political positions.⁶⁰⁵ But no detailed analysis of the promotion process itself has been done so far.

In this Second Part, I unveil the mechanisms of political sponsored mobility in China starting with the key role played by CCP youth organizations on campus. I argue that becoming a student cadre (*xuesheng ganbu*, 学生干部) in these organizations on campus constitutes a crucial primary phase in one's personal trajectory towards officialdom. What I identify as "the student cadre experience" is characterized by recurring features, similar to the ones analyzed by Turner: a) an early selection of the future elite members which goes together with the individual internalization of elite's codes and status; b) a club sociability among the recruits themselves; c) a strong involvement of elite members in the selection process through what is akin to a form of mentorship.⁶⁰⁶

The student cadres are officially defined as the students who work voluntarily for CCP and CYL organizations, for the student union, as well as for student associations at different levels on campus.⁶⁰⁷ While these are voluntary positions and they are not paid officials, they play a key control function on campus and I argue that this experience can have a deep impact on their future career. Surprisingly, the student cadre experience is completely absent from the English or French literature on contemporary China.

Despite their absence in the literature, student cadres in universities share common characteristics with the student "activists" (*jiji fenzi*, 积极分子), who were the kingpin of the Maoist education system. In Maoist terms, "activist" refers to the broad group of people who are not CYL or CCP members yet but actively compete for membership. They are the "progressive elements" (*jindu fenzi*, 进步分子) on which Party members rely to implement policies.⁶⁰⁸ As showed by Solomon, the concept of "activist" emerged in the Soviet Union but became more widely developed in the Chinese context: activists could be found in every social organization.⁶⁰⁹

Several studies have highlighted the role of activists in the Maoist schooling system. Starting from primary school, pupils competed to become "pioneers," who were portrayed as

⁶⁰⁵ Li and Walder, "Career Advancement as Party Patronage: Sponsored Mobility into the Chinese Administrative Elite, 1949-1996," 1371-1408.

⁶⁰⁶ Turner, "Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System," 855-867.

⁶⁰⁷ "Plan for the Cultivation of University Student Cadres 2006-2010 (*gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu peiyang guihua 2006-2010*, 高校学生干部培养规划 2006-2010)," Central CYL, 29 August 2006.

⁶⁰⁸ Richard H Solomon, "On Activism and Activists: Maoist Conceptions of Motivation and Political Role Linking State to Society," *The China Quarterly*, no. 39 (1969): 97-100.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

an elite. As described by Chan, the best behaved, most enthusiastic and academically diligent were selected by their teachers. Among the pioneers, the most active ones became activists, serving as mediators between students and teachers.⁶¹⁰ Each class had four to seven hierarchically organized activists, according to Unger, and they were expected to help the teacher manage the other students and keep order in the class.⁶¹¹

A similar system could be found in high schools, with students competing for CYL membership. According to Shirk, only half the students were admitted into the CYL during the 1960s, and they had to be outstanding activists.⁶¹² Political competition in high school was fierce at the time because political standing was a criterion to access higher education. The political competition was overall harsher than the academic one as it was seen as less transparent by the students, and it often implied criticizing one's comrades for their lack of activism.⁶¹³ This led to what Shirk called a "virtuocracy," a system of social promotion based on one's political virtue. The definition of political virtue remaining highly flexible, it gave leeway to teachers and school officials to put forward the students they valued.⁶¹⁴

While the overall system of Party-related organizations in primary schools and high schools remains the same, activism does not have the same value in post-Mao China. Class background, political performance and academic achievement were the three main selection criteria for entering higher education during the Mao era. With the suppression of class background as a selection criterion and the reinstatement of examination for entering higher education in 1977, academic performance became key.⁶¹⁵ The student cadres and professors I interviewed underlined that high school students are now mostly concerned with their grades at the exams, and not really with activism. Reflecting this tendency, the term "activist" is not really used by students to refer widely to the "progressive elements" in the school or the CYL. Now "activist" generally refers to the more limited category of people who have applied to Party membership and are still in the first phase of selection, i.e. the "activist entering the Party" (*rudang jiji fenzi*, 入党积极分子).⁶¹⁶ In turn, the term "student cadre" is employed to refer to the ones who hold leadership positions at the class level or the CYL branches in high school.

⁶¹⁰ Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation*, 16–24.

⁶¹¹ Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 90.

⁶¹² Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 38.

⁶¹³ On competition among students in high schools, see : Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 94–95; Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation*, 52; *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶¹⁴ Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 11.

⁶¹⁵ Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 212.

⁶¹⁶ Interviews with academic 2, academic 3, student 6, student 7, student 8, and cadre 20.

In contrast to the Mao era, Party-State officials increasingly have a college degree. Between 1979 and 1998, the ratio of officials with a higher education degree rose from 17.9% to 46.5%. It became extremely common for higher ranked officials: 80.5% of leading cadres in 1998 had a higher education degree.⁶¹⁷ It also became *de facto* a necessary condition for recruitment in the CCP Central Committee in 2002.⁶¹⁸ This is a result of the education-related requirements developed since the 1980s along with the CCP's rejuvenation strategy.⁶¹⁹ Zang Xiaowei for instance noted that 80% of the cadres promoted in 1984 had a college degree and that the ratio of college educated officials at the provincial and central levels grew from 43% in 1980 to 60% in 1986.⁶²⁰

As cadres have to go through higher education, universities, instead of high schools, have become the main competition arena for political status and the launching pad to start a career as an official. Yet, while leading officials largely have a university degree, they represent only a minority of college graduates.⁶²¹ In 2010, according to the Ministry of Education, China had 22.3 million undergraduate students.⁶²² Students are so numerous that a certain selection has to occur based on their willingness to follow such a path and their political reliability.⁶²³ Underlining a certain continuity with the activists of the Mao era, I show that the student cadre experience is one of the main ways to implement this screening process, which follows a sponsored mobility logic.

In particular, I argue that the student cadre experience is crucial to the development of the young cadres' commitment to a career in the Party-State. Through this experience, students are subjected to the different commitment building mechanisms reviewed in the Introduction. This includes material incentives, which can be used as a political career accelerator, but not only. Through their involvement, and especially as they rise in the hierarchy, students learn to

⁶¹⁷ Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 70.

⁶¹⁸ Shih, Adolph, and Liu, "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China," 175.

⁶¹⁹ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 32.

⁶²⁰ Zang, *Elite Dualism and Leadership Selection in China*, 61.

⁶²¹ There were 508,025 leading cadres in 1998 (Brødsgaard, "Management of Party Cadres in China," 67).

⁶²² Yan Xiaojun, "'To Get Rich Is Not Only Glorious': Economic Reform and the New Entrepreneurial Party Secretaries," *The China Quarterly* 210 (June 2012): 493.

⁶²³ In 2008, only 14% of the graduates from all the "211 project" universities got directly a position in a Party-State Administration or an Academic Institution, which includes both official and academic posts (The "211 project" (211 *gongcheng*, 211工程) universities include the one hundred or so best higher education institutions in the country. For a synthetic explanation of the project, see the website of the China Education Center: <http://www.chinaeducercenter.com/en/cedu/ceduproject211.php> (Consulted on 12 May 2016)). Source: Cheng Changqun (成长群), "Research on the Issue of Employment of University Students: Survey on the Issue of Hubei University Student Employment as a Case (*daxuesheng jiuye wenti yanjiu: yi Hubei daxuesheng jiuye diaocha weili*, 大学生就业问题研究:以湖北大学生就业调查为例)," 98.

cultivate and enjoy a role as future Party-State officials. Most importantly, the student cadres experience transforms their social circles, which progressively narrow themselves to other student cadres or officials. These social ties also reinforce the political commitment of the recruits, since choosing a different path would mean losing most of their friends and contacts. The Party's youth organizations on campus play a major role in cultivating elite cohesion on the long run.

As developed in the Introduction, my research focuses on four universities. It includes the two best universities of the country, Peking University and Tsinghua University, as well as two universities outside Beijing: Nanjing University and Nanjing Normal University.

Part II is organized along three chapters, tracing chronologically three different stages in the trajectory of ambitious students on campus: becoming a student cadre; becoming a student leader; becoming a campus official (and jumping, or not, into politics). Building on Becker's work, I suggest that it is useful to frame commitment building as a sequenced process in which every step and individual choice is linked to the individual's past experiences.⁶²⁴

After highlighting the overall student management system in universities and the key role student cadres play in it, I turn to a detailed description of the various mechanisms put in place to incentivize students to follow this path. Chapter Three is dedicated to unveiling the importance of the student cadre experience itself and the procedures meant to facilitate their potential future career as officials. Chapter Four focuses on the highest ranked student cadres and the cultivation of their commitment. They are the ones who remain student cadres during the several years of college and who are the most active in youth organizations. They are in that sense one step further than most student cadres in terms of commitment. I show that this experience transforms them and eventually leads them to develop a vocation for political office. In addition, their unique position on campus and the strong ties they develop with university officials can be extremely valuable when starting a career as an official. Chapter Five is dedicated to the student cadres who become university officials after graduation. In continuity with the student cadre experience, they are appointed officials in charge of student management on campus, a first job which is highly valued in itself in a situation where competition for employment is particularly fierce for graduates.⁶²⁵ It can also be used as a springboard for political office for the less risk-averse and most ambitious recruits. By deciphering the different

⁶²⁴ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 41–58.

⁶²⁵ In 2014, the unemployment was officially around 15% for graduates six months after they left university, and according to some reports it was in practice closer to 30% (Yojana Sharma, "What Do You Do with Millions of Extra Graduates?," *BBC News*, July 1, 2014).

steps of the political commitment process which takes place in campus, the Second Part of this dissertation asserts the key role played by universities in political recruitment in China.

Chapter 3: Discovering political commitment on campus

This chapter analyzes the political organization of Chinese universities and the role played by student cadres as the mainstay of the system. While the role of student cadres in high school does not have the social importance it used to, this chapter demonstrates that it remains a key formative experience at the university level for, but not only, future officials. Focusing on this experience, I explore both how the student body is managed by Party-related organizations, as well as the first steps of a commitment process for those who choose to take an active part in these organizations. I examine the reasons which push them to choose this path, focusing more specifically on the role played by the students' social background and the career-related incentives associated with the student cadre experience. The unwritten and written advantages coming with the experience can in fact facilitate their future education or help them find a first job.

A - A decentralized organizational hegemony

In the first part of this chapter, I expose the functioning of the Party's "organizational weapon" in universities.⁶²⁶ While life on Chinese campuses has changed since the Mao era, especially through the emergence of numerous student organizations, the Party and its related organizations are still very present and operate a hegemonic control over student activities on campus. Political control in Chinese universities has been reinforced since the rather liberal era of the 1980s, and especially after the student movement of 1989. I describe how the Party-State has reestablished its authority on campus through the reinforcement and diversification of its control organizations. Political control on campus is also enforced differently than during the 1980s: it now uses modern tools like the Internet and the activities offered to students are increasingly presented as non-political. These developments aim at keeping up with the evolution of students' social practices and are in line with the transformations of CYL work developed in Chapter One. I show that paradoxically the diversification of student organizations and activities on campus strengthens political control.

⁶²⁶ Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952).

Some studies have underlined the continuous, as well as evolving, control over student life in China. However, they did not emphasize the role played by the CYL and the student cadres.⁶²⁷ I argue instead that the Party's control structure follows a decentralized framework with the CYL at the center. I also highlight the key role played by student cadres, in addition to the employed political workers on campus. Unveiling the work performed by student cadres and student associations supervised by the CYL allows to better grasp the breadth and depth of political control in Chinese universities.

1) The organizational weapon on campus

a) A League-centric organization

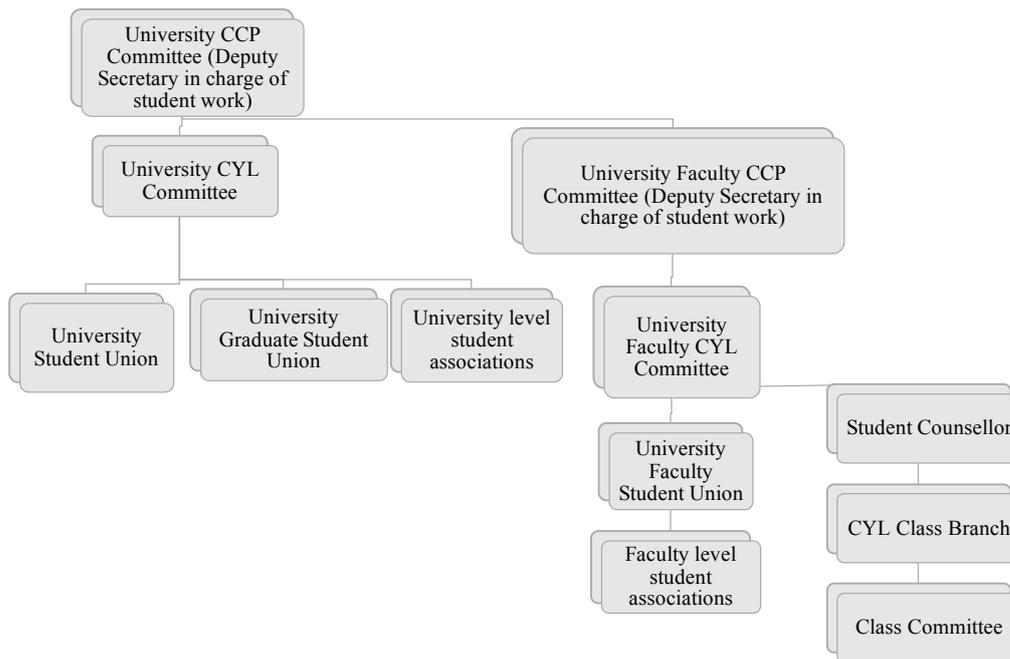
On Chinese campuses, student life outside the classroom is managed through a hierarchical system of organizations with the Youth League at the center. This organization is mainly subdivided into three levels of control: the university level, the university faculty level (*yuanxi*, 院系) and the class level.⁶²⁸ The lower unit of organization on campus is the class (*banji*, 班级), made of people from the same cohorts within faculties.⁶²⁹ At all these echelons the hierarchy is the same: the CCP committee controls the CYL, which in turn supervises the student organizations. This framework is presented in figure 3.1.

⁶²⁷ Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China"; Elizabeth J Perry, "Citizen Contention and Campus Calm: The Paradox of Chinese Civil Society," *Current History* 113, no. 764 (2014): 211–17.

⁶²⁸ Faculty here refers to what is designated in Chinese as *Yuanxi* (院系). Transposed to American universities, this denomination would include both the schools, such as a university's business school, and the departments, such as a university's sociology department.

⁶²⁹ Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," 494.

Figure 3.1 A League-centered control over student organizations⁶³⁰



Student management is supervised at the top by the university’s CCP committee, with generally a deputy secretary specifically in charge of student affairs.⁶³¹ It directly controls the university level CYL committee as well as the faculty level CCP committees. Following the framework developed in Chapter One, the control of the CCP over the CYL is reproduced at the faculty and class levels. At the faculty level, a CCP deputy secretary is also in charge of managing student affairs and the CYL. At the class level, the CYL branch is under the supervision of a university cadre, a “student counsellor” (*xuesheng fudaoyuan*, 学生辅导员) who serves as class director (*ban zhuren*, 班主任) and generally as the class level CCP branch secretary.⁶³² “Student counsellor” refers broadly to a number of employees of the university in charge of student management. In addition to the class level, they can be found at the faculty and university levels, where they hold leadership positions in the Youth League committees for instance. Chapter Five is largely devoted to student counsellors.

⁶³⁰ The overall organization can vary slightly from one university to the other. For example, Tsinghua University has a Graduate Student CYL Committee in addition to the general one. This figure represents the most common set up. For more clarity, this figure does not include all hierarchical links across the various organizations on campus but only the main ones. Sources: Interviews with cadre 3, student 4, cadre 6, student 7, student 8, cadre 10, cadre 11, and cadre 15. See also : Yan, “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China,” 499.

⁶³¹ Interview with cadre 17. This is also put forward in : Yan, “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China,” 499.

⁶³² Interviews with student 4, student 7, student 8, and cadre 10. On class directors, see also : Zhao, “Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement,” 163.

Like at the local echelons of the Party-State, the university CYL has only a limited power over the lower level CYL units.⁶³³ Every four to five years, representatives from the different faculty level CYL committees are sent to be part of the university level CYL congress and elect the CYL committee. In turn, the CYL committee appoints the CYL secretary and deputy secretaries. As described in Chapter One, the CYL is structured like the CCP and it largely relies on its leadership. In practice, the CYL congress and committee only validate choices already made by the university Party leaders. As a result, at the university and faculty levels, the CYL leaders are officials selected by the CCP. Lower level cadres at these two echelons, and class CYL branches secretaries, are student cadres.⁶³⁴ In addition, the CYL's funding comes from the university administration under the control of the CCP.⁶³⁵

The CYL is in turn in charge of managing student organizations. At the university level, the CYL committee manages the student union (*xueshenghui*, 学生会) and the graduate student union (*yanjiushenghui*, 研究生会). As described in Chapter One, the All-China Students Federation represents the student unions which can be found in all universities. The student union is a mass organization supposed to function as a bridge between the CCP and the students. It is in charge of organizing students' extracurricular activities. While similar organizations preexisted in various universities, the current student unions were established under the control of the CCP and CYL in 1949.⁶³⁶ The graduate student union is its organizational replica, focused on the management of graduate students. It was set up later in various universities, as a result of the increasing number of graduate students in the reform era. For instance, it was established in 1985 at Nanjing Normal University.⁶³⁷ Organizationally, it functions just like the student union.

In all universities, the student union's charter states that it "accepts the leadership (*lingdao*, 领导) of the university Party committee and the supervision (*zhidao*, 指导) of the

⁶³³ Some universities also have an intermediary level of CYL organizations between the faculty level CYL committees and the class level CYL branches, with cohort-based CYL general branches. Still they have a limited organizational function (interview with cadre 3, cadre 4, and cadre 15).

⁶³⁴ Interviews with cadre 3, cadre 6, cadre 11, and cadre 15. See also: Francis, "The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University."

⁶³⁵ A small additional share of funding comes from the CYL membership paid by the students. It is collected by the branches and centralized at the university level. If I could not find an actual figure, according to the cadres in charge, it did not amount to much as the collecting is far from thorough (interviews with cadre 3 and cadre 10).

⁶³⁶ Tsinghua University and Peking University for instance developed student unions as soon as 1919, in the wake of the May 4th Movement (Lü Lili (吕丽莉), "Study on the Democratic Construction of College Student Organizations (*gaoxiao xuesheng zuzhi de minzhu jianshe*, 高校学生组织的民主建设)," 29.

⁶³⁷ Feng Shichang (冯世昌), *Local record of the Nanjing normal university 1902-1992 (Nanjing shifan daxue zhi 1902-1992, 南京师范大学志 1902-1992)* (Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press, 2002), 347.

university CYL.”⁶³⁸ In practice, it is the CYL which manages its activities. The student union is staffed by the students themselves, to the exception of its office secretary (*mishuzhang*, 秘书长) who is an official of the university CYL.⁶³⁹ This ensures the CYL’s grip over the student union. Also, the student union’s funds are controlled by the CYL, which also has to approve its main activities.⁶⁴⁰ Even if the students manage to obtain sponsorship from outside organizations, the funds have to go through the CYL. The CYL collects a share of this money for its own activities, for instance around 8% in Peking University.⁶⁴¹ Overall, the Union is often referred to in my interviews as a mere “department” (*bumen*, 部门) of the university CYL.⁶⁴² This control of the CYL over the student union is reproduced at the faculty level. At that echelon, the CYL secretary is at the same time the student union’s office secretary, to ensure better supervision.⁶⁴³

At the lower level of the pyramid, the class CYL branch is in charge of recruiting new CYL members. It is fully staffed by students. It also manages the class committee (*banji weiyuanhui*, 班级委员会). The class committee is headed by a class leader (*banzhang*, 班长), elected by the students. The role of this committee is limited to student life at the class level, a sort of smaller reproduction of the student union.⁶⁴⁴

In addition to this holistic organization for student management, there are also autonomous student associations focusing on specific issues, such as sport, language learning, calligraphy, and so on. These associations emerged in the 1980s as a result of the reform and opening up policy. In Nanjing Normal University, the first associations were established in 1981 and they were thirty in 1985.⁶⁴⁵ There are now around 150 such associations in Nanjing University, 180 in Tsinghua University, and 300 in Peking University.⁶⁴⁶ These associations are supervised by the CYL through a dedicated department. To create an association, students

⁶³⁸ “Charter of Peking University Student Union (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 北京大学学生会章程),” Peking University Student Union, May 2010; “Charter of Tsinghua University Student Union (*Qinghua daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 清华大学学生会章程),” Tsinghua University Student Union, December 2010.

⁶³⁹ Interviews with student 11 and student 12, and Francis, “The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University,” 398.

⁶⁴⁰ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 10, cadre 11, and student 12.

⁶⁴¹ Interview with student 12.

⁶⁴² Interviews with student 4, student 7, student 8, cadre 10.

⁶⁴³ Interviews with cadre 10 and cadre 30.

⁶⁴⁴ Interviews with student 7 and student 8. On the class level CYL branches and on class committees, see also : Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 23.

⁶⁴⁵ Feng Shichang (冯世昌), *Local record of the Nanjing normal university 1902-1992 (Nanjing shifan daxue zhi 1902-1992, 南京师范大学志 1902-1992)*, 345.

⁶⁴⁶ Interviews with student 7, student 8, cadre 10, and cadre 14.

need to find a faculty member, generally a student counsellor, to endorse them and the CYL committee gives the final approval. Student associations generally have to go through an annual review of their activities by the CYL. Also, their resources are supervised by the CYL, which grants them funds as well as campus resources, such as meeting spaces.⁶⁴⁷

The League being unable to monitor them all, the student union generally assists it in the supervision of student associations.⁶⁴⁸ Some universities, such as Nanjing University, established in the 2000s a specific organization staffed by students, a Federation of Student Associations (*Shetuan lianhehui*, 社团联合会), which has the same hierarchical ranking as the student union and is in charge of dealing with the associations.⁶⁴⁹

Overall, far from autonomous student politics, the various organizations are part of a hierarchical system, with the CYL as a key actor linking the CCP and the student organizations. Rather than declining, the importance of the CYL on campus has actually strengthened since the beginning of the reform era, in particular as a response to the Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989.

b) Strengthening political control on campus after 1989

The CYL committees on campus followed the overall historical framework developed in Chapter One regarding the central organization. While some universities developed Youth League branches very early, as soon as 1921 for Peking University, most of them were set up under the control of the CCP in the wake of the foundation of the PRC in 1949. Like at the central level, most of the CYL committees on campuses stopped their activities in the first years of the Cultural Revolution. Some resumed them before the CYL Central Committee did in 1978. For example, the Peking University CYL held its 9th Congress in 1971.⁶⁵⁰

The reform policy opened the way to a liberalization of control on campus. In the 1980s, the CYL and related organizations were still key actors on campus but were increasingly autonomous from the CCP and more liberal in their activities. Also, the student union was less controlled by the CYL and the CCP. In the 1980s, the student union chairman was usually directly elected by all the college students. The elections were highly contested as Francis

⁶⁴⁷ Interviews with student 2, student 3, student 4, student 7, and student 8. See also : Yan, “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China,” 504.

⁶⁴⁸ Interviews with student 2, student 3, student 4, student 7, and student 8.

⁶⁴⁹ Interviews with student 7, student 8, and student 10.

⁶⁵⁰ On the evolution of the Youth League Committee of Peking University, see : Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 358–371.

highlighted in the case of Peking University.⁶⁵¹ As I show in the next chapter, the elections are now generally indirect and highly controlled.

The 1980s decade was special in that regard. As argued by Zhao, the decreasing number of cadres dedicated to student management made possible an increasing “amphibiousness” of youth organizations on campus. It means that they were diverted from their original role and developed activities rather contradictory with their official functions. According to Zhao, “some student control personnel and students in universities not only resisted cooperation with the state, but also captured student control institutions to spread nonconformist ideologies.”⁶⁵²

From the Party’s perspective, this relaxation of student control was one of the main elements which made possible the uprising of 1989.⁶⁵³ Against this background, the control mechanisms were strengthened during the years that followed. One of the earliest decisions after June 1989 was to establish a mandatory military training for students. Peking University, as one of the most active schools during the protests, was made a test case and the whole class of freshmen of 1989 was sent to the Shijiazhuang Military Academy in Hebei for one year of military training. Some 140 other universities received funding for military trainings.⁶⁵⁴ The trainings were then reduced in length and short-term trainings of a few weeks became the rule in most universities across the country.⁶⁵⁵

The 1989 events also triggered a long-term reflection within the CYL on how to improve its control over college students. This was first reflected in the publication by the central CYL administration in August 1989 of a document calling for a strengthening of the CYL’s position within campuses, and more specifically for increased professionalization of CYL cadres, which included a standardization of their training, status and salaries.⁶⁵⁶ The various universities then put into place broad recommendations from this document. In the case of Peking University, the student union chairman stopped from being directly elected after 1989, training programs were put in place for CYL branches secretaries starting in 1995, and clearer rules where

⁶⁵¹ Francis, “The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University,” 307.

⁶⁵² Zhao, “Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement,” 170.

⁶⁵³ Yan, “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China,” 500.

⁶⁵⁴ Rosen, “The Effect of Post-4 June Re-Education Campaigns on Chinese Students,” 318.

⁶⁵⁵ Perry, “Citizen Contention and Campus Calm,” 212.

⁶⁵⁶ “Opinion Regarding CYL Work in Universities in the Current Period (*guanyu dangqian gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan gongzuo de ji dian yijian*, 关于当前高等学校共青团工作的几点意见),” CYL Central Committee, 13 August 1989.

established in 1998 regarding the creation and funding of student associations.⁶⁵⁷ The rank of the university CYL committee leaders was also raised in the various universities in the 1990s.⁶⁵⁸ In most cases, the university CYL committee secretary was given the rank of division director (*zheng chuji*, 正处级).⁶⁵⁹

The Document 15 of 2005 issued by the central CYL and the Ministry of Education further advanced the strengthening of the CYL on campus. It gave clear standards regarding the number of full-time CYL cadres a university CYL committee should have depending on the size of the school. If the university has less than 10,000 students, the CYL committee must have at least five officials. For universities with 10,000 to 25,000 students, the minimum is nine. And the universities of more than 25,000 students should have, at least, twelve officials. According to the text, the CYL secretary should have the same rank and salary as a department director of the CCP committee, which generally means the rank of division director. At the level of the university faculty, they all should have at least one full time CYL official.⁶⁶⁰ In the universities I studied, this standard is followed. For instance, Peking University and Nanjing University, which have both more than 30,000 students each, have twelve full time CYL officials at the university level and one in each faculty.⁶⁶¹ In smaller and less prestigious institutions, the rules are not always followed that closely. A report regarding CYL work in the various institutions of higher education in Mianyang City, in Sichuan Province, showed that in 2008 the schools did not have on average enough full-time CYL officials with respect to Document 15.⁶⁶²

Document 15 also established a minimum budget for CYL daily activities on campus depending on the size of the school. According to my interviews, elite schools tend to follow

⁶⁵⁷ Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 157–159.

⁶⁵⁸ See Chapter Two regarding the cadres' ranking system.

⁶⁵⁹ This change was implemented in 1996 in Nanjing Normal University for instance : Da Zuoling (笄佐领), *Local record of the Nanjing normal university 1993-2002 (Nanjing shifan daxue zhi 1993-2002, 南京师范大学志 1993-2002)* (Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press, 2002), 350.

⁶⁶⁰ “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the CYL Construction in Higher Education Institutions (*Guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan jianshe de yijian, 关于进一步加强和改进高等学校共青团建设的意见*),” Document 15, Ministry of Education and CYL Central Committee, 8 April 2005.

⁶⁶¹ Interviews with cadre 3, student 4, cadre 6, and cadre 12.

⁶⁶² Ren Tongmei (任彤玫), “Research Report on the Youth League Construction Work in Universities in Mianyang (*Mianyang gaoxiao tuanjian gongzuo diaoyan baogao, 绵阳高校团建工作调研报告*),” Website of Mianyang CYL, January 2008. It can be accessed here: <http://mygqt.org.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=20&id=2756> (consulted on 2 September 2016).

the rule,⁶⁶³ but the investigation in Mianyang showed that it is not always the case.⁶⁶⁴ In addition, Document 15 clarified the relationship between the CYL and student organizations. It set as a rule that at the university level the student union and graduate student union office secretaries must be CYL officials. Also, it emphasized the supervision function of the CYL over the various student associations.⁶⁶⁵ In parallel to these texts focusing on the CYL, others emphasized the strengthening of political work on campus, and especially the role of student counsellors. I come back to these in Chapter Five.⁶⁶⁶

In addition to the strengthening of the control organizations themselves, the post-1989 period also saw an increase in the recruitment of college students in the Party. As shown by Ch'i, as well as Rosen, the recruitment of CCP members on campus in the 1980s was extremely low.⁶⁶⁷ After 1989, the Party pushed for an increase in the recruitment of university students.⁶⁶⁸ This trend is visible in Table 3.1 below: while the ratio of CCP members on campus nationwide was 1.5% in 1992, it reached 8.8% in 2013.

Table 3.1: Ratio of CCP and CYL members among university students⁶⁶⁹

| Date | 1956 | 1978 | 1980 | 1988 | 1992 | 2003 | 2013 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| CCP membership | 8.6% | 10.8% | 4.4% | 2.9% | 1.5% | 6.7% | 8.8% |
| CYL membership | 57.3% | 60.4% | 76.2% | 86.9% | 88.9% | 68% | 68.4% |

⁶⁶³ Interviews with cadre 6 and cadre 12. Overall, it is very hard to obtain a clear figure for CYL budget in the various schools. If they replied, our interviewees only gave me vague figures, impossible to verify. The only documented budget I found was for the year 2002 in Nanjing Normal University, it amounted to 830,000 RMB. Da Zuoling (笪佐领), *Local record of the Nanjing normal university 1993-2002 (Nanjing shifan daxue zhi 1993-2002, 南京师范大学志 1993-2002)*, 350.

⁶⁶⁴ Ren Tongmei (任彤玫), “Research Report on the Youth League Construction Work in Universities in Mianyang (*Mianyang gaoxiao tuanjian gongzuo diaoyan baogao*, 绵阳高校团建工作调研报告).”

⁶⁶⁵ “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the CYL Construction in Higher Education Institutions (*Guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan jianshe de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进高等学校共青团建设的意见),” Document 15, Ministry of Education and CYL Central Committee, 8 April 2005.

⁶⁶⁶ See in particular: “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the Political Education of University students (*guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin daxuesheng sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进大学生思想政治教育的意见),” Document 16, State Council, 14 October 2004.

⁶⁶⁷ Ch'i, *Politics of Disillusionment: The Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1989*, 142; Rosen, “Students and the State in China: The Crisis in Ideology and Organization,” 73.

⁶⁶⁸ Stanley Rosen, “The Victory of Materialism: Aspirations to Join China’s Urban Moneyed Classes and the Commercialization of Education,” *The China Journal*, no. 51 (2004): 27–52.

⁶⁶⁹ Sources: *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (Zhongguo jiaoyu tongji nianjian*, 中国教育统计年鉴) (People’s Education Press, 1993), 171; *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (Zhongguo jiaoyu tongji nianjian*, 中国教育统计年鉴) (People’s Education Press, 2003), 2-40; *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (Zhongguo jiaoyu tongji nianjian*, 中国教育统计年鉴) (People’s Education Press, 2013), 3-41.

The trends are less clear regarding CYL members. As underlined by Rosen, the CYL membership was particularly high in the late 1980s, at a time when its ideological appeal was also extremely low. There was very little screening in recruiting.⁶⁷⁰ After that, the ratio of members among university students declined, and has stabilized around 68% since the early 2000s. This decrease is concomitant with the reforms of the late 1990s which greatly increased the number of college students. While between 1978 and 1996, yearly enrollment of university students only gradually increased, from 0.86 to 0.97 million, with the reforms implemented between 1996 and 1999 it skyrocketed. In 1999 it reached 2.7 million. This tendency continued as enrollment in 2004 reached 4.47 million.⁶⁷¹ It is during this period of transformation that the ratio of CYL members among university students decreased. The recruitment efforts were directed to the Party,⁶⁷² while CYL membership was not that relevant anymore to student's life, as highlighted in Chapter One. But since then, the ratio of CYL members among university students is stable, indicating that CYL recruitment follows the continuous increase in students' enrollment.

Rosen stressed in the 2000s that the CCP members have been largely recruited in elite universities, such as Tsinghua University. The ratio of CCP members has always been higher and still remains very high in such institutions.⁶⁷³ This is also true about CYL membership. At Tsinghua University, 84% of the students were CYL members in 1963,⁶⁷⁴ and in 2014 they were around 90% according to CYL cadres.⁶⁷⁵ Similar ratios are true for the other studied universities.⁶⁷⁶ In elite universities, CYL membership is almost universal.

We have seen how the organizational control structure on campus strengthened since the early 1990s. I now focus on the activities of the CYL and the student union on campus, to show how they evolved so as to keep their monopoly over extra-curricular student life.

⁶⁷⁰ Rosen, "The Effect of Post-4 June Re-Education Campaigns on Chinese Students," 320.

⁶⁷¹ Limin Bai, "Graduate Unemployment: Dilemmas and Challenges in China's Move to Mass Higher Education," *The China Quarterly* 185 (2006): 128–44.

⁶⁷² Interviews with academic 6 and cadre 10.

⁶⁷³ Rosen, "The Victory of Materialism: Aspirations to Join China's Urban Moneyed Classes and the Commercialization of Education," 43.

⁶⁷⁴ Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*, 26.

⁶⁷⁵ Interviews with cadre 17 and cadre 41.

⁶⁷⁶ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 10, and cadre 35.

2) Maintaining the monopoly over extra-curricular activities

a) New forms of (a)political education

In the Post-1989 era, the CCP leadership has put forward the necessity of enhancing political control. As a result, the political education curriculum was completely rebuilt. Since the late 1990s, the college students are to follow compulsory hours of political education according to a system of “two courses” (*liangke*, 两课). It includes mandatory courses in Marxist ideology and morals, with, among others, regular classes on the CCP’s current ideological direction.⁶⁷⁷ In addition to these compulsory classes, The CYL has been instrumental in developing political education among its large membership.⁶⁷⁸ It has established CYL schools (*tuaxiao*, 团校) in the various universities since the 1980s.⁶⁷⁹ These schools have been active since then in the training of CYL members and CYL branches leaders.⁶⁸⁰

While it still promotes such classical political work among students, the CYL has been diversifying its activities since the 1990s. In particular, it started proposing more leisure oriented activities. Along with the student union, it increasingly organized large cultural events such as singing, sports or poetry competitions on campus.⁶⁸¹ In addition, in 1989 was organized for the first time by the CYL a national competition of student scientific projects called “the challenge cup” (*tiaozhanbei*, 挑战杯).⁶⁸² It became very popular and was later reproduced at the university level, such as in Peking University in 1994.⁶⁸³ Such leisure activities are set in place through the student union; the CYL mainly supervises and does not really organize itself the activities.⁶⁸⁴ A key role of the student union, beyond the actual organization of events, is also to make sure that a lot of students participate. Since the activities are not mandatory, the

⁶⁷⁷ Yan, “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China,” 501.

⁶⁷⁸ Regarding the strengthening and evolution of political education in universities more broadly, see : Qinghua Wang, “Strengthening and Professionalizing Political Education in China’s Higher Education,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 80 (2013): 332–50.

⁶⁷⁹ The Peking University CYL school was established in 1982: Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 160.

⁶⁸⁰ For an overview of the training sessions organized by the Tsinghua University CYL school, see : Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi, 清华大学志)*, 1:885.

⁶⁸¹ Interviews with cadre 6, student 7, student 8, cadre 10, and cadre 35.

⁶⁸² Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui, 共青团北京市委员会*), ed., *Records and Documents of Beijing’s Youth Organizations (Beijing Qingnian Zuzhi Zhiwengao, 北京青年组织志文稿)* (Beijing: Beijing Press, 2007), 386.

⁶⁸³ Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 143.

⁶⁸⁴ Interviews with cadre 6, student 7, student 8, cadre 10, and cadre 35.

cadres sometimes have to rely on their personal ties to persuade them.⁶⁸⁵

Following this logic, the volunteering activities developed by the central level CYL that I described in Chapter One, were largely implemented at the university level. In Peking University, the first of these volunteering activities was organized in 1996.⁶⁸⁶ Since the 1990s, college students got involved in the “Hope project” for instance, volunteering to staff the elementary schools established by the China Youth Development Foundation in the poorest provinces of China.⁶⁸⁷ Student volunteers also take part in exceptional events at the local or national level. The Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games, for example, occurred at the time of my fieldwork in Nanjing. On this occasion, students from Nanjing’s various universities took part in the organization, among which 1600 volunteers from Nanjing University.⁶⁸⁸ To publicize its activities, the CYL also developed new means of communication, focused on student life. The Peking University CYL Committee started to print in 1998 its own brochure, “Beida Youth” (*Beida qingnian*, 北大青年).⁶⁸⁹ In the late 2000s, internet websites and applications became the CYL’s main information distribution channels.⁶⁹⁰

While these diverse activities developed by the CYL appear as apolitical in content, they retain a clear political objective. It is a way for the organization to keep attracting students and to maintain its monopoly over student extracurricular activities. Studies on the political engagement of young people have shown the role played by recreational activities in order to foster membership. This has been emphasized by Abrams and Little regarding parties’ youth organizations in Britain in the 1960s and by Lucie Bargel in the case of contemporary France.⁶⁹¹ Bargel mentioned for instance that youth organizations’ militants find playful ways to carry even the most bureaucratic tasks, such as amending the organization policy proposals. They

⁶⁸⁵ On this issue, see: Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin’an de yi jiao*, 学生会：大学最阴暗的一角),” *Chen Wei’s Blog*, September 12, 2011. It can be accessed here: <http://www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/gmq/2011/0912/45142.html> (consulted on 24 May 2015).

⁶⁸⁶ Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 149.

⁶⁸⁷ On the “Hope Project”, see Chapter One. On its implementation on campus more particularly, see: Perry, “Citizen Contention and Campus Calm,” 214.

⁶⁸⁸ “Description of the Prize-giving Ceremony for the Volunteering Service of Nanjing University at the Youth Olympic Games (*Nanjing daxue qing’aohui zhiyuan furwu banjiang shengdian shikuang*, 南京大学青奥会志愿服务颁奖盛典实况),” WeChat account of Nanjing University CYL, October 29, 2014.

⁶⁸⁹ Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 157.

⁶⁹⁰ Interviews with student 7 and student 8.

⁶⁹¹ Philip Abrams and Alan Little, “The Young Activist in British Politics,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 16, no. 4 (1965): 315–33; Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 325.

invent games to make the exercise fun and enjoyable. They, for instance, would give themselves compulsory, and often unfit words to insert into documents, thereby transforming a tedious task into a humorous challenge.⁶⁹² These studies show that, in contexts where political activities are not valued by young people – just like in post-1989 China – familiarizing new recruits to the life of the organization through recreational activities is a particularly efficient strategy.⁶⁹³

The transformation of the CYL's approach towards students is also visible in the ways it allowed for a multiplication of student associations, as long as they remain under its supervision. To take Peking University as an example, there were 97 registered student associations in 1996, and around 300 now.⁶⁹⁴ Through the student union and these other student associations, the CYL guarantees that no independent organization can develop and contest its hegemonic control over extracurricular student life. This is why, as Perry puts it, “ironically, the increased associational activity among Chinese students today is working to underpin, rather than to undermine, the authority of the Communist party-state.”⁶⁹⁵ I now highlight how the diversification of CYL and student union activities transpire in their organizational evolutions since the 1990s.

b) The League's organizational diversification

The evolution of the CYL's and student union's activities is reflected in the transformations of their organizational structure. In the case of Tsinghua University, in 1950, the university level CYL committee had only two departments, dedicated to organization and propaganda, the basic set up for a CCP-like organization.⁶⁹⁶ The Organization Department dealt with the CYL's human resources while the Propaganda Department publicized its activities. This sharply contrasts with the situation of the CYL committee in 2014, as shown in Figure 3.2. The figure depicts the internal organization of the university's CYL committee, which includes its various departments but also the student union, itself subdivided in functional departments.

⁶⁹² Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 325.

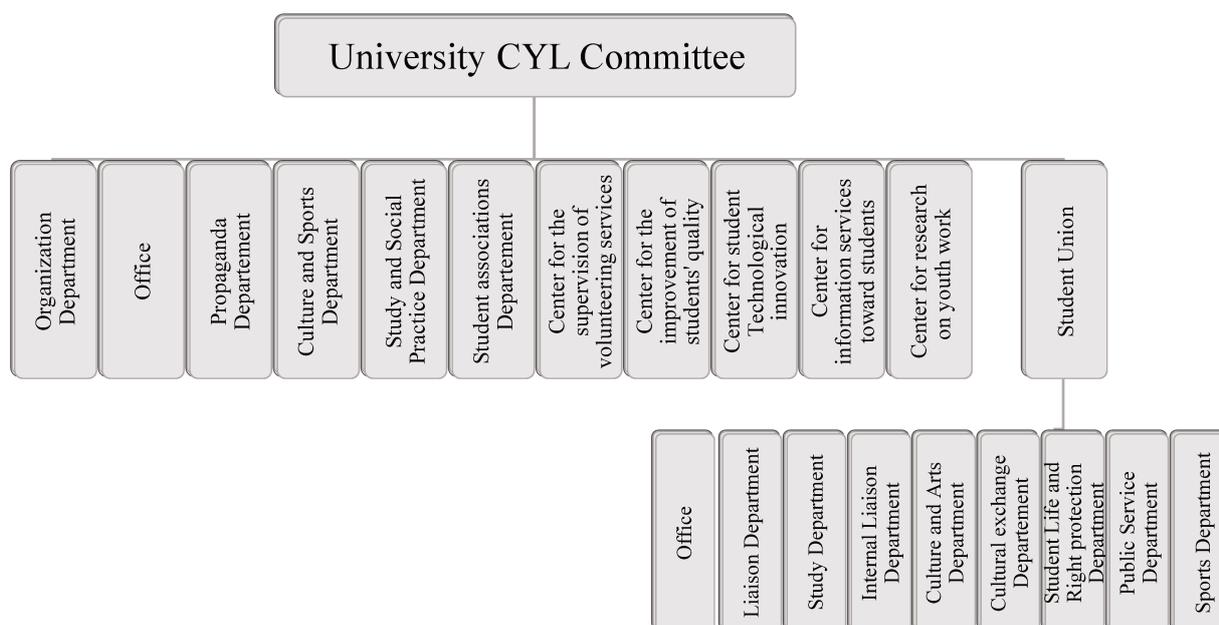
⁶⁹³ On Chinese students' attitude during this period, see : Rosen, “The Victory of Materialism: Aspirations to Join China's Urban Moneyed Classes and the Commercialization of Education,” 27–52.

⁶⁹⁴ Interview with cadre 10 and Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 153.

⁶⁹⁵ Perry, “Citizen Contention and Campus Calm,” 213.

⁶⁹⁶ Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi, 清华大学志)*, 1:881.

Figure 3.2: The internal organization of the Tsinghua University CYL Committee and Student Union (2015)⁶⁹⁷



In addition to its general office and the student union, the university level CYL committee now counts five departments and five subsumed centers. I present the student union as a mere department of the CYL as it is the way it was portrayed by both cadres and students in my interviews. In addition, the student union is physically hosted in the CYL's offices on campus. In some universities the student union is even represented in the organigram as a department of the CYL: such is the case, for instance, in the office of the Peking University CYL Committee.⁶⁹⁸ The CYL also has a department dedicated to culture and sports, supervising the large events and competitions mentioned above. It has a Study and Social Practice Department, which monitors all the students' extracurricular fieldwork activities, such as summer trips to various parts of China, meant for instance to raise students' awareness on social issues.⁶⁹⁹ Despite some reorganization among them, such departments already existed in 1993.⁷⁰⁰ However, the creation since then of a department dedicated to the supervision of

⁶⁹⁷ While the departments' denominations vary, the university level CYL committees overall have similar structures to the one presented here. It is to be noted that university level CYL committees generally have a department specifically dedicated to manage activities for graduate students. It is not the case in Tsinghua University as it has another CYL committee specifically dedicated to them. Sources: interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41. Also Tsinghua University CYL Committee's website (<http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/xtw/4837/>), Consulted on 26 April 2016.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview with cadre 10.

⁶⁹⁹ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41.

⁷⁰⁰ For the Tsinghua University CYL organization in 1993, see : Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi, 清华大学志)*, 1:881.

student associations is indicative of the tight control now exerted over the development of these groups.

The CYL now also counts five centers that did not exist in 1993, highlighting the diversification of its management of student life. A center is dedicated to the supervision of volunteering activities, which are increasingly important on campus. A Center for the Improvement of Students' Quality is in charge of training students to various professional domains and deliver advice regarding their professional plans. A center is also dedicated to technological innovation: it helps students develop their own projects and monitors, for instance, the teams for the Challenge Cup scientific competition. A center in charge of information management oversees the various websites linked to student life on campus, underlining the expansion of CYL's reach on the Internet. Finally, a Center for Research on Youth Work is dedicated to organizing surveys regarding students' attitudes and to analyzing the student management practices themselves.⁷⁰¹ The CYL hence developed means to be self-reflecting about its work in order to maintain its hegemonic position over student life.

The student union followed a similar evolution. It features various departments dedicated to the actual organization of cultural or sport-related activities, as well as to support students in their daily life. While most of these departments have existed for a long time, the main change between the mid-1960s and the early 1990s was the introduction of a Liaison Department.⁷⁰² Its mission is to contact organizations and firms outside campus to find sponsors for the student union and its activities. Such diversification of the student union's funding became possible with the reform and opening up policy.

Besides some marginal reorganizations since 1992,⁷⁰³ the key additional changes are the establishment of a Cultural Exchange Department, a Student Life and Right Protection Department and a Public Service Department. The first is a sign of the internationalization of Chinese universities as it is in charge of the relationships with student groups from other universities in China and abroad. The second focuses on solving daily life problems for students and channeling their complaints to the university management. It shows that the CYL is trying to get closer to students through the student union in order to anticipate and manage discontent.

⁷⁰¹ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41.

⁷⁰² For the Tsinghua University Student Union organization in 1965 and 1992, see : Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi, 清华大学志)*, 1:900.

⁷⁰³ For instance, the function of the former Propaganda Department is now within the hands of the Internal Liaison Department in charge of the flow of information within the organization, and the Study Department in charge of providing extracurricular study content and advice to students. Also the Female Affairs Department does not exist anymore, its content was absorbed by the different departments (Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41).

Finally, the Public Service Department organizes various activities, such as debating contests or conferences, to foster students' civic engagement, in addition to classical political education.⁷⁰⁴

All in all, the organizational transformations of the CYL and the student union reflect the complexification of their approach towards student management. This is also true for the graduate student union, developed since the 1980s, which is organized along similar lines.⁷⁰⁵ The overall structure of the CYL and the student union is also reproduced at the faculty level, with a lesser amount of departments.⁷⁰⁶ Their diversified range of activities and decentralized structure - which includes the faculty level organizations as well as the supervised student associations - guarantees that the CYL and its student union maintain a hegemonic control over student life. However, this would not be possible without the existence of a dedicated manpower which is mainly composed of students themselves. One of the limitations of the scholarship on student control in Chinese universities, is that it largely omits the key role played by student cadres.⁷⁰⁷ I now turn to a detailed explanation of their omnipresence on campus, which can be partly accounted for by the specific incentives that are put in place to encourage students to choose this path.

B - Commitment is rewarded: the student cadre experience

The second part of this chapter focuses on student cadres themselves as key actors in the university control system. In addition to underlining their significance, my objective is to question the reasons why students choose to become, and eventually remain for several years, student cadres. I put forward the instances of socialization that lead to such a choice, taking into account the complex effects that students' family background might have on their trajectory, but also the role played by CCP membership as a political commitment process parallel to the student cadre experience.

Highlighting the Party-State's cooptation strategy on campus, I show that student cadres have a clear advantage over other students, both in their access to campus resources and

⁷⁰⁴ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41.

⁷⁰⁵ The activities of the graduate student union are more academically focused and far less numerous than the student union ones (Interviews with cadre 14 and student 18).

⁷⁰⁶ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41. On the faculty level organization, see : Jiang Zhibin (江志斌), "A Research on the Instruction of College Student Cadres in the New century (*xin shiqi gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu duiwu jianshe yanjiu*, 新时期高校学生干部队伍建设研究)" (PhD Dissertation, Southwest University, 2011), 82.

⁷⁰⁷ See for instance : Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," 493–513; Perry, "Citizen Contention and Campus Calm," 211–217.

graduate programs, but also when entering the job market. This is the direct result of specific policies aiming at valorizing the student cadres experience, in line with the Party-State's rejuvenation policy developed in Chapter Two. It is also an indirect effect of the universities' student management structure which places the student cadres at the center of a clientelist network.

This advantageous configuration incentivizes them to nurture their commitment as student cadres. Such career advantages are particularly valuable for students in a highly competitive environment. The dismantlement of the system of guaranteed job assignments for university graduates in the 1980s,⁷⁰⁸ and the expansion of the number of college students since the late 1990s⁷⁰⁹ have led to a highly competitive job market and to massive unemployment among young graduates. While in 1999 the higher education system enrolled 8.8 million students, around 10.5% of the age cohort, in 2014, this figure rose to 29 million, 30% of the cohort.⁷¹⁰ In 2014, the unemployment was officially around 15% for graduates six months after they left university, and according to some reports it was in practice closer to 30%.⁷¹¹

1) Student cadres as key actors on campus

a) A hierarchy controlled by the Youth League

The student cadres' mission is to act as a link between the students and the university professors and officials. The official definition of student cadres in universities include the students who volunteer as cadres for the CCP and CYL organizations, for the student union, and for student associations at different levels on campus.⁷¹² Such a broad definition includes a very large number of students. While it is hard to obtain actual figures regarding the number of student cadres in various universities, there are, according to a campus official, around 2,000 student cadres among Tsinghua University's roughly 15,000 undergrads.⁷¹³ According to a

⁷⁰⁸ See : Dingxin Zhao, *The Power of Tiananmen State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 80–90.

⁷⁰⁹ The reform of 1999 was particularly instrumental in expanding drastically the pool of college graduates. See : Bai, "Graduate Unemployment: Dilemmas and Challenges in China's Move to Mass Higher Education," 128–144.

⁷¹⁰ Elizabeth J Perry, "Higher Education and Authoritarian Resilience: The Case of China, Past and Present," in *Harvard-Yenching Institute Working Paper Series*, 2015, 14.

⁷¹¹ Sharma, "What Do You Do with Millions of Extra Graduates?"

⁷¹² "Plan for the Cultivation of University Student Cadres 2006-2010 (*gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu peiyang guihua 2006-2010*, 高校学生干部培养规划 2006-2010)," Central CYL, 29 August 2006.

⁷¹³ Interview with cadre 10.

survey conducted among 3,000 students in 30 universities or so, 38.5% of students participated in student associations and 25.5% of them had an experience in the student union.⁷¹⁴

Being mostly interested in the students who actively take part in the student control structure itself, I focus here on the student cadres who are part of the CYL and student union organizations, which offer a lot of positions and opportunities. On the contrary, as its units are largely staffed with professional cadres, the CCP can only offer basic level cadre positions to students, who cannot, therefore, rise in the hierarchy. At the same time, student associations are generally small groups which cannot offer many positions to those who participate in it, and they remain marginal in the overall student control structure.⁷¹⁵ In that case, students hold positions that are similar to those of volunteers in student clubs in Europe or the US.⁷¹⁶

By contrast, in the CYL and the student union, students can occupy a variety of positions, which are hierarchically organized. The student union is staffed by students, apart from its office secretary who is a CYL cadre. Hence it provides a large range of opportunities for students at various levels of the university hierarchical structure. In the CYL, the leaders at the university and faculty levels are professional cadres but a large number of positions are held by students. At the university level, basic cadres, as well as CYL department deputy directors, are generally students. Most universities also have a graduate student among the university level CYL deputy secretaries.⁷¹⁷ At the faculty level, the CYL secretary and the executive deputy secretary⁷¹⁸ are generally officials while the remaining positions are held by students. At the class level, the CYL branch is fully staffed by students. These various student cadre positions are presented hierarchically in Figure 3.3 below. The figure depicts the parallel hierarchies of student cadres within the student union and the CYL, which are both under the management of CYL officials. This figure aims at giving an idea of the various positions student cadres can hold in the CYL and student union on campus and their hierarchical relations. However, as

⁷¹⁴ Lü Lili (吕丽莉), “Study on the Democratic Construction of College Student Organizations (*gaoxiao xuesheng zuzhi de minzhu jianshe*, 高校学生组织的民主建设),” 45.

⁷¹⁵ Some student associations, such as the units of the Red Cross on campus, are big enough so they are given a specific place alongside the student union. The leaders of these organization have then a status similar to the one of student union cadres as they can rise up within the hierarchy and often end up in the student union of the CYL (Interview with student 17).

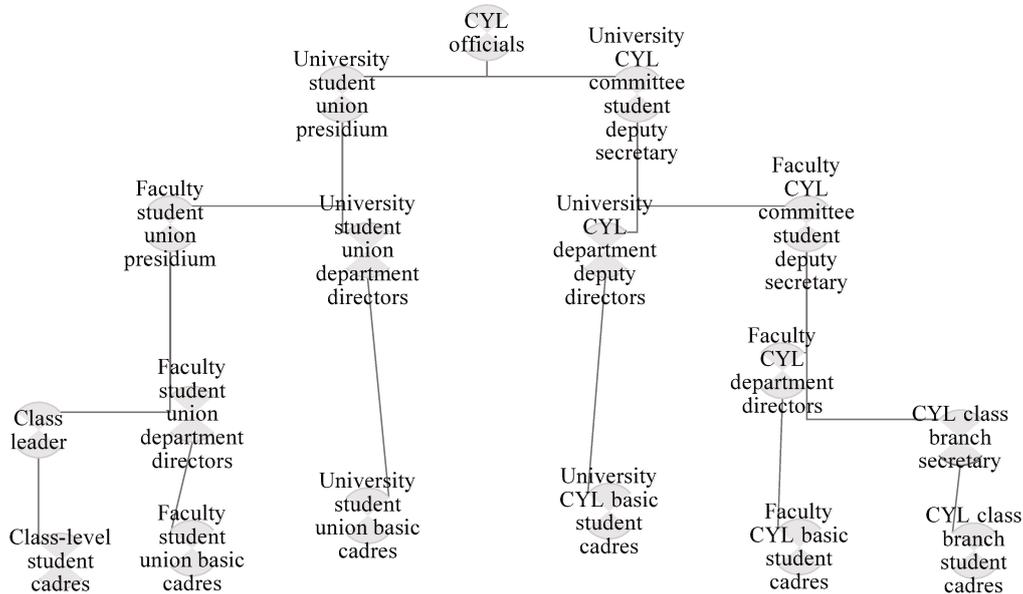
⁷¹⁶ Interviews with cadre 6, student 7, student 8, and student 16.

⁷¹⁷ The features of the position as university level CYL student deputy secretary change from one university to the other. In Peking University, it is generally held by a graduate student. In Tsinghua University it is held by a graduate student who is student counsellor at the same time. In Nanjing University, it is replaced by a position as aid of the CYL secretary (Interviews with cadre 3, cadre 12, cadre 14, and cadre 31).

⁷¹⁸ The executive deputy secretary is the most important among the CYL committee’s deputy secretaries.

these students are not actual professional cadres, this hierarchy is not an official one and can vary slightly from one university to the next.

Figure 3.3: A hierarchy of student cadres in the CYL and the student union⁷¹⁹



It is important to separate these two parallel hierarchies as my interviewees presented student cadre positions in the CYL and in the student union as quite different experiences. The student union cadres are presented as being closer to students as it is a student-run organization mainly focused on leisure activities. However, the number of activities they manage also renders their schedule busier. The CYL student cadres are, by contrast, presented as closer to the university officials, and especially the CYL leaders. They mainly help the CYL officials in their work, rather than autonomously organize activities. The students who choose to become student cadres in the CYL are generally already Party members.⁷²⁰

The issue of CCP membership is fundamentally linked to the student cadre experience. While most student cadres are CYL members, only a few are CCP members. A student cadre experience can help one to obtain CCP membership, as the selection process values involvement in Party-related organizations.⁷²¹ While political criteria are still key for entering

⁷¹⁹ This figure is based on a cross analysis of all my interviews with university cadres and student cadres. I included the class committee cadres, and the class leader, in the student union hierarchy as it plays the same role at the class level and mirrors the CYL hierarchy.

⁷²⁰ Interviews with cadre 10, student 11, student 12, student 16, and student 17.

⁷²¹ Interviews with student 7 and student 8.

the Party, they evolved from an emphasis put on class origin in Mao China to a focus on political participation since the 1980s.⁷²²

This is particularly important as CCP membership has been shown to be a clear advantage for one's future career. It is a key factor in obtaining a position in the Party-State bureaucracy or a State-Owned enterprise, and more broadly CCP members earn on average better salaries than non-members.⁷²³ Obtaining CCP membership can therefore be one of the reasons pushing one to volunteer as a student cadre.

The process to become a CCP member is long and selective. Candidates must first express in writing their desire to become Party members to the relevant Party branch, in their class for instance. To initiate the process, they each need two letters of support from CCP branch members. If the candidates are CYL members, the letters can come from their CYL branch's leaders. At this stage, they are only "activists entering the Party" (*rudang jiji fenzi*, 入党积极分子). As underlined by Duchâtel and Zylberman, this part is highly dependent on the candidates' relationship to members in their CCP branch.⁷²⁴ For instance, I was surprised to learn that one of the student cadres I interviewed was not a CCP member while he was already in graduate school and also very active in his faculty's graduate student union. He had been delayed in his application to CCP membership because he did not know well the students in his class. After being assigned to a certain dormitory linked to his class, he had changed his major and ended up not having his classmates as roommates, as is usually the case for Chinese undergrads. As a result, he had grown closer to his roommates than his classmates. Since the CCP branch is attached to the class, he had more difficulty to find sponsors.⁷²⁵

After the candidates become "activists," they must prove their loyalty and commitment during a minimum period of one year. They must participate in the activities of the Party branch and follow Party classes (*dangke*, 党课). They must also regularly report their self-assessments (*sixiang huibao*, 思想汇报) to the CCP branch secretary. One or two CCP branch members are also in charge of monitoring each activist's behavior and of reporting to the CCP branch about

⁷²² Bian, Shu, and Logan, "Communist Party Membership and Regime Dynamics in China," 805–841.

⁷²³ On this issue, see : Hongbin Li et al., "Economic Returns to Communist Party Membership: Evidence from Urban Chinese Twins," *The Economic Journal* 117, no. 523 (October 2007): 1504–20; Andrew G. Walder and Songhua Hu, "Revolution, Reform, and Status Inheritance: Urban China, 1949-1996," *American Journal of Sociology* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1395–1427; Bruce J. Dickson, "Who Wants to Be a Communist? Career Incentives and Mobilized Loyalty in China," *The China Quarterly* 217 (2014): 42–68.

⁷²⁴ Mathieu Duchâtel and Joris Zylberman, *Les nouveaux communistes chinois [The new Chinese communists]* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012), 108.

⁷²⁵ Interview with student 15.

their progress. During this period, information about the candidates and their social circles is collected by the CCP branch members to judge their political loyalty. After a year, a vote is organized to determine if the activists can become or not “probationary members” (*yubei dangyuan*, 预备党员). The probationary members have the right to participate in CCP branch meetings but not to vote.

After a maximum period of one year, another vote is organized in the CCP branch so they can become full members. If they do not commit any major mistake and participate regularly in the activities and Party classes, the probationary members generally become full members at the end of the process. This process is more straightforward when the activists are CYL members as their records are easily available through their CYL branch’s files. It is also easier for candidates recommended by their CYL branch as they enter a separate category in the CCP branch’s yearly recruitment quota.⁷²⁶

While being a lower level student cadre is a positive element to enter the Party, CCP membership is key to rise up in the student cadre hierarchy. This is true in the CYL, as we have seen, but also to become chairman or deputy chairman of the university level student union.⁷²⁷ The two experiences are therefore closely tied. As the student cadres climb up the hierarchy, most of them gradually become CCP members. Overall, being a student cadre and being a CCP member are two mutually reinforcing commitment processes: while at the beginning of the process having a student cadre experience can help one to obtain Party membership, this membership becomes later on necessary in order to rise in the student cadre hierarchy.

b) Social background and commitment

As in the case of CCP membership, one’s social background is important to understand why one would become a student cadre. This is in line with the social aspect of political commitment I developed in the Introduction. More precisely, it echoes what Oberschall called “bloc recruitment” in his comparative study of social movements. He stressed how the organizations often recruit from within specific social groups, among the people close to their members.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁶ On this process, see : Bian, Shu, and Logan, “Communist Party Membership and Regime Dynamics in China,” 814; Duchâtel and Zylberman, *Les nouveaux communistes chinois [The new Chinese communists]*, 108–120.

⁷²⁷ Interviews with student 7, student 8, cadre 10 and cadre 27

⁷²⁸ Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements*.

While class background is not an official criterion for university enrollment or even Party recruitment anymore,⁷²⁹ one's family background remains a determining factor on whether or not one becomes a student cadre. According to a survey among 680 ordinary students and 127 student cadres from one of the best Chinese universities⁷³⁰ published in 2013, 19.7% of the sampled student cadres were children of "public sector managers."⁷³¹ By contrast, only 8.4% of the other students were included in this category. Furthermore, public sector managers only represent 2.1% of the overall Chinese population, underlining even more clearly the overrepresentation of their children among student cadres. While the white collar and urban families are also more numerous among student cadres compared to other students, the overrepresentation of children of cadres is this survey's most striking result.⁷³² I could not access such data for the universities I specifically studied, but I speculate that the results would be similar.

These results indicate that student cadres are a minority within the already privileged minority that has access to university, and especially the high level institutions I am focusing on. Consider the case of Peking University: between 1995 and 1999, only 35.8% of its students came from a family of peasants or workers and 39.2% from one of managers. At the time, these two categories represented respectively 80.2% and 1.7% of the Chinese population.⁷³³ It must be noted, however, that the Chinese higher education system has progressed towards gender balance since the 1990s. In 2013, there was a majority of female students (51.74%) among undergrads across the country.⁷³⁴ While no statistics on the gender of student cadres are available, my interviews established that no clear gender imbalance could be found among basic level student cadres.⁷³⁵ As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, this stops to be the case when one rises in the hierarchy, as female students become less and less represented.

⁷²⁹ Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 213.

⁷³⁰ While the name of the university is not given, it is a "project 985" (985 *gongcheng*, 985工程) university, meaning it is one of the forty or so best Universities in the country. For a synthetic explanation of the project, see the website of the China Education Center: <http://www.chinaeducenter.com/en/cedu/ceduproject211.php> (Consulted on 12 May 2016).

⁷³¹ The category of "public sector managers" (*Guojia he shehui guanli zhe*, 国家和社会管理者) includes the medium and high level cadres in public administrations and public service units.

⁷³² Zhu Xinzhuo (朱新卓), Shi Junhua (石俊华), and Dong Zhihui (董智慧), "The Impact of Family Background on Occupying Student Union Cadre Positions (*jiating Beijing dui daxuesheng danren xueshenghui ganbu de yingxiang*, 家庭背景对大学生担任学生会干部的影响)," *Journal of Higher Education* 4 (2013): 69.

⁷³³ Liang Chen (梁晨), Zhang Hao (张浩), and Li Zhongqing (李中清), *Silent Revolution (wusheng de geming*, 无声的革命) (Beijing: Sanlian Library Ed., 2013), 114.

⁷³⁴ "Number of Female Students of Schools by Type and Level." Ministry of Education's website, December 2014. It can be accessed here: <http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s8493/201412/181716.html> (consulted on 22 August 2016).

⁷³⁵ Interviews with student 1, student 2, student 7, student 8, and student 15.

Coming back to the student cadres' family background, the overrepresentation of children of officials implies a certain continuity between the Mao and post-Mao eras. In the 1950s and 1960s, as shown by Unger as well as Shirk, students adapted their personal strategies to the opportunities offered to them based on their officially defined class label. Students with a "good" class background – meaning overall the children of officials, soldiers, peasants or workers – tended to maximize their political advantage and become student activists. This was especially true for cadres' children, who were the most valued. Students from "bad" class background – broadly meaning the students with property-class origins – could generally not access the advantages of being an activist.⁷³⁶ Such differences can still be found, albeit to a lesser degree, in the post Mao era where children of officials remain overrepresented among student cadres on campus. Such students could be inspired or even pushed by their relatives to pursue such a commitment. Being well-informed, they know that it can bring a career advantage to their children, especially in the administration, as I show in the following lines. Also, being potentially well connected, these students can make the most of/maximize their student cadre experience in their ascent towards an official career.

However, the influence of one's family background is multi-layered. According to my interviews in Beijing's best universities, student cadres are mostly from well-off families with no background in the administration, and from families of low level and mid-level officials.⁷³⁷ In the first case, they are pushed in this direction by their parents because, if they become officials, they can activate a useful web of relationships for the family business. Becoming a student cadre is therefore a substitute way of acquiring political capital for those who did not inherit it. In the second case, their choice is nurtured by the family's taste for politics and family connections. The student cadre experience is akin to a consecration process for young people who were already socially predisposed to become part of the political elite. Such processes are key in converting the heirs to their own heritage, because, as Bourdieu puts it, "one is born noble, but one becomes noble."⁷³⁸

By contrast, according to the same interviews, the children of high level cadres tend not to choose to become student cadres, either because they do not need it for their future career as they can rely on their parents' network, or because they are bored with politics and want to go

⁷³⁶ On the officially defined "good" and "bad class backgrounds in Mao China, see: Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 75–79; Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 101–102.

⁷³⁷ Information provided by: student 12, student 16, and student 21.

⁷³⁸ Bourdieu here paraphrased Norbert Elias, in : Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'Etat: grandes écoles et esprit de corps [The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power]*, 157.

into business.⁷³⁹ This is in line with the idea that they can use their parents' influence to enrich themselves in the private sector. A recent quantitative study by Jia and Lan showed that children of officials go in large number in the private sector, especially when government spending increases, which enables them to further capitalize on their family connections.⁷⁴⁰

While family background remains a significant element, it plays in a variety of ways and the student cadre experience can therefore not be reduced to a reserved path for children of officials. Studies on political socialization in a variety of contexts have showed how young people's political behaviors are largely influenced by the family background, but also how this influence is complex and multifaceted, far from being limited to the parents' direct influence.⁷⁴¹ Other instances of sociability affect a student's choice. The role of friends and roommates is of specific importance. Several interviewees have emphasized the role played by friendship in their decision to become student cadres and to remain so. Students in fact tend to join by small groups, mutually reinforcing their determination. The entry into the student union or the CYL is construed as a collective experience.⁷⁴²

The friends they make in their dormitories are central in that regard. The importance of roommate ties and collective emulation was put forward by different student cadres.⁷⁴³ Dingxin Zhao already highlighted the importance of the dormitory environment in Chinese campuses with regards to political mobilization. He argued that in the years leading to the 1989 uprising, this dense living environment facilitated the spread of dissident ideas. He showed that different rooms developed specific features depending on their configuration, and especially the personalities of their most charismatic occupants.⁷⁴⁴ Such phenomena can also lead to a conservative turn if charismatic members push their roommates into becoming more active in the political organizations on campus, which appears to be rather common.

One student cadre for instance explained to me how he started on this path in Peking University together with two of his roommates. One of the two was especially captivating and vocal. He pushed the two others in that direction. During their third year, they even considered running together for elections. In case of victory, the most charismatic one would have become

⁷³⁹ Interviews with student 12, student 16, student 21.

⁷⁴⁰ Ruixue Jia and Xiaohuan Lan, "Capitalism for the Children: Entrepreneurs with Cadre Parents Under Big Government", Working Paper, 17 August 2014. It can be accessed here: http://xiaohuanlan.weebly.com/uploads/1/9/1/3/19133549/entrepreneur_v140806.pdf (consulted on 2 July 2016).

⁷⁴¹ See in particular : Anne Muxel, *L'expérience politique des jeunes* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2001), 67.

⁷⁴² Interviews with student 12, student 16, and student 23.

⁷⁴³ Interviews with student 12, student 16, and student 23.

⁷⁴⁴ Dingxin Zhao, *The Power of Tiananmen State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 101–22.

the student union chairman and the others, deputy chairmen. Yet, being too outspoken, he was discouraged from running by CYL officials, who doubted his obedience and docility. As I show in the next chapter, CYL officials have a lot of power in selecting the potential candidates for the election of the student union chairman. The three friends therefore all remained mid-level student cadres during their fourth year.⁷⁴⁵

Overall, the social circles of student cadres should not be forgotten when trying to understand their commitment process, and one should go beyond the issue of family background. Such phenomenon is not unique as organizations often recruit through the close networks of their members. In addition to the social aspects of recruitment, I now turn to the retributions of the student cadre experience and demonstrate that it is also particularly attractive for students navigating a competitive professional environment.

2) Written and unwritten retributions for student cadres

a) Clientelism on campus

Student cadres have a facilitated access to a number of university resources, from grants to graduate programs. This is, first, a result of the key position they occupy as brokers between students, officials and professors. It provides them with a privileged access to the information about opportunities offered by the university. They meet with professors and officials on a regular basis to discuss activities or university policies. For example, the leaders of the university level CYL committee meet all the CYL branch secretaries, who are student cadres, once or twice a year at Peking University.⁷⁴⁶ Through these meetings, professors and officials get to know them and often deliver them information about grants, fellowships or travels abroad before they are publicized.⁷⁴⁷

Beyond a privileged access to information, student cadres are more easily selected than other students for such grants or travels as they often develop a personal relationship with officials and professors. Such relationships are particularly important since the selection regarding grants and fellowships is generally made directly by professors. Having often relied

⁷⁴⁵ Interview with student 13.

⁷⁴⁶ Interview with cadre 10.

⁷⁴⁷ Interviews with student 2, student 3, and academic 23. This is also put forward by Chen Wei, a Renmin University Professor, in his blog: Chen Wei (陈伟), "Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会：大学最阴暗的一角)."

on student cadres for a number of administrative tasks, it is a way for professors and officials to return the favor and reward students for their personal commitment.⁷⁴⁸

Beyond these retributions based on favored relationships and access to information, student cadres are also at the center of a structured clientelist system within universities. In exchange for their services to the school administration, they enjoy a formalized preferred treatment over other students. This is clear with regards to the deliverance of personal awards to students. A multiplicity of such prizes exist in various organizations in China. In universities, generalist awards include for instance: the “three goods students” award (*san hao xuesheng*, 三好学生)⁷⁴⁹ and the “excellent student” award (*youxiu xuesheng*, 优秀学生). These awards symbolize a student’s achievements in terms of grades, but also moral standing and involvement in the school. Being a student cadre is a key criterion in the selection process. Such awards exist at the different levels of the educational system and play a role in the graduation process. At the university level, these awards can be decisive in the selection to graduate school but also more broadly they are a positive feature on a resume.⁷⁵⁰

Some prizes reward students based on their political activities specifically; they can be granted to “excellent Communist Youth League members” (*youxiu gongqingtuanyuan*, 优秀共青团员) or “excellent student cadres” (*youxiu xuesheng ganbu*, 优秀学生干部). While the first can be awarded to a large number of students, given that CYL membership is extremely widespread, the second is more specifically focused on student cadres and is, according to my interviewees, more valuable. Such awards, just like some of the general ones, are given at the faculty and university levels, but also at the local and national ones. The universities recommend candidates for local and national competitions.⁷⁵¹ The national level awards are obviously the most prestigious ones.⁷⁵²

In addition to being often selected for these awards, student cadres also have a considerable advantage in the “direct admission to graduate school” system (*baoyan*, 保研).

⁷⁴⁸ Interviews with student 2, student 3, and academic 23. This is also put forward by Chen Wei in his blog : Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会 : 大学最阴暗的一角).”

⁷⁴⁹ The “three goods” refer to good morals, good study abilities and good physical conditions.

⁷⁵⁰ Interviews with student 11, cadre 12, student 15, and cadre 30.

⁷⁵¹ Interviews with student 6, student 11, cadre 12, student 24, and cadre 41.

⁷⁵² In 2011, 158 awards of “excellent Communist Youth League members” were given at the national level by the central CYL, to students but also young professionals. That same year, 124 national awards of “Excellent student cadres” were also delivered by the central CYL (Central Communist Youth League, *Yearbook of the Chinese Communist Youth League 2012* (*Zhongguo Gongqingtuan nianjian 2012*, 中国共青团年鉴 2012), 242–246.

This scheme allows some students to enter graduate school directly, bypassing the extremely competitive national admission examinations for graduate schools. The practice has been existing since the 1980s. Most of the “direct admissions to graduate school” take place within a faculty, but the best students have sometimes the opportunity to apply for a graduate program in another major. Universities and their faculties follow various procedures for selecting the college students who are directly accepted in their graduate programs. While the lists of admitted students have to be approved by the Ministry of Education, universities select the candidates internally. Overall, all universities give an important weight to the candidates’ participation to political activities on campus, and in particular to having an experience as student cadre.⁷⁵³

There are two main types of “direct admissions to graduate school.” The first one is mostly based on a student academic performance. The student is generally evaluated through his grades as well as a written and oral exam specific to the university. Interestingly, among the grades taken into account, one is given each term by faculty level CYL officials and is dedicated to “social practice” (*shehui shijian*, 社会实践). The social practice grade is based on the officials’ perspective on a student involvement on campus and is therefore highly subjective and malleable. CYL officials can use the leverage they have on the grades in social practice to push aside a student they dislike and to favor others.⁷⁵⁴ For instance, a student I interviewed who had the best grades in his class almost did not get selected for the “direct admissions to graduate school” as the CYL official in charge gave him the worst grade in social practice so as to keep the slot for one of his protégés.⁷⁵⁵ Professors had to intervene and raise the issue to higher level university officials in order to allow this interviewee to obtain a better social practice grade and get admitted. Entertaining close relationships with CYL cadres, for whom they work and who see them as particularly active on campus, student cadres are often the ones who get the best grades in social practice. In turn it potentially helps them to obtain a “direct admission to graduate school.”⁷⁵⁶

The second type of “direct admissions to graduate school” is related to “student work” and therefore especially relevant to student cadres. In that case, the students are selected according to their academic performance (in theory they must not have failed any class for

⁷⁵³ Interviews with student 2, student 3, student 12, student 15, student 16, and cadre 35.

⁷⁵⁴ Interviews with student 2, student 3, student 15, and cadre 10.

⁷⁵⁵ Interview with student 14.

⁷⁵⁶ Interviews with student 2, student 3, student 15, and cadre 10.

instance), but most importantly their political involvement on campus. The selection process is rather opaque and, if not explicitly, it is in practice reserved for student cadres.⁷⁵⁷

The students going through this “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school” (*xuegong baoyan*, 学工保研) do not get into the graduate programs directly: they first have to work for some time. The aim is to provide universities and schools with young graduates who will work in the student management structure. In general, two paths are available. The first is to stay on campus and work for a period of around two years as an official in charge of student management, most generally as student counsellors. The second option is to go to a less economically developed part of the country and work in a school as a teacher or an official for a short period of time, generally one year.⁷⁵⁸

Some students prefer the second option as they can more quickly get on with the graduate program. However, my interviewees at Peking University underlined that to stay on campus as a student counsellor for two years was overall the most preferred option. Some students are simply not comfortable living for a year in a foreign and rather modest environment. More tactical students also envision a stay on campus as the most efficient way to strengthen their network within the university. The ones who stay on campus often become student counsellors and at the same time deputy secretaries of the faculty CYL committees.⁷⁵⁹ They are in a good position to meet a number of university officials. After two years, some students even stay in their positions in parallel to their graduate program, which is a valued option as it provides them with a regular income.⁷⁶⁰ These two years of working experience are also precious for students who want to take the civil service exam. Indeed, for most civil servant positions, two years of grassroots level work are required⁷⁶¹ and this experience can count as such.⁷⁶²

However, the choice between these two options does not only lie in students’ hands and highly depends on the officials in charge. The first type of “student work-related direct

⁷⁵⁷ Interviews with student 2, academic 2, student 3, cadre 10, student 12, and student 16. See also: Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会：大学最阴暗的一角).”

⁷⁵⁸ Interviews with student 2, academic 2, student 3, cadre 10, student 12, and student 16.

⁷⁵⁹ Interviews with student 12, student 16, and student 24.

⁷⁶⁰ The salaries vary depending on the universities and the faculties but at Peking University, it is around 6000 yuan a month for a student counsellor (interview with student 34).

⁷⁶¹ Following the Temporary regulation regarding civil servants of 1993, a system of civil service exam was implemented. In order to apply to positions in provincial level administrations and above, the candidates need to have at least two years of working experience at the grassroots (*jiceng*, 基层), meaning county level and below (“Temporary Regulation Regarding Civil Servants (*guojia gongwuyuan zanxing tiaoli*, 国家公务员暂行条例),” State Council, August 1993). See the entry “civil service system” in the glossary for more details.

⁷⁶² Interviews with student 12, student 16, and student 24.

admissions to graduate school,” which implies to stay on campus for two years, is supervised by the university CYL. Student cadres who have strong ties with university level CYL officials are therefore favored. It is in particular the case for the university level student union leaders. The second type is managed by the university administration, and more specifically by the Student Work Department (*xuesheng gongzuo bu*, 学生工作部). Being in charge of managing the student counsellors present in the various faculties, this department is mostly in contact with the faculty level organizations rather than the university level ones. The student cadres with close connections with that level of administration are often favored, and in particular student union leaders and CYL student cadres at the faculty level.⁷⁶³

Overall, such political selection in graduate school encourages students to become student cadres. As put by Chen Wei, “some students have very little interest in student work but as they reflect on the potentiality of a superior grade to enter a graduate program without exam, they join the student union.”⁷⁶⁴ When this incentive is not in the picture, the number of student cadres declines. There are, for instance, only a few student cadres in Peking University’s Cai Yuanpei College, which works like a liberal arts college and has no graduate program, and therefore no direct admissions. More traditional faculties, which include graduate programs, have by contrast many more student cadres.⁷⁶⁵

There is a general trend of limiting the number of “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school” in universities, as they do not really need such programs to recruit student counsellors anymore. The decrease has been especially sharp at Peking University since a scandal broke in 2009 regarding the admission of certain students to graduate programs. In 2009, a blog post from a Peking University student criticized the opaqueness of the “direct admissions to graduate school.” It stated that some of the best students in Peking University Faculty of Economics did not get admitted through this system while two mediocre students did. More importantly, these students had failed several classes, which should have prevented them from accessing these admission procedures. The blogger explained this preferential treatment by the family background of the two students in question. They were both children of city level officials from Heilongjiang Province. In addition, the relatives of one of them were

⁷⁶³ Interviews with student 12, student 16, and student 24.

⁷⁶⁴ Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会：大学最阴暗的一角).”

⁷⁶⁵ Interview with student 16.

personally close to high level officials in the Peking University CCP Committee.⁷⁶⁶ The two students also had meaningful experiences as student cadres. The blogpost was quickly deleted by the authorities but during the 36 hours it was online it was viewed 120,000 times, which highlights the attention paid to such issues. Before this scandal, the university did not respect the Ministry of Education quotas regarding these admissions. This case pushed the university leadership to respect them and limit admissions. While in 2009 around a hundred students were recruited through the “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school,” only less than fifty have been enrolled through this method between 2009 and 2015.⁷⁶⁷

However, the recent decrease in the number of “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school,” which is especially remarkable at Peking University, does not completely eradicate the attractiveness of student cadre positions. Indeed, the increasing unemployment among graduates is sufficient to keep these positions very attractive.⁷⁶⁸ While it has decreased in scale, selection to graduate school based on political activism on campus still exists and can be found all over the country. The professors from Beijing and Nanjing I interviewed told me that “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school” now generally amount to around one or two students per cohort in each faculty.⁷⁶⁹ This political selection for graduate school is the main advantage student cadres obtain on campus. However, being a student cadre also brings retributions in terms of future career prospects beyond the university walls.

b) A card to play on the job market

The student cadre experience can be helpful in itself when looking for a job after graduation. The skills student cadres cultivate are seen as practical and useful for future professional developments by both the students themselves and their potential recruiters. The experience is valued for a career in the Party-State, but also from the point of view of managers in the business sector. According to my interviewees, through this experience, the student cadres develop practical skills that they believe other students lack. They can put that forward in their resumes and during job interviews. Through the organization of projects and activities on campus, student cadres acquire valuable skills such as managing personal relationships and

⁷⁶⁶ “Shocking News: A Son of Official Who Did Not Pass Five Classes from Peking University’s Economics Faculty Still Gets Direct Admissions to Graduate School! (*hairén tīngwén: guānyuán érzi běidà jīngjì xuéyuán wǔ mén bù jìgè zhāoyāng bāoyán!*, 骇人听闻：官员儿子北大经济学院五门不及格照样保研!),” blogpost by pkuecograduate, October 2009. The original post was deleted; it can now be found here: <http://www.boxun.com/news/gb/china/2009/10/200910192326.shtml> (Consulted on 6 June 2016).

⁷⁶⁷ Interviews with student 12, student 16, and student 24.

⁷⁶⁸ Interviews with student 2, student 3, cadre 6, cadre 10, student 15, and cadre 41.

⁷⁶⁹ Interviews with academic 2, academic 22, and academic 24.

interacting with a wide variety of actors. My interlocutors also emphasized the “eloquence” (*koucai*, 口才) of student cadres as they had to develop their ability to talk to officials and convince their fellow students to join the activities they organized, or potentially to vote for them. More broadly, it is the “organizational” (*zuzhi nengli*, 组织能力) and “coordination” abilities (*xietiao nengli*, 协调能力) of the student cadres which are always put forward.⁷⁷⁰

Beyond these broad skills attributed to student cadres in general, specific positions are seen as a way to train certain abilities. As we have seen, student unions are made of numerous departments with various tasks. One’s position among these departments can lead to different kinds of experiences for student cadres. Working in the Propaganda Department, the Liaison Department or the Culture and Arts Department activates different kinds of skills. A student cadre in the union’s Propaganda Department will be particularly socially active and develop communication skills, and even some technical skills, such as learning how to use a graphic design software or communication platforms. A student working in the Liaison Department can learn how to communicate with firms and actors outside the school, one of the department’s main function being to find external funding for union’s activities. In places where universities are numerous, such as the Haidian District in Beijing where, among others, Peking University and Tsinghua University are situated, firms are highly solicited. As a result, students have to be very active and convincing to attract funding. They also often have to use personal or family relationships in order to get what they want, which trains their networking skills. Finally, cadres in the Culture and Arts Department will mainly have to organize union’s activities themselves. They will mostly be in contact with CYL officials to obtain rooms and sometimes authorizations or funding, as well as with students in order to ensure their participation.⁷⁷¹

According to an opinion survey conducted on 100 student cadres in the city of Qinhuangdao in Hebei, the vast majority think that their work as student cadres allowed them to cultivate their skills. According to the survey, this is also by far the main reason why they became cadres in the first place.⁷⁷² To be sure, the idea that practical skills developed on campus are valuable for a future career is hardly original and similar phenomena can easily be witnessed in universities all over the world. The specificity of student cadres in China is the opening this

⁷⁷⁰ Interviews with cadre 6, student 6, cadre 7, student 7, student 8, student 12, cadre 16, cadre 18, and cadre 31.

⁷⁷¹ Interviews with student 6, student 7, and student 8.

⁷⁷² Wang Xueting (王雪婷) et al., “Analysis on the Effective Role Played by Students Cadres (*guanyu qieshi youxiao de fahui xuesheng ganbu zuoyong de yanjiu fenxi*, 关于切实有效的发挥学生干部作用的调研分析)” (Collected works from the eleventh academic congress on Chinese youth information and management (*dishiyi Zhongguo qingnian xinxi yu guanli xuezhe dahui lunwenji*, 第十一届中国青年信息与管理学者大会论文集), Chongqing, 2009), 75–83.

experience grants them in terms of internships but also job opportunities, in relation with their close ties to university professors and officials.

According to a survey among students from the Beijing area, the relationships established with professors and school officials are perceived as the most important when looking for a job, even more than family relationships.⁷⁷³ In the case of student cadres, the advantages obtained through these relationships can take several forms. In some cases, the university CYL proposes short-term internships to students in local level administrations during vacations. These internships are in practice largely offered to student cadres.⁷⁷⁴ This targeting of student cadres was put forward by the national “Plan for the training of university student cadres 2006-2010.” The goal advanced by this five-year plan was to send 10,000 student cadres to do such internships at the local level.⁷⁷⁵

Beyond the internships organized by the CYL itself, the organization can be used as a platform by students to get in touch with potential recruiters, for an internship or a first job. Some companies and social organizations come to campus to scout for potential recruits among graduating students. Some of them, and especially State-owned enterprises (SOEs) or mass organizations, go through the university administration and the CYL when looking for specific profiles. The student cadres are often the ones put forward by university officials and the CYL as they are the ones closer to them. These profiles are also valued by recruiters.⁷⁷⁶

Student cadres are also in a good position to be recruited as university staff when they graduate. This is particularly true for the recruitment of student counsellors. While the system varies from one university to another (see Chapter Five), counsellors are often recruited among the student cadres who benefited from the “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school.” Even after their compulsory two years of work they often remain on the job while doing their graduate studies. Beyond this specific mechanism, student cadres have experience and contacts within the university, which puts them in the best place to remain in campus as student counsellors after graduation. Some of them built so close relationships with university officials that the recruitment process is oriented in such a way so as to ensure their selection.

⁷⁷³ Wu Qing (吴庆), “2002 Report Regarding the Employment Situation for University Students in the Beijing Area (2002 nian Beijing diqu daxuesheng jiuye zhuangkuang diaocha baogao, 2002年北京地区大学生就业状况调查报告),” *Journal of China Youth College for Political Sciences* 22, no. 2 (March 2003): 26–31.

⁷⁷⁴ Interviews with student 4 and cadre 10.

⁷⁷⁵ “Plan for the Cultivation of University Student Cadres 2006-2010 (*gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu peiyang guihua 2006-2010*, 高校学生干部培养规划 2006-2010),” Central CYL, 29 August 2006.

⁷⁷⁶ Interviews with student 1, academic 2, student 2, and student 3.

While it is mandatory to openly advertise these positions, the recruitment criteria then becomes so precise that only one or two student cadres can actually fit the position.⁷⁷⁷

However, these opportunities to “stay on campus” after graduation (*liuxiao*, 留校) are decreasing, which on the long run might have an influence on the students’ interest in student cadre work. The number of opportunities for graduates to stay on campus as counsellors has become more and more limited. For instance, at Peking University, only fourteen students were able to do it in 2013, while previously around forty had been selected. At Nanjing Normal University, the number shrunk from fourteen students selected as counsellors in 2011 to five in 2015. This was mainly due to a limited turnover, itself provoked by a rising unemployment on the job market.⁷⁷⁸

c) A first step towards officialdom

Beyond the overall advantages student cadres have in terms of finding a job on campus or outside, some programs designed to train young Party-State officials specifically favor student cadres in their recruitment process. This is explicit in the “assigned graduates” system (*xuandiao sheng*, 选调生), sets in stone the benefits of being a student cadre. This system allows new graduates to enter a trainee program, under which they are sent to a grassroots position for generally two years before being promoted rather quickly in the local administration. While such systems have been developed at the local level since the 1980s, under the framework of the “third echelon policy,”⁷⁷⁹ it has been formalized in 2000.⁷⁸⁰ In order to enter the “assigned graduates” program, candidates have to take an exam organized by the CCP Organization Department at the provincial or city level depending on the position. They are then interviewed by the recruiting administrations. This program is reserved for former student cadres.⁷⁸¹

While young people can become civil servants through this program, several elements differentiate this trainee program from the civil servant exam itself.⁷⁸² First, the candidates must have graduated recently, be CCP members, and have a background as student cadres. Second,

⁷⁷⁷ Interviews with cadre 6, student 7, student 8, cadre 10, student 16, and cadre 35.

⁷⁷⁸ Interviews with student 16, cadre 16, and cadre 35.

⁷⁷⁹ See Chapter Two regarding the “third echelon policy”.

⁷⁸⁰ “Notice Regarding the Further Development of the Assignment of University Graduates to Grassroots Positions for Training (*guanyu jinyibu zuohao xuandiao yingjie youxiu daxue biye sheng dao jiceng peiyang duanlian gongzuo de tongzhi*, 关于进一步做好选调应届优秀大学毕业生到基层培养锻炼工作的通知),” CCP Organization Department, January 2000.

⁷⁸¹ While it now exists in most provinces, this program remains organized at the provincial or city level and some variations can be found in the recruitment process (Interviews with cadre 6, student 11, student 12, cadre 16, and cadre 30).

⁷⁸² On the civil service exam itself, see the entry “civil service system” in the glossary.

they have to be recommended by the CCP organization of their university, which is generally not the case for candidates to the civil servant exam. Third, instead of starting directly in the position they were recruited for, they are generally first sent to a grassroots position, for instance in a township level administration, for a minimum period of three months. Then, they are promoted to a low level leadership position, generally one ranked as section director (*keji*, 科级).⁷⁸³

Contrary to civil servants, they are directly managed by the provincial or city level Organization Departments, rather than at the level of the recruiting units. It implies that instead of applying to specific positions when taking the exam, they only select a locale. Also, they are managed by the upper level Organization Department because they are explicitly considered as “reserve cadres” (*houbei ganbu*, 后备干部) for local political leadership, generally at the county level. Being considered as the next generation of local political leaders they are usually appointed to CCP or CYL positions, rather than to State positions as most civil servants.⁷⁸⁴

The “assigned graduates” program is overall reserved for undergrad student cadres from highly ranked universities.⁷⁸⁵ This program is very popular among students because the exam is seen as less competitive than the civil servant exam⁷⁸⁶ (only recent graduates can apply) and it also offers better prospects of promotion.⁷⁸⁷ Between 2000 and 2014, 200,000 graduates have been through this program and official meetings have been organized in 2014 to further expand the recruitment.⁷⁸⁸

However, some interviewees were cautious regarding the “assigned graduates” program and underlined the risk of being sent for two years to a grassroots position far from decision making centers. They emphasized the importance of maintaining the relevant personal relations

⁷⁸³ Since they generally do not have a previous working experience, they often spend two years at the grassroots as to complete the minimum experience required for civil service positions (Interviews with cadre 6, student 11, student 12, cadre 16, and cadre 30). Regarding ranks and the civil service system, see the glossary.

⁷⁸⁴ Interviews with cadre 6, student 11, student 12, cadre 16, and cadre 30. On the difference between State and Party positions, see the development on elite dualism literature in the Introduction.

⁷⁸⁵ The program targets the “211 project” universities, which include the one hundred or so best higher education institutions in the country. Under certain conditions, the “assigned graduates” program can be expanded to some other universities and to graduate students (interviews with cadre 6, student 11, student 12, and cadre 16).

⁷⁸⁶ In 2013, 1.5 million candidates took the national civil service exam, competing for only 19,000 positions (“Has the ‘Civil Servant Fever’ Cooled Down?” *Xinhua*, October 16, 2014. It can be accessed here: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-10/16/content_33784854.htm (Consulted on 16 June 2016).

⁷⁸⁷ Interviews with cadre 6, student 11, student 12, cadre 16, and cadre 30.

⁷⁸⁸ “Preface to *Youth is Blooming at the Grassroots* (*qingchun zai jiceng zhanfang xuyan*, 青春在基层绽放序言),” Website of the assigned graduates program, September 14, 2014. It can be accessed here: <http://www.cnxds.com/view-16603-1.html> (Consulted on 12 May 2016).

to ensure a subsequent promotion.⁷⁸⁹ In addition to personal relations, some interviewees also mentioned that the kind of experience the graduates acquired as student cadres is also an important factor in determining the jobs they might obtain through the “assigned graduates” program. If they had important positions in the CYL or the student union for instance, they would most probably get promoted to better positions.⁷⁹⁰

Another program also aims at sending young graduates to grassroots positions for training: the “university graduate village official” (*daxuesheng cunquan*, 大学生村官) framework. Applicants take an exam supervised by the CCP Organization Department in order to become local village officials for two to three years.⁷⁹¹ They generally obtain an assistant position for the first year and then move on to a leadership one in the village CCP committee. This later position is only short-term and they are not considered civil servants. Still, the experience can be rewarding for young graduates as it gives them additional points when applying to graduate programs. It can also be particularly enticing to the ones who want to pursue a career in the administration as it provides them with the two-year grassroots experience required for most civil servant positions.⁷⁹² It is also a particularly valuable asset when recruits manage to obtain leadership positions at the village level.⁷⁹³ From 2008 to 2014, 248,000 “university student village officials” have been recruited. Among them, 92,000 (36.9%) later became civil servants.⁷⁹⁴

Similar programs preexisted since the 1990s but it is in 2008 that the “university graduate village official” framework started to take its current shape.⁷⁹⁵ It was then formalized by a 2009 text, which referred for the first time to “university student village officials.”⁷⁹⁶ While

⁷⁸⁹ Interviews with student 11, student 12, and cadre 16.

⁷⁹⁰ Interviews with cadre 6 and cadre 16.

⁷⁹¹ Most of them work part time at the village level and part time at in the upper level township administration (“This is How the Village ‘Number One Leaders’ are Cultivated (*cunquan ‘yibashou’ zheyang liancheng* 村官“一把手”这样炼成), *China Youth Daily*, 2 June 2012),” *China Youth Daily*, June 2, 2012.

⁷⁹² Interviews with student 12 and cadre 16.

⁷⁹³ In 2011, 24.1% of the university graduate village officials were part of the leadership of the Village Committee or the village level CCP branch (Liu Xizhong (刘西忠), “Research on the Construction of the College Graduate Village Cadres Policy System (*daxuesheng cunganbu zhengce tixi jiangou yanjiu*, 大学生村干部政策体系建构研究)” (PhD Dissertation, Nanjing University, 2011), 41.

⁷⁹⁴ “Nationally, Twenty Thousand University Student Village Officials Created a Business (*quanguo 2 wan duo daxuesheng cunquan chuangye*, 全国2万多大学生村官创业),” Website of the Chinese Government, July 7, 2015. It can be accessed here: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-07/07/content_2893239.htm (consulted on 12 May 2016).

⁷⁹⁵ Liu Xizhong (刘西忠), “Research on the Construction of the College Graduate Village Cadres Policy System (*daxuesheng cunganbu zhengce tixi jiangou yanjiu*, 大学生村干部政策体系建构研究),” 48–50.

⁷⁹⁶ “Opinion Regarding the Establishment of a Long Term System for Selecting University Graduates to be Appointed to Work in Villages (*guanyu jianli xuanpin gaoxiao biyesheng dao cun renzhi gongzuo changxiao jizhi de yijian*, 关于建立选聘高校毕业生到村任职工作长效机制的意见),” CCP Organization Department, 13 April 2009.

the program is not explicitly restricted to student cadres, most candidates have been, since it is valued by the local CCP Organization Departments, which manage the selection process.⁷⁹⁷ The 2009 text explicitly stated that the main targets of this program are the graduates below thirty who are CCP members, as well as the “excellent student cadres.”⁷⁹⁸

A third program follows a similar pattern of sending young graduates as trainees in smaller localities: the “plan for university graduates voluntary service to the West” (*daxuesheng zhiyuanzhe fuwu xibu jihua*, 大学生志愿服务西部计划). It was launched in 2003 and is managed by the CYL. It falls within the CYL’s broader objective of promoting voluntary service, as described in Chapter One. Under this program, graduates are sent for one to three years to the less developed parts of the country to serve as social volunteers. They can serve at the same time as CYL deputy secretaries in their host village or township. To be selected, they have to take an exam organized by the CYL. In contrast to the two former programs, this is a volunteering program and not an actual job, even though recruits are still financially compensated for their service.⁷⁹⁹

The program is overall very popular, and between 2003 and 2013, 160,000 people participated in it.⁸⁰⁰ Under certain circumstances, a passage through the “plan for university graduates voluntary service to the West” can give graduates additional points to enter a graduate program or when taking the civil servant exam.⁸⁰¹ In addition, this experience can also count as the two-year grassroots working experience needed in order to apply to most civil servants positions.⁸⁰²

Similar programs were also developed at the local level. Since 2004, graduates from the main cities of Jiangsu Province are sent to the poorer northern part of the province for voluntary

⁷⁹⁷ Interviews with cadre 6 and cadre 16.

⁷⁹⁸ “Opinion Regarding the Establishment of a Long Term System for Selecting University Graduates to be Appointed to Work in Villages (*guanyu jianli xuanpin gaoxiao biyesheng dao cun renzhi gongzuo changxiao jizhi de yijian*, 关于建立选聘高校毕业生到村任职工作长效机制的意见),” CCP Organization Department, 13 April 2009.

⁷⁹⁹ “Notice Regarding the Implementation of the Plan for University Graduates Voluntary Service to the West (*guanyu shishi daxuesheng zhiyuanzhe fuwu xibu jihua de tongzhi*, 关于实施大学生志愿服务西部计划的通知),” State Council, 6 June 2003.

⁸⁰⁰ “Report on the 20 years of the China Young Volunteers Operation (*Zhongguo qingnian zhiyuanzhe xingdong 20 nian baogao*, 中国青年志愿者行动 20 年报告),” *China Youth Daily*, December 5, 2013.

⁸⁰¹ “Notice Regarding the Implementation of the Plan for University Graduates Voluntary Service to the West (*guanyu shishi daxuesheng zhiyuanzhe fuwu xibu jihua de tongzhi*, 关于实施大学生志愿服务西部计划的通知),” State Council, 6 June 2003.

⁸⁰² Interviews with cadre 16 and cadre 30.

services. Around 500 volunteers are recruited through this program every year.⁸⁰³ Like the “university student village official” framework, the “plan for university graduates voluntary service to the West” is not explicitly directed towards student cadres. However, the selection being made by the CYL itself, the student cadre experience is key in the recruitment process.⁸⁰⁴

The various training programs I just reviewed are presented by Chinese scholars as a way to limit the pressure on the job market by giving special opportunities to selected graduates.⁸⁰⁵ Interestingly they are all directed, explicitly or implicitly, towards student cadres. They are therefore a perfect example of the preferential treatment student cadres enjoy in the Chinese system and of how their political commitment is rewarded.

Student cadres are at the center of the student management system as well as key actors in the clientelist network built by the CCP and the CYL on campus. For this reason, the student cadre experience has been underlined by all our interviewees as highly positive in shaping students’ future careers. A survey conducted among 281 students in 2009 also highlighted the benefits of being a student cadre. Within the sample, student cadres had a much higher “success rate” than other students: after graduation, 91.2% of them secured a job or enrolled in a graduate program. This was only true for 53.2% of the other students. Student cadres were also more likely to find jobs in higher level units, in particular in the public sector.⁸⁰⁶ As I demonstrated, these benefits are the result of the central role played by student cadres on campus, which enables them to develop strong ties with officials and professors, an instrumental asset when looking for a job or applying to a graduate program. In addition, I have shown that specific public service programs target student cadres for recruitment. It reflects the Party’s strategy to

⁸⁰³ Li Hongbo (李洪波), ed., *Theory and Practice of the University Youth League Work in the new era (xin shiqi gaoxiao Gongqingtuan gongzuo lilun yu shijian, 新时期高校共青团工作理论与实践)* (Jiangsu University Press, 2009), 163.

⁸⁰⁴ Interviews with cadre 16 and cadre 30.

⁸⁰⁵ See for instance : Li Hongbo (李洪波), *Theory and Practice of the University Youth League Work in the new era (xin shiqi gaoxiao Gongqingtuan gongzuo lilun yu shijian, 新时期高校共青团工作理论与实践)*, 161.

⁸⁰⁶ Zhang Yanan (张亚男), Wang Jianmin (王建敏), and Zhen Hua (甄华), “Analysis of Student Cadres’ Employment Advantages (*gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu de jiuye youshi fenxi, 高校学生干部的就业优势分析*),” *Journal of Guangxi Youth Leaders College* 24, no. 6 (December 2012): 34–37.

rewards these students' early political commitment. As argued by Bourdieu, "the institution invests in the ones who invest in it."⁸⁰⁷

To conclude, the student cadre experience is especially useful if one wants to become an official. Even if student cadre positions are not explicitly made for political training, they facilitate an early political professionalization. However, one must keep in mind that this is a processual phenomenon. Student cadre is not a label one can win once and for all. It is the work student cadres perform over the years, as well as the relationships they build and the status they obtain within a school, that determine how the experience will influence their future. In order to enjoy the full benefits of the experience, one has to be fully committed to it and has to remain on this path for the several years of college. In this chapter, I have set the definitional boundaries of this experience and highlighted the various factors pushing students to choose this path, including leisure activities, social circles and career-related retributions. In the next chapter, I examine the contents of the experience itself and analyze how it transforms those who take part in it and remain committed to it. In order to do so, I focus on the most highly ranked student cadres, and in particular the student union leaders, since they are the most committed and have the most complete experience.

⁸⁰⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "La représentation politique. Éléments pour une théorie du champ politique [Political Representation. Elements for a Theory of the Political Field]," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 36, no. 1 (1981): 19.

Chapter 4: Becoming a student leader: a commitment cultivation process

In this chapter, I get into the details of the student cadre experience in order to analyze the cultivation of their political commitment. I show that it is often the first step of a sponsored mobility towards officialdom. Becoming a student cadre is a gradual process, one that potentially ends with leadership in the student union or important positions in the CYL on campus. Those who manage to secure these positions during their last years of college are the most committed ones and have usually been student cadres since their freshman year. Those happy few made the most out of the unique opportunities offered by the student cadre experience in terms of boosting their future career.

By focusing on these student leaders, we can understand how their several years as student cadres contributed to strengthen their commitment to a political career. I highlight how the student cadre experience progressively restricts their social circles, excluding students who have not chosen the same path. At the same time, student cadres multiply their personal links with other student cadres and officials, which can range from friendship ties to mentorship ones. I argue that these ties are key in order to get ahead in the student cadre hierarchy, but highly valuable when starting a political career. In addition to personal ties, I show how the social role and status student leaders take on further shapes their political commitment process. By and large, they already present themselves as officials to be.

A - Commitment and social networks on campus

In the first part of this chapter, I show that those who rise in the student cadre hierarchy are engaged in a progressive screening and selection process, which is demanding in terms of time and energy. Only the most committed stay on this path. Only a few eventually rise to the top of the student cadre hierarchy and become student union chairmen. This election and the title that goes with it mark the end of a long initiation process. Through this *rite de passage*, students are publicly recognized as being part of a special elite. This is in line with the “election effect” described by Bourdieu.⁸⁰⁸

This long process also alters student cadres’ socializing practices, which tend to be narrowed down to other student cadres and officials on campus. In turn, the transformation of

⁸⁰⁸ Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d’Etat: grandes écoles et esprit de corps* [The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power], 143.

their social circles strengthens the student cadres' commitment itself, by harnessing their social life to their loyalty to the path.

1) From student cadres to student leaders

a) A progressive commitment process

When they eventually become student union chairmen, students have already been cadres for a long time and appointed to a variety of positions. The trajectory of one of my interviewees exemplifies this phenomenon. In her first year of college, she became class leader. Her class' student counsellor, with whom she had a good relationship, then suggested she became a low level cadre in the university CYL. During her second and third years, she worked at various positions within the university CYL, as well as in the university level student union. During her fourth year, she became the student union chairman.⁸⁰⁹ As this individual trajectory shows, the student cadres who rise to the top of the hierarchy go through a variety of positions, alternatively in the CYL and the student union. As a result, they share increasingly similar experiences and profiles. I now turn to a detailed enumeration of what happens year after year.

In the first year of college, a lot of students want to become student cadres. During the first weeks of the academic year, student counsellors and student leaders advertise the experience in classes and dormitories, and try to detect the most appropriate students. They focus on their "eloquence" (*koucai*, 口才) and "people skills" (*dairen jiewu nengli*, 待人接物能力).⁸¹⁰ They also go through their personal files in order to see if they had an experience as student cadre in high school. Having an experience as class leader or CYL student cadre while in high school is not a fundamental criterion in order to be selected but it can signal a students' interest in such activities. Also, most of the students in elite universities, such as the ones I focus on, have had such an experience since it is generally correlated with academic achievements in high school.⁸¹¹

During the first year, the new student cadres serve at the class level or as lower level cadres in the faculty or university level organizations.⁸¹² At this echelon, the selection process

⁸⁰⁹ Interview with student 17.

⁸¹⁰ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, these skills are further developed through the student cadre experience as they get used to deal with large groups of people and interact with officials.

⁸¹¹ Interviews with cadre 3, cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41. This process is also developed in: Lü Lili (吕丽莉), "Study on the Democratic Construction of College Student Organizations (*gaoxiao xuesheng zuzhi de minzhu jianshe*, 高校学生组织的民主建设)," 33.

⁸¹² At the class level, the CYL branch secretaries as well as the class leaders are elected by students but the candidates are preselected by the class director. Regarding the student union at the university or faculty levels, the student cadres can go through a selection process by the student union leaders and join at the bottom of the

is not very strict and most applicants have a chance of becoming lower level student cadres.⁸¹³ At Tsinghua University for instance, almost 50% of the 3,300 freshmen end up as student cadres during the first year, including the ones in various student associations.⁸¹⁴ At Nanjing University, each department of the university level student union counts more than 30 students, mainly first years doing a variety of small tasks.⁸¹⁵ While such a large number of student cadres is not actually needed, the CYL pushes for broad recruitment in the student union and student associations among the first years, in order to increase participation in the organizations it controls. As a result, most student cadres are only given petty tasks, such as moving tables for an event. A lot of them find it uninteresting and do not invest more of their time in these organizations. Most freshmen also try different organizations all at once, and they only start to focus on one or two the following year.⁸¹⁶

The situation evolves during the second, third and fourth years of college. Student cadres go through various selection processes to obtain higher positions and only the most committed remain in place. Among Tsinghua University's third and fourth year students for instance, only 200 student cadres remain in the CYL and the student union at the different levels.⁸¹⁷ Those who keep on as student cadres while entering their second year of college are generally the ones who rise in the hierarchy.⁸¹⁸ In most universities, they have to pass short written tests regarding the organization and the university, as well as a recruitment interview.⁸¹⁹

Those who are still student cadres during the third year of college have gone through yet another round of selection. They can, for example, become CYL deputy secretary at the faculty level. In that case, they are selected by the CYL secretary and the faculty level CCP leadership. As CYL leaders, they must be CCP members. They can also head a department of the university student union, or become a student union chairman at the faculty level. The university student union department directors are selected by the union's secretaries with the

hierarchy. To become basic CYL student cadres, they are selected by CYL officials (Interviews with cadre 6, student 16, cadre 30, and cadre 41).

⁸¹³ Interviews with cadre 6, student 16, cadre 30, and cadre 41.

⁸¹⁴ I did not obtain clear figures regarding the number of student cadres in the various universities. Source for Tsinghua: interview with cadre 41.

⁸¹⁵ Interviews with student 7 and student 8.

⁸¹⁶ Interviews with cadre 7, student 7, cadre 8, and student 8.

⁸¹⁷ In addition, around 200 students head the various student associations managed by the CYL (interviews with cadre 17 and cadre 41).

⁸¹⁸ They can for instance become department director of the faculty student union or deputy director at the university level. In that case, they have to be selected by the student union chairman and deputy chairmen at the relevant level, with the agreement of the CYL. They can also get similar positions within the faculty CYL committee going through a similar selection process, this time managed by the CYL cadres themselves (interviews with cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41).

⁸¹⁹ Interviews with cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41.

agreement of CYL officials and especially the student union office secretary.⁸²⁰ At the faculty level, the selection process for the student union chairman varies from one faculty to another. The two most common practices highlighted by Lü Lili are a direct selection by the faculty CYL or an election by students.⁸²¹ These various methods have been confirmed by my interviewees.⁸²² In any case, the CYL exerts ample influence over the faculty student union. Candidates for this position have generally been student cadres for several years and have good relationships with the faculty CYL officials. Former faculty student union chairmen can also be influential in the selection process as they can advise the CYL on the candidates they deem fit to replace them.⁸²³ While being a CCP member is not mandatory, most student union leaders at the faculty level in the various universities are (or are at least probationary members).⁸²⁴

Finally, only a handful of students remain student cadres while in their fourth year of college. If they do, it means they have been through very competitive processes to reach the top leadership positions, in particular as chairman or deputy chairman of the university level student union. The selection process also varies from one university to another. Still, the overall process, common to the various universities under study, is laid out by the All-China Student Federation's charter. Every two years, a congress of students' representatives is assembled. A number of representatives are sent by the different faculties according to their size. They are generally selected by the chairmen of the faculty level student unions. The representatives select a presidium (*zhuxituan*, 主席团) composed of a chairman and several deputy chairmen, which manages the union during one year.⁸²⁵ A Standing Committee (*changwu daibiao weiyuanhui*, 常务代表委员会) is also formed, based on representatives sent from the different faculties. It is in charge of supervising the union's work before its next congress.⁸²⁶ The student unions are largely organized along the same lines as the CYL and the CCP.⁸²⁷

⁸²⁰ Interviews with cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41.

⁸²¹ Lü Lili (吕丽莉), "Study on the Democratic Construction of College Student Organizations (*gaoxiao xuesheng zuzhi de minzhu jianshe*, 高校学生组织的民主建设)," 33.

⁸²² In the case of Nanjing University for instance, the Foreign Languages Faculty organizes a direct election by the students and officials for the student union chairman. To guarantee that students do not elect someone at odds with the faculty's officials, their votes count five times less. By contrast, in the History Faculty, the student union chairman is directly selected by the CYL. There used to be elections, but after a candidate who was not supported by the faculty CYL mismanaged some activities, very few students showed up and they were cancelled (interviews with student 7, student 8, and cadre 30).

⁸²³ Interviews with student 7, student 8, and cadre 30.

⁸²⁴ Interviews with cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41.

⁸²⁵ "Charter of the All-China Student Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo xuesheng lianhehui zhangcheng*, 中华全国学生联合会章程)," All-China Student Federation, 25 August 2010.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ This is also put forward here : Francis, "The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University," 404.

The process appears very systematic on paper, but is less clear in practice. First, the student union congresses are assembled every two years but actually the union chairmen rotate every year. When the congress is not assembled, the presidium is selected by the student union's Standing Committee after a pre-selection by the CCP and the CYL. The candidates are chosen within the different faculties by fellow students and screened by the CYL. The actual process is relatively obscure and varies from one faculty to the other. A CYL deputy secretary is commonly very implicated in it and selects the candidates with the help of former student union chairmen and deputy chairmen. The candidates to the presidium usually have to be CCP members. The CYL prevents the unreliable individuals from running, in particular the ones who are critical of the university administration or simply not obedient enough.⁸²⁸ Overall, the CYL highly influences the selection process. Some debates have emerged regarding a potential democratization of these elections, yet since 1989 only one university tried to implement direct elections by the students.⁸²⁹

b) The cost of commitment

The student cadre experience is a perfect example of the early stages of a sponsored mobility process. It is a way to select the most motivated and reliable students, that is those who invested the more time and energy in their task as student cadres. Following Kanter's *cognitive-continuance commitment*, or Klandermans' analysis of "continuance commitment" in the case of social movements, such intense personal investment in an activity makes it hard to give up.⁸³⁰ In the case of student cadres, it is coupled with the potential retributions they can obtain from pursuing that path, as highlighted in the previous chapter.

However, commitment is not costless. An article from 2001 underlined the costs of commitment from the perspective of university student cadres. It emphasized how much of their time and energy went into their tasks as student cadres. They confessed being tired and overwhelmed with the multiplicity of what they saw as useless tasks. They reported having

⁸²⁸ Interviews with cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41.

⁸²⁹ In 2008, Sun-Yat Sen University in Guangzhou organized direct elections for the student union chairman. The 33,123 undergraduate students were to select directly the chairman among four candidates preselected by the CYL. They conducted a true election campaign through the internet and the media. Still, the experience was not pursued nor reproduced. It was judged potentially disturbing for campus life and the university leaders had no incentives in pushing for it (interviews with academic 6 and student 16). See also on the topic : He Haining (何海宁), "Full Record of the Student Union Chairman Direct Election (*xueshenghui zhuxi zhixuan quan jilu*, 学生会主席直选全记录)," *Southern Weekend*, November 13, 2008.

⁸³⁰ On investment-based commitment, see the Introduction. Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities"; Bert Klandermans, *The Social Psychology of Protest* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 97.

meetings every day of the week at the class level, the faculty level and in link with the various organizations. These meetings could last from one hour to much more. During the week-end, they had to prepare the activities for the coming week and advertise them. This was perceived as a waste of time by students, which could potentially impact their studies. The difficulty to manage both academic pressure and their work as cadres was advanced as a major reason for student cadres to withdraw from their position. Numerous student cadres in fact abandon after a year or two, just before they would have to get more seriously involved.⁸³¹ Along this line, a majority of respondents (65%) in an opinion survey conducted among 100 student cadres in the city of Qinhuangdao in Hebei Province, believed that their work as student cadres had a strong impact on their academic studies.⁸³²

According to my interviews, this is mostly a problem for student leaders, the most committed ones, rather than for the majority of student cadres.⁸³³ While they do not necessarily have major academic problems, student leaders rarely have the best grades among a cohort. They spend a lot of time on the job and therefore study less. As underlined by some interviewees, at a certain point one has to choose between being part of the “academic” (*xueshu*, 学术) circle or the “political” (*zhengzhi*, 政治) one on campus.⁸³⁴

To mitigate their commitment and the opportunity costs that go with it, numerous students limit their ambition to faculty level student leaders. Instead of trying to do as much as possible in order to become university level student leaders, they aim at best at becoming chairman or deputy chairman in their faculty, a less stressful and time consuming position. Rising in the hierarchy at the university level, by contrast, leaves no time for vacation. Pressure can also be very high if one falls under the supervision of an ambitious department director who wants to run for the next election and who hence pushes his subordinates to their limits as to

⁸³¹ Qi Fujuan (戚甫娟), “Thoughts on the Phenomenon of Higher Education Student Cadres Asking to Withdraw (*dui gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu gaotui xianxiang de sikao*, 对高校学生干部告退现象的思考),” *Youth Studies* 4 (2001): 41.

⁸³² Wang Xueting (王雪婷) et al., “Analysis on the Effective Role Played by Students Cadres (*guanyu qieshi youxiao de fahui xuesheng ganbu zuoyong de yanjiu fenxi*, 关于切实有效的发挥学生干部作用的调研分析)” (Collected works from the eleventh academic congress on Chinese youth information and management (*dishiyi Zhongguo qingnian xinxi yu guanli xuezhe dahui lunwenji*, 第十一届中国青年信息与管理学者大会论文集), Chongqing, 2009), 75–83.

⁸³³ Interviews with cadre 7, student 7, student 8, cadre 8, cadre 10, student 15, student 17, and cadre 41. According to a large-n survey, nearly 75% of student cadres have grades above the mean of the student body. Jiang Zhibin (江志斌), “A Research on the Instruction of College Student Cadres in the New century (*xin shiqi gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu duiwu jianshe yanjiu*, 新时期高校学生干部队伍建设研究)” (PhD Dissertation, Southwest University, 2011), 72.

⁸³⁴ Interviews with student 12 and student 16.

show his efficiency.⁸³⁵ This tendency for student cadres to aim for less ambitious positions at the faculty level is also put forward in Qi Fujuan's study.⁸³⁶

This progressive commitment is overall a key aspect of the student cadre experience for those who remain on this path. Building on the idea of "continuance commitment," I argue that this experience is self-strengthening: the more student cadres personally invest in an activity, the less likely they are to quit, since it would mean losing their previous investment.

2) The transformation of the cadres' social network

a) Narrowing their social circle

Throughout the four years of college, the social circle of student cadres progressively narrows. As stated above, only the most committed stick to the path over such a long period of time. For instance, in large institutions such as Peking University and Tsinghua University, several hundred freshmen become student cadres every year in the university level student union. But less than a hundred are still part of the organization during their second year. The figure goes below twenty for the third and fourth year students. Being only a handful in each of the organizations at the various levels, the student cadres who managed to stay on tracks for several years get to know each other very well. While for freshmen, joining the student union can be a way to meet new people and widen one's social circle on campus, this is less and less true as years go by. Starting from the third year in particular, most student cadres have risen to leadership positions and their sociability circles become extremely limited.⁸³⁷

In addition to being a narrow group of people, student cadres spend most of their time together and with university officials. They participate in numerous meetings, which take up most of their time outside classes.⁸³⁸ Overall, at the university level, student union leaders interact among themselves every day, and meet at least once a week with CYL officials.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁵ Interviews with student 12, student 14, student 15, and student 16.

⁸³⁶ Qi Fujuan (戚甫娟), "Thoughts on the Phenomenon of Higher Education Student Cadres Asking to Withdraw (*dui gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu gaotui xianxiang de sikao*, 对高校学生干部告退现象的思考)," 41.

⁸³⁷ Interviews with student 15, student 16, and student 21.

⁸³⁸ The multiplicity of meetings at the various levels is extremely complicated to list but for instance the key meetings for university student union leaders are: The union's congress every two years, the union's Standing Committee meetings every year, as well as the yearly meetings which bring together the heads of the different university level student organizations. The university CYL and CCP leadership are present at these meetings. More frequent meetings, such as the weekly presidium meetings, can also include CYL officials (Interviews with student 12 and student 22).

⁸³⁹ Interviews with student 12 and student 22.

Between the management of the activities themselves and these recurrent meetings, student leaders have very little time for socializing outside their organizations.

My interviewees stressed that the intense commitment of student cadres to their job had a strong impact on their friendship relationships but also sentimental ones. It can lead some relationships to end, especially when the partner is not part of these organizations. Student cadres tend therefore to pursue sentimental relationships among themselves,⁸⁴⁰ or to remain single during college.⁸⁴¹ The issue is so widespread, that it has become a matter of concern for the central CYL, which now publishes articles on “single student cadres” through its propaganda apparatus. A recent publication, for instance, put forward how hard it is for student cadres to develop sentimental relationships as they are highly absorbed by their task. It reiterated that student cadres have to be fully committed to their and must be ready to cancel projects or dates at the last minute if required by their superiors. By underlining how common the phenomenon was, the publication attempted at reassuring student cadres about their personal situation.⁸⁴²

This transformation of the student cadres’ social circles is close to what Shirk described regarding the shift in sociability of the high school students who turned to activism during the Mao era.⁸⁴³ Similar transformations in sociability have also been highlighted in the case of other political organizations. Focusing on contemporary French youth political organizations, Bargel underlined that personal identification to the organization is highly linked to an exclusive sociability within it and an exclusion of outsiders from one’s social circles. She showed for instance that members tend to date almost exclusively within the organization. She stressed that even friendship and sentimental relationships take on a political meaning as socializing within the organization is usually held as proof of one’s commitment to it. Accordingly, members also often detach themselves from former friends who do not share their commitment.⁸⁴⁴

In the Chinese case, this phenomenon is strengthened by the various training programs cadres have to go through. The training of student cadres has become increasingly important in

⁸⁴⁰ Education-based homogamy has been increasing since the 1980s, especially in the urban areas. Student cadres marrying each other’s select from an even narrower group within the already restricted pool of college educated people. Source on homogamy : Hongyun Han, “Trends in Educational Assortative Marriage in China from 1970 to 2000,” *Demographic Research* 22, no. 24 (April 2010): 733–70.

⁸⁴¹ Interviews with student 12 and cadre 38.

⁸⁴² “Student Cadres, Why Are You Single? (*Xuesheng ganbu, ni weishenme danshen?*, 学生干部,你为什么单身?),” Central CYL WeChat Account, November 11, 2015.

⁸⁴³ Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 87.

⁸⁴⁴ Bargel, “Apprendre un métier qui ne s’apprend pas. Carrières dans les organisations de jeunesse des partis [Learning a trade which cannot be learned. Careers in the parties’ youth organizations].”

the post-1989 era. Following the instructions of the “Opinion regarding the strengthening and improvement of the political education of university students” or Document 16, issued by the Party-State in 2004,⁸⁴⁵ a “Plan for the training of university student cadres (2006-2010)” was put in place.⁸⁴⁶ The variety of training programs established at that time further shapes the sociability of the student leaders who take part in them.

b) Training programs and selective sociability

As part of the plan initiated in 2006, the central CYL launched one year later the “Marxism training program for youth” (*qingnian Makesi zhuyi peiyang gongcheng*, 青年马克思主义培养工程).⁸⁴⁷ It implies trainings at three different levels: within the various universities, at the provincial and at the central level.⁸⁴⁸ While these trainings include people from different universities, the groups remain homogenous since they are mostly constituted of highly ranked student cadres. Once again, these trainings keep student cadres within narrow social circles.

For the most part, at the university level, this program furthers what had already been put in place since the 1980s. Taking Peking University as an example, a CYL school was established in 1982, when Li Keqiang was the university CYL secretary. The trainings were progressively formalized, especially after 1989, in order to strengthen the student cadres body. In 1997 a special training was for instance created for faculty level CYL secretaries. The same year, another program was established for student associations leaders.⁸⁴⁹ Around that period, the university also initiated its “High level CYL school” (*gaoji tuanxiao*, 高级团校), in which around three hundred student cadres take part every year. These are mostly third or fourth year

⁸⁴⁵ “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the Political Education of University students (*guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin daxuesheng sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进大学生思想政治教育的意见),” Document 16, State Council, 14 October 2004.

⁸⁴⁶ “Plan for the Cultivation of University Student Cadres 2006-2010 (*gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu peiyang guihua 2006-2010*, 高校学生干部培养规划 2006-2010),” Central CYL, 29 August 2006.

⁸⁴⁷ In addition to full time CYL cadres and young researchers, it pushed for the establishment of training programs for “student backbones” (*daxuesheng guban*, 大学生骨干), meaning student cadres as well as CCP members and students remarked for their involvement in cultural activities and sports for instance. The group is therefore slightly extended beyond student cadres. As underlined by Walder, in the case of factory workers, the “backbones” are seen as the stable and loyal elements on which the Party-State can rely. They are good at what they do and support the official line as they benefit from it (Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, 151. Still on campus, the student cadres constitute most of the group (interviews with student 15, student 16, and student 21).

⁸⁴⁸ “Implementation Outline for the Marxism Training Program for Youth (*Qingnian makesi zhuyi peiyang gongcheng shixing gangyao*, 青年马克思主义培养工程实行纲要),” CYL Central Committee, 16 October 2007.

⁸⁴⁹ Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuán zài Beida*, 共青团在北大), 160.

student cadres holding highly ranked positions in the CYL, the student union, or in university level student associations, such as the campus unit of the Red Cross. They are sent by the various organizations as well as the different faculties, in agreement with CYL officials. They are organized as an actual class and follow half-day trainings every two or three weeks.⁸⁵⁰

The trainings offered to student cadres intensified in the mid-2000s in link with Document 16 and the new program from the central CYL. In 2005, was initiated the “Peking University student union backbones training school” (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui guban peixun xuexiao*, 北京大学学生会骨干培训学校), which advocates that student union leaders at various levels, around a hundred people, be brought together for half-day training sessions five times a year, in presence of CYL officials.⁸⁵¹ Also in 2006 were initiated the “Student backbones training camps” (*Xuesheng guban xunlian ying*, 学生骨干训练营), which bring together around sixty high level student cadres for a week of fieldwork. While at the beginning the program had a strong military component (students were sent to train in an army camp),⁸⁵² it has now become more focused on social and volunteering work as well as visiting historical sites. In 2008 for instance, for the 30th anniversary of the reform and opening up policy, they visited Shenzhen in Guangdong Province, presented as a symbol of China’s recent transformations. My interviewees who took part in this program described it as a good way to have fun with their classmates. It appeared to them more as a summer camp than an actual training program. It also strengthened the personal ties among them.⁸⁵³

These study trips are not new in Peking University, as the CYL school started organizing some for student cadres in 1988,⁸⁵⁴ but they became much more formalized after 2006. The “Plan for the training of university student cadres (2006-2010)” pushed universities to organize such activities for student cadres during academic vacations.⁸⁵⁵

The trends I have illustrated in the case of Peking University are also true of the other institutions I studied. Each of them developed their own training programs under different

⁸⁵⁰ Interviews with Student 16 and student 24.

⁸⁵¹ Interviews with student 12, student 16 and student 22.

⁸⁵² “Peking University Holds the 2006 Student Backbones Training Camp (*Beida juban 2006 nian xuesheng guban xunlian ying*, 北大举办2006年学生骨干训练营).” Website of Peking University, July 13, 2006. It can be accessed here: <http://www.pkucet.com.cn/news.asp?id=1777&d=%B1%B1%B4%F3%D0%C2%CE%C5> (Consulted on 20 May 2016).

⁸⁵³ Interviews with student 16 and student 24.

⁸⁵⁴ Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 124.

⁸⁵⁵ “Plan for the Cultivation of University Student Cadres 2006-2010 (*gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu peiyang guihua 2006-2010*, 高校学生干部培养规划 2006-2010),” Central CYL, 29 August 2006.

formats. For instance, Tsinghua established in 2001 a training program called “When you drink water, think of its source: serve society” (*Yinshui siyuan fuwu shehui*, 饮水思源 服务社会). Around thirty students from various grades are selected every year to join this program for three years. While it is not explicitly made for student cadres, they make up most of the participants, since, once again, the selection is made by student counsellors and CYL officials who work with them on a daily basis. The program features regular training sessions over the semester, as well as study trips during the vacations. During these trips students go to various places together with CYL officials. The first year they generally go to a poorer region of the country in the inner lands, to visit farms for instance. The second year they travel to the most developed parts of the country to visit factories, research units, or military facilities. The third year they are sent to Hong Kong to expand their “international horizon” (*guoji shiye*, 国际视野). This program was further developed in 2007, with the creation of a special section dedicated to highly ranked student cadres, and in particular the student union and CYL leaders.⁸⁵⁶

Over these three years, the students who take part in the program at Tsinghua University get to know each other very well. An official in charge of supervising this program underlined how strong are the relationships built there and how useful they can be for a student’s future career.⁸⁵⁷ Cadres in charge of similar programs at Nanjing University confirmed such statement. Regarding the study trips more specifically, they mentioned that they eventually had to forbid alcohol as student drank too much in the past. This anecdote further demonstrates the socializing function of these trips.⁸⁵⁸

The “Marxism training program for youth” also entailed the creation of training programs at the provincial level by local student federations and CYL organizations. They organize a one-week training session once a year, involving both classwork and fieldwork. It usually brings together the student union chairmen, or graduate union chairmen, of the biggest and highest ranked universities in the province. It generally includes fifty people or more depending on the size of the province.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁶ Interviews with student 21 and cadre 41. See also the presentation of the program: “Special Training Plans (*Zhuanxiang peiyang jihua*, 专项培养计划),” Tsinghua University Website. It can be accessed here: <http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/xtw/4794/> (Consulted on 20 May 2016).

⁸⁵⁷ Interview with cadre 41.

⁸⁵⁸ Interviews with cadre 6 and cadre 30.

⁸⁵⁹ Interviews with cadre 6 and student 18. Regarding the Beijing Student Federation, see: “Looking Back at the Marvels of the Beijing Student Federation in 2014-2015 (*Beijing Xuelian 2014-2015 niandu jingcai huigu*, 北京学联2014-2015年度精彩回顾),” WeChat account of the Beijing Student Federation, April 28, 2015.

A similar training program was established in 2007 at the central level, the “National university student backbones training school” (*Zhongguo daxue xuesheng gudan peiyang xuexiao*, 北京大学学生会骨干培训学校). Every year, the central CYL and the All-China Student Federation bring together the student union chairmen from the two hundred or so best universities in the country. The program includes one week of training at the Central CYL School and one or two weeks of study trip, often in important sites of the Chinese revolution. It also sometimes implies a trip abroad. The central CYL secretaries take part in the training and students are accompanied by central CYL officials in their study trips.⁸⁶⁰ For instance, during the eighth edition which took place in 2014-2015, 204 student participated in a one-week study session at the Central CYL School in December 2014. The CYL Central Committee First Secretary Qin Yizhi gave a speech regarding the new CCP and CYL policies. Other central CYL leaders also took part in the training sessions. In August 2015, during the summer vacations, the students, together with central and provincial CYL officials, went for eleven days of fieldwork in Jiangsu Province.⁸⁶¹

A comprehensive multi-leveled training structure was therefore established in 2007 through the “Marxism training program for youth.” On its first year, 208 students took part in the national training, 5000 in provincial ones, and more than 100,000 at the university level.⁸⁶² While provincial and national trainings might appear as a way for students to meet various people from other universities, such multiplicity of training programs actually amplifies the segregated social practices of student cadres. They spend the little free time they have, their vacations in particular, with other cadres. This is particularly true of the student cadres who join the central level trainings, as they also generally take part in the ones within their university and province.⁸⁶³

⁸⁶⁰ Interviews with student 17 and student 18. See also : Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 120.

⁸⁶¹ “The National University Student Backbones Training School Eight Edition’s Week of Theoretical Training of Comes to an End (*Zhongguo daxuesheng gudan peiyang xuexiao di ba qi xueyuan lilun xuexizhou huodong jieshu*, 中国大学生骨干培养学校第八期学员理论学习周活动结束),” *China Youth Daily*, December 25, 2014; “The National University Student Backbones Training School Eight Edition’s Practical Training in Jiangsu Comes to an End (*Zhongguo daxuesheng gudan peiyang xuexiao di ba qi xueyuan Jiangsu shijian duanlian huodong jieshu*, 中国大学生骨干培养学校第八期学员江苏实践锻炼活动结束),” *China Youth Daily*, August 18, 2015.

⁸⁶² Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan, 政治学视野下的中国共青团)*, 120.

⁸⁶³ A student union chairman of a highly ranked university, and who is invited to the national level training for student cadres, will also be invited to the provincial level training and the ones in his own university (interviews with student 17 and student 18).

Initiated by the Document 16 of 2004, the development of such a multiplicity of training program is a conscious effort from the Party-State to influence student cadres on a theoretical basis but also to transform their sociability. It ensures that they spend most of their time with other cadres and officials. In line with scholarly understanding of commitment, the Party-State has well understood that securing one's commitment implies reinforcing one's ties with other cadres and detaching oneself from people who do not share this commitment.

This echoes what has been reported regarding Communist Parties' practices elsewhere. In the case of the French Communist Party during the interwar years, militants and cadres explicitly analyzed, and consciously transformed, their own personal social practices in order to make sure that their commitment to the Party was reflected in their narrow socializing within the organization.⁸⁶⁴ Shirk put forward that activists in the Mao era were also very careful about who they included in their social circle since they were being judged on it. They could not afford to be close to politically unreliable people.⁸⁶⁵ To a certain extent, it is still the case. Several interviewees have expounded that it is common for student cadres to stop a relationship with someone in order to preserve their own reputation among campus officials.⁸⁶⁶

This level of commitment, to the point of transforming one's personal relationships, is mostly true for the most engaged student cadres and especially the university level student union leaders. The result is a widening gap with the rest of the student body, which pushes them to develop a specific identity as student cadres, and eventually reinforces their commitment to the path.

⁸⁶⁴ Claude Pannetier and Bernard Pudal, "Du parti bolshevik au parti stalinien [From the Bolshevik Party to the Stalinist Party]," in *Le siècle des communismes*, ed. Michel Dreyfus et al. (Paris: Editions de l'Atelier/ Editions ouvrières, 2000), 507.

⁸⁶⁵ Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 120.

⁸⁶⁶ Interview with academic 2 and student 12.

B - Developing a vocation for office

Over the years, student cadres develop a specific identity and take on the attributes of the role linked to their position. Through a first immersion in the world of officials, they absorb the rules of the political game and learn what is expected from them as cadres. They also learn how to speak and behave like officials. Those who remain student cadres during the years of college participate in various activities and build a network of friends within the organization. Most importantly, they *learn* to enjoy such activities and to value the specific status it gives them on campus, compared to other students. They therefore become interested in maintaining such a status by pursuing a professional career as officials. In a nutshell, they begin to cultivate a vocation for political office.

Political vocation is here understood pragmatically as a commitment to the role itself, in line with Max Weber's classic distinction between *living off* or *for* politics. If one lives for politics, beyond the material rewards one gets off it, one has to enjoy the role itself and develop a vocation.⁸⁶⁷ The development of a vocation is the result of a process through which young recruits interiorize their life project as part of an elite and are given the idea that they are both competent and legitimate to attain power positions. The vocation is what makes political professionalization both possible and desirable.⁸⁶⁸ Instead of a purely ideological or normative commitment to a political career, the vocation logically derives from the commitment process initiated by the student cadre experience.

1) Cultivating one's role as a cadre

a) Understanding the rules of the game

Through the various meetings and trainings sessions described in the first part of this chapter, student cadres learn their role. In parallel to their educational function, these meetings are to be understood as a "test in bourgeoisie:" students have to show their ability to fit in a specific social setting. This expression was used by Eymeri to describe the compulsory internships designed for students of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (National school of administration, ENA) in France. He highlighted that the internships were mostly a way to test

⁸⁶⁷ Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, xlix.

⁸⁶⁸ See for instance: Bargel, "S'attacher à la politique. Carrières de jeunes socialistes professionnels [Becoming attached to politics. Careers of young professional socialists]."

students' social skills and their ability to navigate the social environment of French high-level administration.⁸⁶⁹

During training sessions, they are taught the basics of the contemporary Chinese approach to Marxism, as well as the overall narrative of the country's evolution from the Party's standpoint. During the fieldwork linked to the training sessions, they are supposed to get a sense of the country's diversity and learn to behave as student cadres in their dealings with the rest of the people. The official aim is for them to develop an "affection towards the popular masses" (*yu renmin qunzhong de ganqing*, 与人民群众的感情).⁸⁷⁰

The various meetings with officials have a more indirect training function. In the most important meetings with campus officials, student cadres only listen and do not take an active part.⁸⁷¹ Still, the content of the meetings frames what they learn to see as mainstream knowledge among officials and as the normal topics to mention. It gives them access to the rules of the game. Such on-the-job training is common to every political organization.⁸⁷²

In addition to official meetings, student cadres are sometimes also invited to take part in informal gatherings with other cadres and university officials. They take place in restaurants on campus or outside. In these settings, student cadres mimic their superiors, generally CYL officials. They learn where everybody should be seated depending on rank, what conversation and tone are proper or not, and importantly they get used to the drinking habits of officials. Not used to drinking alcohol in large quantities and navigating a context where they had to stay in control, some students would train themselves or find ways to limit the effects of alcohol before such events. Some ate large quantities of yogurt before dinner or used certain Chinese medicinal herbs.⁸⁷³ In particular they learn how to propose a toast and with whom they are supposed to toast first and how, depending on the respective ranks.⁸⁷⁴ To a certain degree I myself experienced this learning process while participating in such meetings. I witnessed the degree of formality hidden behind rather pleasant moments. Guided by my interviewees, I had to learn

⁸⁶⁹ Eymeri, *La fabrique des énarques [Making enarques]*, 127.

⁸⁷⁰ The goals and contents of the training and fieldwork sessions are developed in this document : "Implementation Outline for the Marxism Training Program for Youth (*qingnian makesi zhuyi peiyang gongcheng shixing gangyao*, 青年马克思主义培养工程实行纲要)," CYL Central Committee, 16 October 2007.

⁸⁷¹ Interviews with student 16 and student 18.

⁸⁷² In the case of French party youth organizations, Bargel highlighted how, through the numerous meetings they take part in, the militants learn to behave and to speak in these settings and get used to interact with other militants (Lucie Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique, 2009* (Paris: Dalloz, 2009), 352).

⁸⁷³ Interviews with student 12 and student 24.

⁸⁷⁴ Interviews with student 12 and student 16.

where I had to seat and with when to toast based on my perceived status within the group. I learn, at my expense, that I should toast only scarcely and limit the amount of *baijiu* drunk.

Students can already be familiar with such socializing experiences when having dinner with their parents' friends for instance, but it is rare for them to have access to such level of officials. Most importantly, in these meetings, student cadres have to prove they are worthy of the attention given to them, which separates them from other students.

Beyond what they get from these various meetings in terms of understanding the informal rules of the world of officials, student cadres also understand over the years how to present themselves within the frame of their role. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, this can later be useful in a recruitment setting. The specific way in which students conform to the expectations attached to their role is best apparent in the student unions' publications which introduce the candidates running for office in the various universities. For instance, in a WeChat post, listing the candidates for the Nanjing University Graduate Student Union Presidium, the various contenders had to fit their personal experience into formatted tables in order to best advertise their qualities and convince students to vote for them.⁸⁷⁵ As the figure below demonstrates, the selected categories are very specific and revealing of what is expected from them.

⁸⁷⁵ "Record of the Selection for the 2014 Teams of the Nanjing University Student Union and Graduate Student Union (2014 nian Nanjing daxue xueshenghui, yanjiushenghui huanjie xuanba ceji, 2014年南京大学学生会、研究生会换届选举侧记)," Nanjing University Student Union WeChat account, May 30, 2014.

Figure 4.1: Presentation of a candidate for the Nanjing University Graduate Student Union elections⁸⁷⁶



The candidate's formatted resume includes eight categories. First, the number of positions he held at the various levels in the CYL and student union. In this case, he held six positions. Second, the number of large activities he organized personally at the faculty or university levels. He organized four. Third, the number of his appearances in the media, within and outside campus. In this case, 600 appearances.⁸⁷⁷ Fourth, the number of academic exchanges he participated in, in other parts of the country or abroad. He did one. Fifth, the number of competitions won at the university level or above (provincial or central level for instance). He won five. Sixth, the number of prizes and awards, such as the "excellent student cadre award", that he received at the university level and above. He won twenty. Seventh, the amount of money he managed to raise from outside donors for student union activities. He gathered in total 1,320,000 RMB. Finally, the number of research projects or papers he completed. In his case he did twenty-two.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ The number of media appearances could seem extremely high but one has to keep in mind that this includes all social media platforms, which are actively used by student organizations on campus.

Through this personal presentation, the candidate wants to picture himself as an overachieving student having acquired a lot of experience in the student union and the CYL, and who ultimately can deliver. In particular, he shows his ability to gather large amounts of money from the outside as well as to organize large events. Overall he presents himself more as an efficient official than an actual student representative. One could imagine that a student representative would put forward the concessions he obtained from the administration, or more broadly what he did in favor of students rather than highlighting his own personal achievements.

Student cadres learn over the years how to cultivate an image of good organizers, and in fact of good potential officials. They show that they understand well the functioning of the CYL and the student union on campus and that they achieve what is needed for the development of these organizations, which is close to what is expected from actual officials. Student cadres hence become proficient in the mechanisms of Party-type organizations as a whole. Such skills can be highly valuable if they later choose to become officials.⁸⁷⁸

b) Embodying their role as future officials

The function played by student cadres on campus, who lie at the center of the student management structure, as well as their constant interactions with university officials, give them a particular status compared to other students. This status is reinforced by what Bourdieu called the “election effect.”⁸⁷⁹ The fact that they have been selected and given an official title publicly sanctions their elite status and associated skills. It marks that they have been initiated into the closed circle of cadres. Those who remain active and eventually become student leaders are the ones who enjoy this specific status and the role they have to play within the university.

Such phenomenon is far from unique and already existed during the Mao era. Unger stressed that for high school students, entering the CYL meant joining a specific social circle and enjoying a privileged status. Being able to wear the badge and share the secrets of the organization, even though at a very low level, was for the students a matter of status symbol and embodiment. As in the case of student cadres, their spare time was mostly spent within the organization, reinforcing their feeling of belonging.⁸⁸⁰ Chan has also underlined how cultivating a role as an activist through one’s behavior and language was highly self-reinforcing.

⁸⁷⁸ Interviews with student 16 and academic 23.

⁸⁷⁹ Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'Etat: grandes écoles et esprit de corps* [*The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*], 143.

⁸⁸⁰ Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 93.

Individuals value the status their activism gives them.⁸⁸¹ Similar situations have also been highlighted in the case of elite clubs on American campuses. As put forward by Grousset-Charrière in her work on clubs at Harvard University, students are also cultivating an elite status through secret activities and elitist daily behavior, which sets them apart from the rest of the student body.⁸⁸²

In China, the case of student cadres is original because their status is highly related to the one of campus officials and more broadly Party-State officials. As developed in Chapter One, the CYL and the student union, for which the student cadres work, are organized similarly to the CCP.⁸⁸³ By cultivating a specific role as student cadres on campus, they therefore develop the premises of an identity as Party-State officials. Several of my interviews explicitly told me how this experience gave them the feeling of being “like leaders” (*xiang lingdao*, 领导).⁸⁸⁴

This is particularly clear in the way they have mastered “bureaucratic jargon” (*guanhua*, 官话) and make wide use of it in their speech. This was put forward in several of my interviews with lower level student cadres when describing their superiors and comrades, and I could experience it in my encounters with student leaders themselves. Chen Wei, a professor at Renmin University, also gave the example of one of his students who was “original and naïve” at first, and who started to have “the mouth full of bureaucratic jargon” once he became student union chairman.⁸⁸⁵ Language is a strong sign of one’s status on campus. In Chapter Six I further explore the linkages between language and ideology in the world of officials.

Beyond language, student cadres are also transformed physically by the experience. Being part of an elite group implies a specific bodily *hexis*, certain behaviors and tastes which highlight one’s affiliation.⁸⁸⁶ Studying this issue in details, Fretel showed that every political organization leads its members to behave in a unique fashion. They all learn to behave in a certain way as members of a common corps.⁸⁸⁷ In the case of student cadres, those who remain

⁸⁸¹ Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation*, 214.

⁸⁸² Stéphanie Grousset-Charrière, *La face cachée de Harvard: la socialisation de l’élite dans les sociétés secrètes étudiantes [Harvard’s hidden face: elite socialization in student secret societies]* (Paris: La documentation française, 2012).

⁸⁸³ Interviews with student 16 and academic 23. See also : Francis, “The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University.”

⁸⁸⁴ Interviews with student 13, student 20 and student 24.

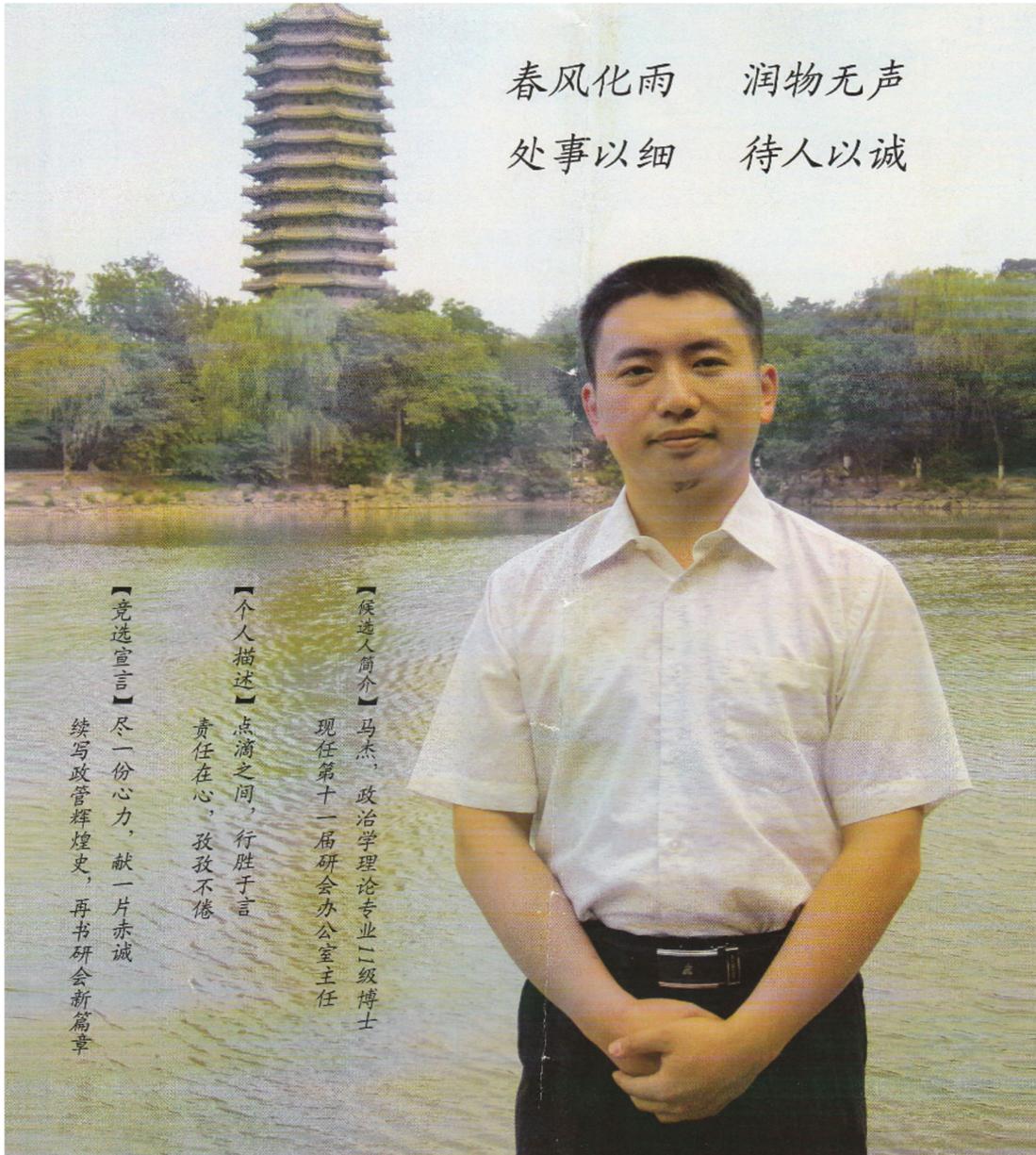
⁸⁸⁵ Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin’an de yi jiao*, 学生会: 大学最阴暗的一角.)”

⁸⁸⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “Les rites comme actes d’institution [Rites as Acts of Institution],” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 43, no. 1 (1982): 62.

⁸⁸⁷ Julien Fretel, “Habiter l’institution. Habitus, apprentissages et langages dans les institutions partisans [Inhabiting the institution. Habitus, learning processes and languages in party institutions],” in *Sociologie de l’institution*, ed. Jacques Lagroye and Michel Offerlé (Paris: Belin, 2011), 195–217.

on this path after several years and attain top positions, start physically mimicking officials. It is, for instance, visible in the way student union election candidates present themselves in electoral handouts, such as the one below.

Figure 4.2: Handout for the election campaign of a faculty level graduate student union in Peking University⁸⁸⁸



The candidate depicted here is a master student who ran for chairmanship in a faculty graduate student union at Peking University. In the front page of the handout, he appears before the Weiming lake and its adjacent pagoda, symbols of Peking University. It is striking how this

⁸⁸⁸ In the case of this faculty level student union elections, handouts were distributed by candidates to all the student representatives who were to vote in the election. I obtained this hand out through one of my interviewees who was one of these representatives.

graduate student already looks like a Party-State official, by contrast to most students, who dress in a very casual fashion. He wears the white short-sleeved shirt, as well as the dark pants and belt which are worn by almost every official. The resemblance is striking with Figure 4.3, a picture of Xi Jinping visiting Peking University in 2012 few months before he became the leader of the CCP. The only noticeable difference between their uniform is that the student does not wear a watch.

Figure 4.3: Xi Jinping (in the middle) visiting Peking University⁸⁸⁹



Coming back to the handout, Figure 4.2, the text on the front page is also revealing of the way the student wants to advertise himself. Through the four figurative expressions on the top, he wants to underline that he is the “product of his education” (*chunfenghuayu*, 春风化雨), that he “embellishes things discreetly” (*runwuwusheng*, 润物无声), that he “manages things delicately” (*chushiyixi*, 处事以细), and that he is a “distinguished and honest person” (*terenyicheng*, 特人以诚). He presents himself as an efficient, moral, and humble servant of

⁸⁸⁹ Source: Ministry of Education Website. It can be accessed here: http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/A12_tt/201206/138082.html (consulted on 24 August 2016).

the organization, like a Party official should be. In the remnant text, he succinctly presents himself as the current student union office director, and further develops his qualities and how he will positively influence the organization' future. Among other things, he highlights that he is “responsible at heart” (*zerenzaixin*, 责任在心) as well as “diligent and tireless” (*zizibujuan*, 孜孜不倦).

Their classmates often present student cadres as overdoing it in their adoption of “bureaucratic jargon” and behavior. They appear almost as actors.⁸⁹⁰ But as Unger highlighted, the Party-State has a certain tolerance for acting. During the Mao era, officials tended to believe that by acting, that is faking behaviors and values which are deemed positive, activists would eventually interiorize them. The cultivation of certain patterns of behavior was therefore emphasized.⁸⁹¹ This was also put forward by Walder in his conceptualization of *biaoxian* (表现), which can roughly be translated as *performance*. Focusing on factory workers during the Mao era, he showed how they always had to actively display the virtues and talents expected from their superiors. More than conformity to an overarching ideology, it meant actively showing one's obedience to fit the leaders' subjective expectations.⁸⁹² Similarly, studies on religion stressed that behavioral conformity can lead to faith.⁸⁹³ This is well summarized in this quote from the French singer Georges Brassens, bending Blaise Pascal words: “kneel, pray and implore, soon you will believe.”⁸⁹⁴

In the post-Mao era, ascriptive signs of loyalty to the regime, such as class label, became less relevant in political selection. Behavioral signs of loyalty, including such displays of commitment, have replaced them as a key criterion.⁸⁹⁵ As a result, Party-State officials have become even more tolerant towards people acting loyal as it is often the main way they have to evaluate their commitment. In fact, the officials in charge of student cadres repeatedly put forward how they behave more maturely than other students.⁸⁹⁶

As developed in the Introduction, adherence to a holist Maoist ideology has become less relevant to political selection in the post-Mao era.⁸⁹⁷ As a result, the distinction between “phony

⁸⁹⁰ Interviews with student 1, student 2, student 16 and academic 23.

⁸⁹¹ Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 98.

⁸⁹² Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, 134–160.

⁸⁹³ See in particular : Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 63.

⁸⁹⁴ Song by George Brassens, *Le Mécréant [The unbeliever]*, 1960.

⁸⁹⁵ Walder, “The Political Dimension of Social Mobility in Communist States: China and the Soviet Union.”

⁸⁹⁶ Interviews with cadre 3 and cadre 16.

⁸⁹⁷ On the decreased importance of ideology in post-Mao China, see: Misra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism*.

activists” (*jia jiji*, 假积极) and “genuine activists” (*zhen jiji*, 真积极), which was key in the Mao era,⁸⁹⁸ was never put forward by my interviewees. They did not oppose cynical student cadres to idealist ones. All my interviewees, student cadres, professors and officials on campus, highlighted the career incentives linked to this experience, without condemning it as an amoral goal. What mattered was more the way they behave and displayed their commitment to their role as student cadres, than their actual motivations. In this context, commitment to a role, or vocation, ceases to be normative and does not fundamentally rely on one’s dedication to a cause or moral standard. As such, it differs widely from ideological-based commitment.

I now turn to a description of student cadres’ behavior. I show that their propensity to mimic actual officials affects their relationship with other students, which in turns reinforces their isolation.

2) A deviant minority

a) The “bureaucratization” of student cadres

Most of my interviewees, who generally had an experience as lower level student cadres, portrayed student leaders in a rather negative light. The student union chairmen and deputy chairmen at the university level, in particular, are largely depicted as bureaucratic and corrupt by fellow students. They consider themselves as different from lay students and are disliked for it. They also behave as a separate group from the rest of the students, having their own social activities and not mixing with them for lunch. Also, most students envy their privileged access to grants or graduate programs, and consider it as unfair.⁸⁹⁹ In a survey conducted among 820 students in three universities, a majority of respondents (53.9%) held negative opinions about student cadres.⁹⁰⁰

The bad image of student cadres is partly due to their perception as highly bureaucratic. Like in other Party-related organizations, hierarchy is very strong within the student union. The chairman easily gives orders without discussion to the other student cadres. This also applies to matters unrelated to the functioning of the organization. For instance, he can ask his subalterns

⁸⁹⁸ Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation*, 20; Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 13.

⁸⁹⁹ Interviews with student 1, student 2, student 7, student 8, student 10, student 12, student 16, student 17, student 20, student 22, student 23, and student 24. See also : Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin’an de yi jiao*, 学生会 : 大学最阴暗的一角).”

⁹⁰⁰ Jiang Zhibin (江志斌), “A Research on the Instruction of College Student Cadres in the New century (*xin shiqi gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu duiwu jianshe yanjiu*, 新时期高校学生干部队伍建设研究),” 87.

to pick up and pay for his food, charge his phone...⁹⁰¹ As a result, a lot of students find such cadres too dictatorial in the way they interact with them. According to a survey made in the city of Qinhuangdao, their authoritarian and bureaucratic behavior is the main reason why ordinary students dislike student cadres.⁹⁰² The problem of the “bureaucratization” (*guanliaohua*, 官僚化) of student cadres is in fact emphasized in Chinese studies on the matter.⁹⁰³

The social image of student cadres is very similar to what Shirk, Chan, as well as Unger, described regarding the relationship between activists and non-activists in schools during the Maoist era. Chan described that in primary school already activists acted in a patronizing manner towards other students, and were vilified for being arrogant and acting as teachers’ pets.⁹⁰⁴ In high schools, activists were also kept “at arm’s length” by other students, as Shirk put it. Theirs was a difficult position, situated in-between their professors and classmates. They generally took the professors’ side, as they decided of their future as activists, and were strongly disliked for it. In addition, a contradiction lied at the very heart of their role, since they simultaneously had to encourage other students to be politically active and strove to keep their group relatively small in order to maintain their privileges. To prevent the recruitment of more activists, one strategy was to exaggerate the shortcomings of their fellow students during “criticism sessions” or in their reports to teachers.⁹⁰⁵ Unger also highlighted that while some student activists, perceived as more loyal to their classmates, were more respected than others, their overall image was negative. As a consequence, some students chose not to become activists because they did not want to be ostracized from their peers.⁹⁰⁶

Just like back then, being a student cadre today comes with a bundle of social costs. In addition to being portrayed as “bureaucratic,” student leaders are also perceived as corrupt by lower level student cadres and the broader student body. At Peking University, student union leaders are sometimes described as a “bunch of gangsters” (*heibang*, 黑帮) by students.⁹⁰⁷ Such depreciated image is due to the clientelist practices sometimes associated with their positions.

⁹⁰¹ Interviews with student 1, student 2, student 7, student 8, student 10, student 12, student 16, student 17, student 20, student 22, student 23, and student 24. See also : Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin’an de yi jiao*, 学生会 : 大学最阴暗的一角).”

⁹⁰² Qi Fujuan (戚甫娟), “Thoughts on the Phenomenon of Higher Education Student Cadres Asking to Withdraw (*dui gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu gaotui xianxiang de sikao*, 对高校学生干部告退现象的思考).”

⁹⁰³ See for instance : Bao Zhigang (包志刚) and Siriguleng (斯日古楞), “A Preliminary Discussion on the Existing Problems of the Student Union (*qiantan gaoxiao xueshenghui zuzhi cunzai de wenti*, 浅谈高校学生会组织存在的问题),” *Intelligence* 8 (2013): 13.

⁹⁰⁴ Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation*, 25.

⁹⁰⁵ Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China*, 85.

⁹⁰⁶ Unger, *Education under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, 92.

⁹⁰⁷ Interviews with student 2, student 3, and student 16.

Rumors of vote buying or misappropriation of unions' funds have a very negative impact on the cadres' reputation. It is well known that some student leaders accept different forms of petty corruption, such as getting invited for dinner for instance, in order to speak in favor of a student to university officials. They also can develop parochial practices, favoring people from their region over other students.⁹⁰⁸ Rumors of massive corruption also surrounds the Peking University Student Union elections.⁹⁰⁹ I return to this issue later in this chapter. In consequence, and as already explained at the beginning of this chapter, lower level student cadres are sometimes rebuffed by the ill practices of their leaders and choose to leave the student union or to remain cadres at the faculty level instead of aiming for higher positions.⁹¹⁰

b) Antagonism reinforces their segregation

High level student cadres are seen as deviant by other students, and are socially stigmatized for being arrogant, bureaucratic and corrupt. The concept of “deviant career,” first developed by Howard Becker in the case of drug users, is useful to understand how they learn to accept the stigma.⁹¹¹ Bargel also used this concept to describe the path chosen by militants in youth political organizations in contemporary France. The student cadre experience, which is negatively viewed by a large part of other young people, progressively sets them apart and reinforces their narrow sociability, as already described. At the beginning of a deviant career, leisure activities and social interaction within the group are important in order to accept the stigma and progressively take part in more political activities. With time, the deviants' social practices become more and more different from the ones of other students, and they learn to accept and value their deviance. The deviant career is self-reinforcing in that way.⁹¹²

A main difference with other deviant groups, such as drug users, is that student cadres are in constant interaction with mainstream groups. They cannot isolate themselves but have to

⁹⁰⁸ Interviews with student 2, student 3, student 16, and academic 23. See also : Guo Ming (郭明), “Why Do Student Union Chairmen Have Difficulties Joining the Party: On the Training and Function of Student Cadres (*weishenme xueshenghui zhuxi nan rudang : tan xuesheng ganbu de peiyang yu shiyong*, 为什么学生会主席难入党：谈学生干部的培养与使用),” *Exam Weekly* 9 (2008): 196; Qi Fujuan (戚甫娟), “Thoughts on the Phenomenon of Higher Education Student Cadres Asking to Withdraw (*dui gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu gaotui xianxiang de sikao*, 对高校学生干部告退现象的思考),” 41.

⁹⁰⁹ Such cases were reported by the press. See for instance: Jin Ying (金颖), “An Election Campaign in Peking University (*Beijing daxue de yi chang xuanzhan*, 北京大学的一场选战),” *News Weekly*, September 28, 2004.

⁹¹⁰ Interviews with student 12, and student 16. See also : Qi Fujuan (戚甫娟), “Thoughts on the Phenomenon of Higher Education Student Cadres Asking to Withdraw (*dui gaoxiao xuesheng ganbu gaotui xianxiang de sikao*, 对高校学生干部告退现象的思考),” 41.

⁹¹¹ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*.

⁹¹² Bargel, *Jeunes socialistes, jeunes UMP: lieux et processus de socialisation politique [Young socialists and young UMP: Sites and processes of political socialization]*, 330.

constantly interact, even superficially, with other students while organizing extracurricular activities and taking part in campus life.

This situation is similar to what Walder described regarding Chinese factories in the Mao era. He highlighted that a minority of workers were given a specific status as activists and derived benefits and privileges from their clientelist relationship with management. Their unique status was regularly marked publicly, in meetings and documents, which progressively drew the antagonism of other workers. Like with Walder's workers, the split between student cadres and other students is a direct consequence of the vertical links they develop with university officials, which give them unique advantages and ultimately changes their personal status and behavior. They also function as a "lightning rod for dissatisfaction" and become the focus of all the resentment the students may have towards officials.⁹¹³ As a result of their isolation from other students, student cadres are more closely bound to each other and to officials, which also echoes Walder's findings.⁹¹⁴

While making it costlier, the increased isolation of student cadres strengthens the importance they give to their specific role and status. In turn, the more they value their status and publicly proclaim it, the more isolated they become. The development of a political vocation both results from and reinforces one's progressive commitment process. Such feedback loop mechanism is a key feature in explaining one's commitment to the student cadre path, and potentially to a future official career. In line with the bureaucratization process noted earlier, student cadres also start to identify with the Party-State establishment. Student cadres are progressively instilled with the idea that they are legitimate to pursue a political career. In our interviews, the highly ranked student cadres rarely hide their political ambitions.⁹¹⁵

Beyond the increasing gap with other students, the strong ties developed with officials outside and on campus, who can subsequently become mentors, are also key in securing the first steps of a political career. I now turn to this dimension by highlighting the case of China's two best universities, Peking University and Tsinghua University.

⁹¹³ Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, 25.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹¹⁵ Interviews with student 4, student 13, student 14, student 17, student 21, and student 22.

C - Finding a political mentor

In this chapter, I have described how student cadres are repeatedly screened and evaluated by officials on campus, and how they eventually get close to them. I now demonstrate how these relationships eventually take the form of mentorship ties, strengthening their vocation and training as student leaders. I highlight how these ties can even help student cadres to start a professional career as officials, with long term effects on their trajectories. The political importance of mentoring relationships is far from specific to China. It has been highlighted by Camp in the case of the Institutional Revolutionary Party regime in Mexico,⁹¹⁶ which held hegemonic power for over seventy years (1929-2000). Camp showed how the support of a mentor was decisive in starting a political career under the Institutional Revolutionary Party's rule. The mentor acted at the same time as a "recruiter," a "networker," and a "socializer." In addition to first recruiting disciples, generally within universities as Mexican officials often held positions in higher education institutions, the mentor would introduce them to influential friends and ultimately influence the way they saw their own future.⁹¹⁷

Coming back to the Chinese case, I stress in the third part of this chapter how developing strong mentorship relations with officials on campus is one of the structuring factors that shapes student cadres' trajectories. I also develop how potential mentors scout and spot the right candidates, sometimes through informal meetings. Taking into account their personal background, including gender, family social status and social circles, they assess their ability to rise up the student cadre hierarchy and win student union elections, as well as the extent to which they can be trusted as long term protégés.

In order to explain how these relationships unfold and eventually play out in university settings I focus on China's best two universities: Peking University and Tsinghua University. These two schools provide the most officials to the Chinese Party-State, who often get promoted to very high ranks, and as such are key places for political networking.⁹¹⁸ Comparing these two

⁹¹⁶ Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexico's Mandarins: Crafting a Power Elite for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 27.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹¹⁸ According to the website of the "Chinese Universities Alumni Association" (*Zhongguo xiaoyou hui*, 中国校友会), in 2007 Tsinghua University had the most alumni within the current political elite with 41 officials within the CCP Central Committee or at the ministerial level and above. Peking University was second with 34 alumni in such positions (Wang Qian (王骞), "Beida Graduates in the Political Arena (*zhengzhi wutai shang de Beida biyesheng*, 政治舞台上的北大毕业生)").

institutions enables me to see how university officials keep control over the Union in various settings, and develop mentoring relationships with students.

1) Elections and mentorship on campus

a) Controlled elections in Peking University

Like in other universities, Peking University Student Union is composed of a School-wide Congress of Student Representatives (*quanxiao xuesheng daibiao dahui*, 全校学生代表大会), a Standing Committee (*changwu daibiao weiyuanhui*, 常务代表委员会), and a presidium (*zhuxituan*, 主席团). The congress is constituted of around three hundred representatives sent from the various faculties based on their size.⁹¹⁹ According to my interviewees, the faculties sending the most representatives are the Institute for Computer Science and Technology and the Health Science Center. A large medical school attached to Peking University only since 2000, the Health Science Center holds a specific status in the student union: it sends a large number of representatives to the congress and many leadership positions are reserved for its students. The ways in which the representatives sent by the faculties are selected is highly nontransparent and varies from one faculty to another. They are sometimes elected by the students, sometimes directly selected by the faculty level student union chairman. In any case they need the agreement of the faculty CYL secretary, who has a strong influence over the process.⁹²⁰

The congress meets once every two years in order to review the union's work, occasionally amend the union's charter, and select the new leadership.⁹²¹ While on paper it is the union's most important institution, its influence remains limited and it mostly functions as a rubberstamp. It mainly plays a role in the selection of the new team which will manage the student union.⁹²² It also approves the Standing Committee members sent by the faculties and it takes part in the selection of the presidium.⁹²³

⁹¹⁹ "Charter of Peking University Student Union (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 北京大学学生会章程)," Peking University Student Union Congress, May 2010.

⁹²⁰ Interviews with student 12, student 16 and student 23.

⁹²¹ "Charter of Peking University Student Union (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 北京大学学生会章程)," Peking University Student Union Congress, May 2010.

⁹²² Interviews with student 12, student 16 and student 23. See also: Francis, "The Institutional Roots of Student Political Culture : Official Student Politics at Beijing University," 410.

⁹²³ "Charter of Peking University Student Union (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 北京大学学生会章程)," Peking University Student Union Congress, May 2010.

As the congress is in session only once every two years, it is the union's Standing Committee which is in charge of supervising the union's work in the interval. The Standing Committee members are sent by the various faculties. Each faculty sends one representative, who cannot be at the same time the faculty student union chairman. In total, they are around forty.⁹²⁴ These representatives are selected by the faculty union chairman with the agreement of the faculty CYL.⁹²⁵

In most universities, the Standing Committee has mostly a “supervision” (*jiandu*, 监督) function. It makes sure that the union's leadership follows the rules established by its charter, and audits the union's expenses. At Peking University, the Standing Committee elects its own leadership in parallel of the presidium, which gives it more weight than in other universities.⁹²⁶ It is composed of a Standing Committee President (*huizhang*, 会长) and two or three vice-presidents (*fuhuizhang*, 副会长), among which one at least must be from the Health Science Center. This is a unique feature for this university.⁹²⁷ The position of Standing Committee President was created in 1979 under the pressure of Li Keqiang and his friends the year when he ran for Peking University Student Union Chairman.⁹²⁸ He himself became the first Standing Committee President. While most of my interviewees presented it as a political innovation aiming at more checks and balances within the student union,⁹²⁹ some also underlined that it was probably a way to provide a springboard to this promising student, who had not been elected as union chairman.⁹³⁰ Even in this configuration, the Standing Committee has only a limited power and does not manage the union's activities. They can only investigate the work done by the union's presidium by requesting activity reports.⁹³¹ In case of disagreements, the university CYL is the final judge, but overall the presidium retains the most power.⁹³²

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

⁹²⁵ The CYL has a strong influence on the selection of faculty level student union chairmen and can as a result easily influence the selection of the representatives (interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24).

⁹²⁶ While the Tsinghua University Student Union established its Standing Committee (*changshe daibiao huiyi*, 常设代表会议) in 1986, it does not have a president. Lü Lili (吕丽莉), “Study on the Democratic Construction of College Student Organizations (*gaoxiao xuesheng zuzhi de minzhu jianshe*, 高校学生组织的民主建设),” 34.

⁹²⁷ “Charter of Peking University Student Union (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 北京大学学生会章程),” Peking University Student Union Congress, May 2010.

⁹²⁸ Li Keqiang was a student at Peking University, which he entered in 1978. In 1982, he became Peking University CYL Secretary. He is currently The PRC's Premier.

⁹²⁹ Interviews with cadre 3, cadre 10, student 12, student 16, student 20, academic 23, student 23, and student 24.

⁹³⁰ Interviews with student 12 and academic 23.

⁹³¹ The chairman is supposed to present a report to the Standing Committee at least once a year, but when the two institutions do not see eye to eye, the latter can ask for more regular meetings. In these cases, the chairman would often send one of his deputies instead of going himself to deliver the report, in order to not publicly lose face (interviews with student 12 and academic 23).

⁹³² Interviews with student 12 and academic 23.

The presidium is in charge of managing the student union activities. It actually runs the organization. It is composed of a chairman (*zhuxi*, 主席) and between three to six deputy chairmen (*fuzhuxi*, 副主席), including at least one from the Health Science Center. The presidium manages the various union's departments which are in charge of routine work, as shown in the previous chapter.⁹³³ Presidium members are elected every year through a complex system which alternates between “big elections” (*daxuan*, 大选) on the years the congress is gathered, and “small elections” (*xiaoxuan*, 小选), when it is not.

Every two years it is time for a “big election.” It is organized in two rounds. During the first round, the congress and the Standing Committee select around seven people among fifteen candidates or so. They constitute the presidium. During the second round, the Standing Committee members select a chairman within the newly elected members of the presidium. The others become deputy chairmen. At the same time, the former presidium and student union chairmen from different faculties are assembled in an Executive Committee (*zhixing weiyuanhui*, 执行委员会), which assists the representatives in their choice.⁹³⁴

When the congress is not assembled, a “small election” is organized. In that case it is the Standing Committee members who vote during the two rounds, selecting first the presidium and then the chairman. In both cases, the presidium later on selects the department directors.⁹³⁵

Candidates to the presidium are suggested by the different faculties. In practice, they have to be CCP members, or at least probationary members. They also need to have a previous experience as student cadres, generally as university level student union department directors or faculty level student union chairmen. Their overall grades need to remain above a certain level and they cannot have failed any classes. According to my interviews, the required academic level is really not hard to achieve, as more than 80% of the students have such grades and above.⁹³⁶

Most importantly, candidates need to obtain the approval of the student union office secretary, who is a CYL official. CYL officials favor the more obedient candidates and they sometimes refuse to grant a candidate the authorization to participate in the election. This happened to one of my interviewees, who presented himself as particularly outspoken and in a

⁹³³ “Charter of Peking University Student Union (*Beijing daxue xueshenghui zhangcheng*, 北京大学学生会章程),” Peking University Student Union Congress, May 2010.

⁹³⁴ Interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24.

⁹³⁵ Interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24.

⁹³⁶ Interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24.

good position to win. According to him, the office secretary was probably bribed by his competitors to remove him from the race.⁹³⁷ To be sure, situations rarely reach that point, since CYL officials usually manage to convince the students they deem inappropriate for the position not to run. The candidates put forward by the faculties are also often fit for the task from the CYL's standpoint, as they already are high level student cadres and therefore have been through a variety of screening processes. If needed, the CYL can also influence the election itself through the Standing Committee members who are sent by the different faculties.⁹³⁸ The CYL has indeed a variety of means to influence student union elections.

Despite all this, elections at Peking University are largely seen as more competitive than in other universities. There is a relatively large number of candidates, generally between ten and fifteen, and they campaign actively. The candidates put up campaign posters on campus, visit the representatives and give them handouts describing themselves and their objectives.⁹³⁹ They also each give a speech right before the representatives vote.⁹⁴⁰

Tsinghua University's student union has a more controlled election process. The overall structure is the same as in Peking University with a congress every two years, and hence "big elections" and "small elections" alternatively. A main difference is that during "small elections," the union presidium is elected by the faculty level student union chairmen, instead of other representatives from the faculty level unions like in Peking University. It guarantees even more control on the CYL side.⁹⁴¹ Contrary to Peking University, candidates for the university student union presidium need to have high grades in order for the CYL to let them run. They need to be at least among the better half of their class. Also, they have to be CCP members.⁹⁴² It allows for additional screening of potential candidates. Overall, all my interviewees from Tsinghua University, including officials in charge of the process, recognized that the elections were less competitive than in Peking University.⁹⁴³ In addition to Tsinghua University, this is also true of Nanjing University and Nanjing Normal University. In these cases, elections are organized

⁹³⁷ Interview with student 23.

⁹³⁸ CYL officials can, for instance, push them to vote in a certain way, by mentioning that doing otherwise could negatively affect their chance of getting a "direct admission to graduate school." As demonstrated in the previous chapter, CYL officials are key decision makers in this matter (interviews with student 12, student 13, student 23, and student 24).

⁹³⁹ See pictures of the posters visible on campus during the 2014-15 campaign in Annex III.

⁹⁴⁰ Interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24.

⁹⁴¹ The CYL has a strong influence on the selection of faculty student union chairmen (Interviews with cadre 8, cadre 14, and cadre 41).

⁹⁴² Interviews with cadre 8, cadre 14, and cadre 41.

⁹⁴³ Interviews with cadre 8, cadre 14, academic 22 and cadre 41.

but the winning candidate is generally already selected by the university CYL with the assistance of the former chairman.⁹⁴⁴

The process is also less competitive in Tsinghua University because the position of student union chairman is less valued in this school. It is mostly a way among others, albeit rather prestigious, to become a student counsellor. At Tsinghua, the student union elections take place only at the end of the first semester, whereas at Peking University they take place at the beginning of the academic year. As a result, the elected chairman holds his position only for half a year, after which he generally becomes a graduate student and a student counsellor. This is far less automatic in Peking University. In Tsinghua University, the position of student counsellor is reserved for graduate students rather than hired university officials, and it is a great asset in terms of future career prospects. The opportunity to become a student counsellor tends therefore to overshadow the position of union chairman itself and the elections carry less weight than in Peking University.⁹⁴⁵ Chapter 5 further delves into the student counsellor experience at Tsinghua and the opportunities that come with it.

b) The “Henan clique” and campus-based networking

The relative competitiveness of Peking University Student Union elections allows for a variety of tactics. Candidates often run as a group in order to maximize the chances of having at least some of them among the selected presidium members. In that case, it is important to include in the coalition people from various faculties since students largely vote for their own. It is in particular crucial to create alliances with candidates from the Health Science Center, as this faculty sends a lot of representatives and has quotas for positions in the presidium. The alliances are generally formed in order to pass the first round of the election. Candidates might then turn against each other in the second round to secure a position as chairman.⁹⁴⁶

Building such a network is a long term process. Having the elections in mind, ambitious students start working as student cadres for the university level student union in their first or second year of college. Throughout that time, they try to impress their leaders by being very active and resourceful. Some student union departments are especially relevant in order to display one’s skills. For instance, by working in the Liaison Department, one can use one’s

⁹⁴⁴ Interviews with cadre 6, student 6, student 7, student 12, student 15, cadre 15, student 18 cadre 30 and cadre 35.

⁹⁴⁵ Interviews with cadre 8, cadre 14, cadre 16, and cadre 41.

⁹⁴⁶ Interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24. Such alliances in Peking University are also put forward by Chen Wei : Chen Wei (陈伟), “Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin’an de yi jiao*, 学生会 : 大学最阴暗的一角).”

network and relational skills to raise large amounts of money for the union. The departments in charge of organizing the union's main events are also good platforms to show one's organizational abilities and zeal. On the contrary, being in the Propaganda Department, which does not organize its own activities, is a lesser option since it does not offer the possibility to stand out.⁹⁴⁷

The second year is also the time to find a potential mentor among current department directors. If one of them runs for the Union's election the following year, he needs to build a team with the student cadres he likes. An ambitious student cadre would therefore try to be part of this team. If a department director does not display the will or ability to run or win the elections, ambitious student cadres will try to change department or find another mentor. This can be done through personal connections, for instance by contacting the potential mentor through a classmate.⁹⁴⁸ They will try to get close to these potential mentors by placing themselves at their service (by buying them lunch for instance). Their hope is that, when comes the time to run for elections, the mentor might solicit them to be part of his team.⁹⁴⁹

Alliances have become highly important in Peking University Student Union elections. To the point that one coalition has extended its web to include former chairmen as well as CYL officials, thereby becoming hegemonic. According to my interviews, Liu Kai, who was the Peking University Student Union Chairman in 2005-2006, has been able to develop a network on campus which has exerted a very strong influence over elections since then.⁹⁵⁰ After graduating college in 2006, he started a Master's program in Marxism and Philosophy at Peking University. At the same time, he became the assistant of the university CYL secretary. When he graduated in 2010, he became deputy secretary of the university CYL. At the end of 2010, he left campus to become CYL Secretary of Chaoyang District in Beijing. He is since 2015 Lingtai County CCP Secretary.⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁷ Interviews with student 12, and student 24.

⁹⁴⁸ Among the student associations, the "regionalist associations" (*tongxianghui*, 同乡会) or high school alumni associations can in particular play an important networking role on campus (interviews with student 1 and student 12).

⁹⁴⁹ Interviews with student 12, student 23, and student 24.

⁹⁵⁰ Liu Kai worked in the university student union from the first year on. Starting as basic cadre in the student union's Cultural Affairs Department he helped organize massive events. He was also noticed for publishing several articles about the history of student organizations in Peking University while in college (interviews with student 12 and student 24).

⁹⁵¹ Liu Kai's resume can be found here:

http://www.lingtai.gov.cn/zwgk/page_zhengwu_01.jsp?urltype=news.NewsContentUrl&wbtreeid=1454&wbnewsid=10954 (consulted on 26 May 2016).

Table 4.2 : Career of Liu Kai⁹⁵²



953

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 2006 | College graduation (23 years old) |
| 2006—2010 | Graduate Studies at Peking University (23 years old) |
| 2007—2010 | Assistant of Peking University CYL Secretary (24 years old) |
| 2010—2010 | Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of Peking University (27 years old) |
| 2010—2011 | Secretary, CYL Committee of Chaoyang District, Beijing (27 years old) |
| 2011—2015 | Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Lingtai County, Gansu (35 years old) |
| 2015—Now | Secretary, CCP Committee of Lingtai County, Gansu (39 years old) |

After he left the Student Union, Liu Kai remained highly influential. As a key player in the university CYL, and thanks to his large network on campus, he was able to hold sway over the elections in the years that followed. He recruited potential candidates through personal ties and helped them get elected. My interviewees designated his group as the “Henan clique” (*Henan pai*, 河南派), since Liu Kai is from this province. Between 2007 and 2010, when he was in the university CYL, the four chairmen who were elected also came from Henan. Liu also supported another chairman who is not from this province but was introduced to him through a family friend. Relying on this hegemonic network, Liu Kai became an indispensable mentor for ambitious student cadres during this period.⁹⁵⁴

In that case, mentorship ties connect a campus-wide clientelist network, involving multiple actors. The Henan clique, built around its mentor Liu Kai, helps student cadres to get elected to the presidium. In return, by supporting young ambitious students who will probably have a successful career as officials or else, Liu Kai establishes personal connections that might become useful in the future. The relationship goes both ways, and the mentor’s investment is not without implications for the protégé. The situation is quite similar to what Oswald Hall

⁹⁵² Liu Kai’s resume can be found here:

http://www.lingtai.gov.cn/zwgk/page_zhengwu_01.jsp?urltype=news.NewsContentUrl&wbtreeid=1454&wbnewsid=10954 (consulted on 26 May 2016).

⁹⁵³ Source: <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/刘凯>

[/7188882/0/faf2b2119313b07e5fdfaa340ed7912397dd8ca8?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=faf2b2119313b07e5fdfaa340ed7912397dd8ca8](http://7188882/0/faf2b2119313b07e5fdfaa340ed7912397dd8ca8?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=faf2b2119313b07e5fdfaa340ed7912397dd8ca8) (Consulted on 31 august 2016).

⁹⁵⁴ Interviews with student 12 and student 24.

described in the case of sponsorship relationships in the American medical field: the protégé is under pressure to live up to the sponsor's expectations, if he exits or is unsuccessful in the organization, the sponsor's image, and their relationships, will be affected.⁹⁵⁵

This clientelist network includes current and former student leaders. They recruit potential candidates starting from their first and second year in college. Candidates have to be introduced through mutual personal relationships, generally through people coming from Henan. It is to be noted that provincial origin is not important per se, as some members of the clique are not from Henan, but it makes it easier for people to get in touch. Provincial origin also works as a proxy for mutual trust as individuals are often embedded in overlapping social circles.⁹⁵⁶

The student cadres who are part of the clique organize leisure activities such as sports or poker games to get to know the new recruits. Dinner parties are also thrown with the most important members of the network, and in particular Liu Kai. These dinners are a good way to test the new recruits, whose family background and ability to provide connections and access to family wealth is evaluated through mundane discussions. Also, the recruits must show that they know how to behave, speak, and drink in such settings. This way, they can signal that they have the necessary social skills to potentially make a career, and that they are worth betting upon. For instance, they can show that they know the rules of the game by paying the bill before anybody else,⁹⁵⁷ showing at the same time that money is not a problem for them, which is important in a context where union elections are not cheap. The monetary cost of running for student union elections should not be underestimated. Even when leaving corruption aside, the printing of handouts and posters alone can cost around 4000 RMB, which is not negligible for most students, who generally have to rely on their family's money to run.⁹⁵⁸

When the time is ripe, the Henan clique collectively chooses a team which will run for elections. Its members have to be both loyal to the clique and relatively popular among students. They train them and occasionally financially support them. The clique uses its relationships within the CYL to provide its candidates with a maximum of advantages and push aside the most dangerous competitors. The Henan clique also establishes solid connections with the incoming faculty student union chairmen every year, in order to make sure that the Standing Committee members they send will vote as instructed. Consequently, the clique holds

⁹⁵⁵ Oswald Hall, "The Stages of a Medical Career," *American Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 5 (1948): 327–36.

⁹⁵⁶ Interviews with student 12 and student 24.

⁹⁵⁷ Interviews with student 12, student 16 and student 24.

⁹⁵⁸ Interviews with student 12, student 13, and student 24.

tremendous sway over the elections' results, especially during the "small elections" where the Standing Committee is all powerful. During the "big elections," the votes of the more numerous congress representatives are harder to control but can still be partially influenced through their faculties' CYL leaders.

Because of this multilayered control, the university had to wait 2012 -when Liu Kai was no longer working on campus - to see someone outside the Henan clique elected. It is hard to assess how much influence Liu Kai and the Henan clique currently retain on campus elections, but according to my interviewees they are still present and their candidate won the 2013 elections again.⁹⁵⁹ The outsider from 2012 was all the more original because he did not come from the university level student union but was a faculty level union chairman. Candidates who do not have a previous experience in the university level union are in fact very rare. One of my interviewees, for instance, found external support in an unusual way. He was the classmate of the ex-girlfriend of a former student union deputy chairman, who accepted to meet him and to introduce him to his former chairman. Thanks to the support of these former leaders, who retained strong ties on campus, and his own popularity among students, he won the "big election" against the clique's candidate.⁹⁶⁰

Yet, the newly elected chairman was quickly accused by some students of having bribed the representatives and officials in charge of supervising the election. The rumor was that he had spent around 500,000 RMB.⁹⁶¹ Some of my interviewees had heard stories about his family wealth. They also heard that he had promised to offer iPads to the representatives who would vote for him. But some also noted that corruption is not rare in these elections and that his denunciation was probably orchestrated by the Henan clique.⁹⁶² Several cases of vote buying in Peking University Student Union elections have in fact been reported by the press in the past.⁹⁶³ Some rules have also been established by the student union to prevent voters from being bought with money or favors. For instance, during the campaign, candidates are not supposed to meet with representatives outside of the meetings set by the union. A proof of wrongdoing could lead to a candidate being disqualified. Moreover, a campaign budget has to be submitted

⁹⁵⁹ Interviews with student 12 and student 24.

⁹⁶⁰ Interview with student 12.

⁹⁶¹ This blogpost illustrates these corruption rumors : Hu Lele (胡乐乐), "A Perspective on University Student Union Based on Vote Buying for Peking University Student Union Chairman Elections (*cong Beida xueshenghui zhuxi gouxuan kan daxue xueshenghui*, 从北大学生会主席贿选看大学学生会)," *Hu Lele's Blog*, August 28, 2012, <http://blog.sciencenet.cn/blog-604217-606752.html> (Consulted on 2 July 2016).

⁹⁶² Interviews with student 12 and student 24.

⁹⁶³ See for instance : Jin Ying (金颖), "An Election Campaign in Peking University (*Beijing daxue de yi chang xuanzhan*, 北京大学的一场选战)."

to the Standing Committee. But the system is far from full-proof according to my interviews. For example, the submitted budgets are often false and transformed to look fair.⁹⁶⁴

At Tsinghua University, corruption cases are even harder to come by, indicating either that it is less common, since elections are less competitive, or that the secret is best kept, which in both cases shows the control of the CYL over the process. Some interviewees mentioned that such corruption exists but on a much smaller scale than in Peking University. They mentioned amounts around 20,000 RMB, far from the 500,000 RMB cited earlier.⁹⁶⁵ Beyond corruption, it seems that large clientelist networks like the Henan clique are not very common in other universities where competition is more controlled (or where information about corruption is not released, which is also a sign of better control).

In any case, personal connections are key in all settings. As for Tsinghua University, the university CCP deputy secretary in charge of student affairs, currently Shi Zongkai,⁹⁶⁶ is very involved in the overall selection of student leaders. It is therefore important to develop a good relationship with him.⁹⁶⁷ The importance of entertaining nice interactions with CYL cadres to secure a position as student leader, has also been stressed in the other universities I studied.⁹⁶⁸ The effect of relationships among officials were also highlighted. For instance, if a faculty level CYL secretary is particularly close to university level officials, student cadres from this faculty student union are more easily selected as candidates for the university level union.⁹⁶⁹

While local configurations may vary and affect student cadres' tactics, developing mentorship ties with strategic actors, and in particular CYL officials, is key in any context. The case of Peking University is extraordinary as the multiple mentorships ties linking student cadres and lower level officials to Liu Kai created a multilayered clientelist network, which allowed him to remain influential even after he left campus. In the following section, I show that mentorship ties built on campus can also be decisive to find a job outside campus, giving student cadres a clear advantage. A survey of new graduates in Beijing in 2001 and 2002, in

⁹⁶⁴ Interviews with student 12, student 16 and student 24.

⁹⁶⁵ Interviews with cadre 18 and cadre 41.

⁹⁶⁶ For Shi Zongkai's resume, see: http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/newthu/newthu_cnt/about/about-5.html# (consulted on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁶⁷ Interviews with cadre 16, cadre 18 and cadre 41.

⁹⁶⁸ Interviews with student 7, student 8, student 14, student 22, and cadre 35. See also : Chen Wei (陈伟), "Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会 : 大学最阴暗的一角)." *China Daily*, 2004.

⁹⁶⁹ Interviews with student 7 and student 8.

which students rated the university administration and professors as most valuable than family ties to find a job, showed the importance of these connections.⁹⁷⁰

2) A head start in politics

a) Chains of mentoring ties in elite universities

The previous chapter was devoted to showing that student cadres possess many advantages in terms of future career prospects. In particular, the mentorship ties they established with campus officials, who often subsequently become local or central Party-State cadres, constitute a major asset for their career, especially if they plan to engage in a similar path.

Looking in detail at the careers of former student union chairmen from Peking University and Tsinghua University, it becomes apparent that an important number became officials, and often at a high level. Combined, the two universities produced 61 student union chairmen between 1978 and 2008.⁹⁷¹ Among them, 28 (that is 46%) worked as officials at the university, local or central level right after graduating. To give an idea of the difference with lay students in terms of career achievements, in 2014 only 19.1% of Tsinghua's new graduates who found a job were employed in an administration or a university (which also includes the academic positions). The ratio was 17.9% in the case of Peking University in 2014.⁹⁷² Interestingly, the ratio is almost the same (18%) for Peking University graduates with a CCP membership.⁹⁷³ This highlights that the student cadre experience is important on its own, beyond the fact that most of the student leaders are also CCP members.

⁹⁷⁰ Wu Qing (吴庆), "2002 Report Regarding the Employment Situation for University Students in the Beijing Area (2002 nian beijing diqu daxuesheng jiuye zhuangkuang diaocha baogao, 2002年北京地区大学生就业状况调查报告)," *Journal of China Youth College for Political Sciences* 22, no. 2 (March 2003): 26–31.

⁹⁷¹ Several name lists for the chairmen can be found on the internet, I cross examined them and verified them with university officials. See in particular for Tsinghua University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/3751112.htm>; and for Peking University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2394305.htm> (both Consulted on 1 June 2016). The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites. I found at least partial career data for 45 of the chairmen. If I was not able to find their career data, there is a high probability that they did not become high level officials, even though they might have worked at the lower ranks of the Party-State hierarchy. For more clarity, I treat them as if they did not have a career as officials. I stopped the analysis at 2008 as the student union chairmen of the following years are not old enough to have gotten high in the administration, and no data is available for them.

⁹⁷² "Report on the Employment of the 2014 Graduates of Tsinghua University" (*Qinghua daxue 2014 nian biyesheng jiuye zhiliang baogao*, 清华大学2014年毕业生就业质量报告), Tsinghua University, December 2014. It can be accessed here: <http://career.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/career/8155/20141231180513432393010/2014.pdf> (Consulted on 12 August 2016).

⁹⁷³ Data for the whole period could not be found. Sources: "Annual Report on the Employment of the 2014 Graduates of Peking University (*Beijing daxue 2014 nian biyesheng jiuye zhiliang niandu baogao*, 北京大学2014年毕业生就业质量年度报告)," Peking University, December 2014. It can be accessed here: <http://career.pku.edu.cn/document/20141229093213311775.pdf> (Consulted on 12 August 2016).

Such difference in the probability of becoming an official after graduation can obviously be explained by student cadres' higher willingness to pursue this path. As a matter of fact, and as highlighted above, they often already behave and see themselves as officials. Yet, even compared with student union chairmen from other institutions, who should value this path just as much, the ones from Tsinghua University and Peking University have a higher chance of becoming officials. This discrepancy brings to light the specific opportunities offered to student leaders in these two schools.

Looking at the career data of the 140 All-China Student Federation Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen between 1979 and 2005, 34 of them (24.3%) became officials right after graduating, at the university, local or central level. The All-China Student Federation leadership changes every five years. It is composed of the student union or graduate student union chairmen from around thirty universities.⁹⁷⁴ While China's nine best universities are always among them, others rotate. Still, they mostly come from "211 project" universities, which include the 100 or so best higher education institutions in the country. Also, one seat is kept for a student from a national minority, generally from a university in Xinjiang or Tibet.⁹⁷⁵

The ratio of 24.3% is far below the 46% featured in the Tsinghua University and Peking University cases. However, these student leaders still have higher chances of becoming officials than common students. A figure is impossible to come by for the whole period, but on an indicative basis, in 2008, only 14% of the graduates from all the "211 project" universities directly secured a position in a Party-State administration or an academic institution, which includes both administrative and academic posts.⁹⁷⁶ While student union leaders in general have a high tendency to become officials, the ones from Peking University and Tsinghua University have an even stronger advantage in doing so.

As the best universities in the country, Peking University and Tsinghua University provide a large number of high ranked officials to the Party-State.⁹⁷⁷ The ties student leaders

⁹⁷⁴ The sample does not include the chairman and the deputy chairmen selected in 2005. Source for the name list of the different All-China Student Federation Presidiums : Li Yan (李艳) and Min Xiaoyi (闵小益), *Compilation of Historical Documents from the Past Congresses of the All-China Student Federation (quanguo xuelian lici daibiao dahui shiliaoji, 全国学联历次代表大会史料集)*.

⁹⁷⁵ Interviews with student 17, cadre 18, cadre 12, cadre 14.

⁹⁷⁶ The figure goes down to 13% for universities outside "211 project" and 5% for vocational higher education institutions. Source: Cheng Changqun (成长群), "Research on the Issue of Employment of University Students: Survey on the Issue of Hubei University Student Employment as a Case (*daxuesheng jiuye wenti yanjiu: yi Hubei daxuesheng jiuye diaocha weili, 大学生就业问题研究:以湖北大学生就业调查为例*)" (PhD Dissertation, Wuhan University, 2010), 98.

⁹⁷⁷ Since 1982, 9% of the CCP Central Committee members have a degree from Beijing university of Tsinghua university, as well as 15% of the politburo members (Source: Data base compiled by Victor Shih et. al. (2012),

build on campus can become highly valuable if the students or officials they personally know get promoted to important positions. It is especially true of the mentoring relationships described earlier. The student leaders who have established strong connections on campus can therefore follow their mentors throughout their careers and benefit from their rising influence. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon.

In the case of Peking University, two former student union chairmen, Zhu Shanlu and Lu Hao, seem to have developed a solid bond. In 1982, Zhu Shanlu was elected student union chairman.⁹⁷⁸ He then stayed on campus as an official and became Peking University CYL Secretary in 1985, a position he retained until 1988. Lu Hao was elected chairman of the student union in 1987.⁹⁷⁹ As previously noted, the CYL has a strong control over the union and Lu Hao needed to have a good relationship with Zhu in order to obtain this position. This relationship paid off, since Lu Hao subsequently followed his mentor Zhu Shanlu from one administration to the next. After several years spent in working for SOEs, Lu became, in 2001, CCP deputy secretary of Haidian District in Beijing, while Zhu Shanlu was the secretary. In 2002, Zhu joined the Beijing CCP Standing Committee and the next year Lu Hao was promoted Beijing Deputy Mayor. Lu Hao eventually went faster than his mentor and became a full member of the 18th CCP Central Committee in 2012, while Zhu Shanlu became only an alternate member. Lu's progression is exceptional as he was also among the few fifteen officials born after 1965 who made it to a provincial CCP Standing Committee in 2013.⁹⁸⁰

The promotion of these two officials may also have been facilitated by the influence of another former student leader, Li Keqiang. After being the Peking University Student Union Standing Committee President, Li was appointed as university's CYL secretary after graduating in 1982.⁹⁸¹ He was in this position when Zhu Shanlu was elected student union chairman. Li

which can be found here: <http://faculty.washington.edu/cadolph/index.php?page=61>). Also, according to the website of the "Chinese Universities Alumni Association" (*Zhongguo xiaoyou hui*, 中国校友会), in 2007 Tsinghua University had the most alumni within the current political elite with 41 officials within the CCP Central Committee or at the ministerial level and above. Peking University was second with 34 alumni in such positions (Wang Qian (王骞), "Beida Graduates in the Political Arena (*zhengzhi wutai shang de Beida biyesheng*, 政治舞台上的北大毕业生)").

⁹⁷⁸ His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavita.com/biography/Zhu_Shanlu/career (consulted on 1 June 2016).

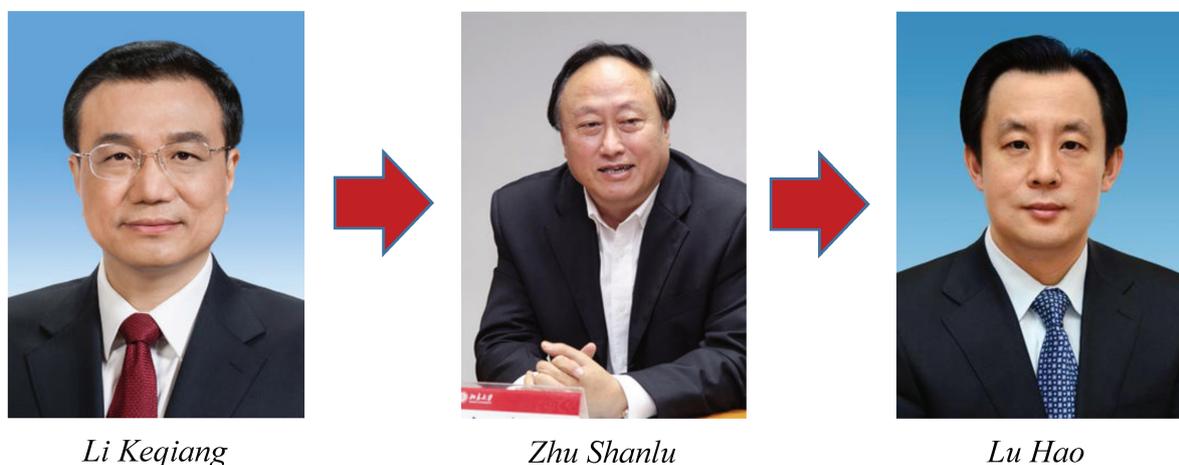
⁹⁷⁹ His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavita.com/biography/Lu_Hao|4863/career (consulted on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁸⁰ "Already 15 Officials Born After 1965 Are Members of Party Provincial Standing Committees ('65 hou' shengji dangwei changwei yida 15 ren, "65后"省级党委常委已达15人)," *Xinhua Daily*, June 7, 2013.

⁹⁸¹ His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavita.com/biography/Li_Keqiang/career (consulted on 1 June 2016).

also had the same graduate advisor as Lu Hao, professor Li Yining.⁹⁸² Li Keqiang may have taken a part in their further promotions, having recently entered the Politburo Standing Committee when Lu Hao became first secretary of the central level CYL in 2008 – a position Li himself had occupied ten years earlier - and when Zhu Shanlu became Nanjing Mayor in 2008. Similar trajectories, featuring student leaders following their mentors, will probably be visible in the case of the Henan clique mentioned above but for now the students implicated are too young to have a clear career trajectory. The only relevant information I gathered from my interviews is that most of them were assisted by Liu Kai and the CYL to go through the “student work-related direct admissions to graduate school.”⁹⁸³

Figure 4.4: A Mentorship Chain Originating from Peking University⁹⁸⁴



In the case of Tsinghua University, the bond existing between Chen Xi and Yang Yue is also akin to a similar mentoring relationship. Yang Yue became student union chairman in 1990 while Chen Xi was the university level CYL secretary.⁹⁸⁵ Chen Xi then became the university CCP deputy secretary and Yang Yue stayed after graduation to work as a student counsellor. Yang became in 1997 the university CYL secretary, while Chen was still in his

⁹⁸² “The Economist Li Yining, He Had Among His Students, Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao and Others” (*Jingji xuejia Li Yining: xuesheng zhong you Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao dengren*, 经济学家厉以宁：学生中有李克强、李源潮等人),” *Chengdu Evening Post*, April 13, 2013.

⁹⁸³ Interview with student 12.

⁹⁸⁴ Sources for the pictures : <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/李克强/632714/0/838ba61ea8d3fd1ff15d9549314e251f95ca5f68?fr=lemma&ct=single> ; <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/朱善璐/7703068/0/3bf33a87e950352ab60bfd685143fbf2b2118b6c?fr=lemma&ct=single> ; <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/陆昊/786668/0/4e4a20a4462309f72c39e760730e0cf3d7cad66a?fr=lemma&ct=single> (consulted on 12 September 2016).

⁹⁸⁵ Chen Xi’s resume can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Chen_Xi/career (consulted on 1 June 2016).

position.⁹⁸⁶ In 2002, Chen Xi became Tsinghua University Party Secretary. Chen is said to be close to Xi Jinping, as they were classmates at Tsinghua University,⁹⁸⁷ and might therefore have helped Yang Yue in his later career. Chen has been in a position to do so since he became in 2013 the executive deputy director of the central level CCP Organization Department. This might partly account for Yang Yue's very successful career. After becoming a local CCP official, he was appointed in 2005 CYL Central Committee Executive Secretary and in 2011 became the Mayor of Fuzhou, capital of Fujian Province. When he entered the Standing Committee of Fujian, in 2008, he was the youngest member of a provincial CCP Standing Committee.⁹⁸⁸

Similar to the chain of mentorship ties established between Li Keqiang and Zhu Shanlu, and then Zhu Shanlu and Lu Hao, Yang Yue has himself become a mentor for student cadres. According to one of my interviewees, he has been particularly supportive of another student leader, Shen Yue, who became Tsinghua University Student Union Chairman in 2000, while he was the university CYL secretary.⁹⁸⁹ Shen originates from the same province (Liaoning) as Yang Yue. A very charismatic person, Shen Yue also stood out for being the first female chairman in the university's history. She attracted the attention for a speech she delivered at the 90th anniversary of Tsinghua University in April 2001, before thousands of students and important national leaders such as then PRC President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji.⁹⁹⁰

Shen Yue's case leads us to the issue of gender among student leaders. The previous chapter noted that no clear gender imbalance was visible among student cadres. Yet, female student leaders are rare. Only 22 of the 140 All-China Student Federation Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen between 1979 and 2005 were in fact women (15.7%). In a study of Peking University and Renmin University, Chen Wei also underlined how infrequently women get elected as union chairmen. Officials also make systematic references to their physical appearance and actually count on it to make activities more attractive.⁹⁹¹ Such gender gap and stereotypes can be explained by the fact that the Chinese political system is widely dominated by male cadres

⁹⁸⁶ Yang Yue's resume can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Yang_Yue/career (consulted on 16 September 2016).

⁹⁸⁷ On this relationship between Chen Xi and Xi Jinping, see: Zhiyue Bo, "The Rise of a New Tsinghua Clique in Chinese Politics," *The Diplomat*, April 27, 2015.

⁹⁸⁸ "Already 15 Officials Born After 1965 Are Members of Party Provincial Standing Committees ('65 hou' shengji dangwei changwei yida 15 ren, "65后"省级党委常委已达15人)."

⁹⁸⁹ Interview with cadre 41.

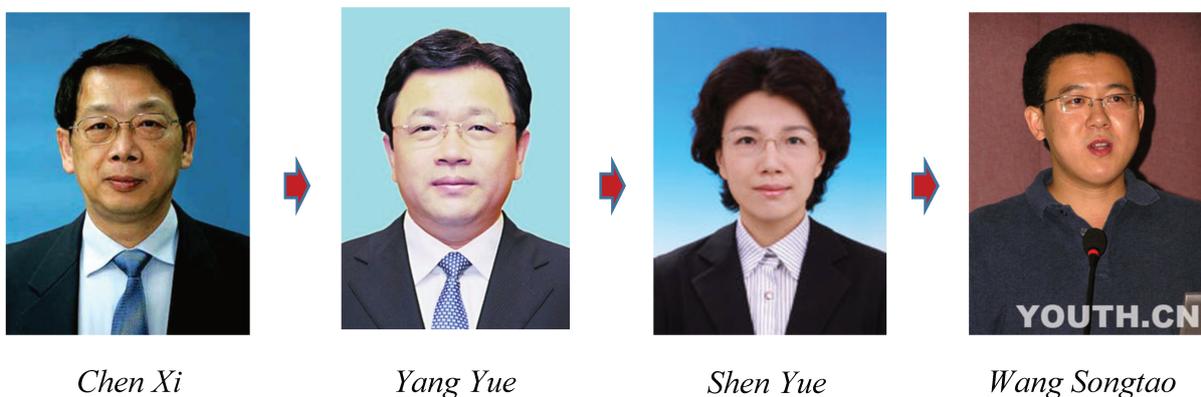
⁹⁹⁰ Interviews with cadre 31 and cadre 41.

⁹⁹¹ Chen Wei (陈伟), "Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会：大学最阴暗的一角)."

while women have fewer promotion chances.⁹⁹² The next chapter, which addresses the issue of female campus officials, demonstrates that this generates self-censorship mechanisms among female student cadres, who are often led to curb their own ambitions.

Coming back to Shen Yue's trajectory, she became Tsinghua University CYL Deputy Secretary in 2001, while she was still a graduate student.⁹⁹³ It is the highest ranked position a graduate student can secure in the CYL. Later she moved to the CYL committee of Fengtai District in Beijing, and became its CYL secretary in 2007. In 2010, she became Beijing CYL Organization Department Director. She then moved to the Yangtze Three Gorges Technology and Economy Development Company, of which she is the CCP secretary since 2013. Interestingly, the chain of mentoring ties lasted overtime as another student leader from Liaoning, Wang Songtao, followed exactly the same path. After becoming Tsinghua University Student Union Chairman in 2003, while Shen Yue was in the university CYL, he too became university level CYL deputy secretary. He was then appointed in 2008 as the Fengtai District CYL Secretary, right after Shen left.⁹⁹⁴

Figure 4.5: A Mentorship Chain Originating from Tsinghua University⁹⁹⁵



⁹⁹² There is little systematic research regarding female officials in China. On this topic, see : Didi Kirsten Tatlow, “Women Struggle for a Foothold in Chinese Politics,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 2010; Shih, Adolph, and Liu, “Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China,” 178.

⁹⁹³ Her resume can be found here: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2412947.htm> (consulted on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁹⁴ Interviews with cadre 14 and cadre 31. See also: “The CYL Secretary of Fengtai District Wang Songtao Goes to the Fengtai District Education Commission in order to Inspect CYL Work (*Fengtai qu tuanwei shuji Wang Songtao fu fengtai jiaowei diaocha gongqingtuan gongzuo*, 丰台团区委书记王松涛赴丰台教委调研共青团工作),” Website of the Fengtai District government, December 5, 2011. It can be accessed here: <http://www.ftedu.gov.cn/2011NianXinWen/2011-12/11447.htm> (consulted on 1 June 2016).

⁹⁹⁵ Sources for the pictures : <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/陈希/7588/0/d4239b35755e044891ef397a?fr=lemma&ct=single> ; <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/杨岳/12067/0/29381f30e924b8999f88a83a6c061d950a7bf678?fr=lemma&ct=single> ; <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/申跃/4799428/0/58ec3d6d55fbb2fbaefde54a4a20a44723dc90?fr=lemma&ct=single> ; <http://baike.baidu.com/pic/王松涛/5418327/0/6159252dd42a2834a07bb81d5fb5c9ea14cebfc3?fr=lemma&ct=single> (consulted on 12 September 2016).

It is hard to demonstrate empirically that these ties forged on campus actually shaped student leaders' trajectories. However, the serial character of their promotions suggests that mentorship facilitates the future career of protégés.⁹⁹⁶ My research demonstrates that it is actually one of the factors explaining the exceptional political rise of student leaders hailing from Peking University and Tsinghua University.

b) An elite within the elite: student leaders from Peking University and Tsinghua University

A large number of student leaders from Tsinghua University and Peking University have reached high level official positions since 1978. To illustrate this, I compiled in Table 4.1 the names of the former student union chairmen from both universities who later in their career reached ministerial or deputy ministerial ranked positions in the Party-State.

Table 4.2: Former student union chairmen from Peking University and Tsinghua University who reached ministerial and vice-ministerial positions (post 1978)⁹⁹⁷

| Name | University | Major | Year in office | Experience in the All-China Student Federation | Highest ranked position reached in January 2016 |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Yuan Chunqing | Peking University | Law | 1978 | Deputy Chairman | Governor of Shaanxi Province |
| Zhu Shanlu | Peking University | Philosophy | 1982 | none | Party Secretary of Peking University |
| Lu Hao | Peking University | Economy | 1987 | none | Governor of Heilongjiang Province |
| Lin Yanzhi | Tsinghua University | Physics | 1980 | Chairman | Deputy Party Secretary of Jilin Province |
| Yang Zhenbin | Tsinghua University | Engineering | 1984 | none | Party Secretary of the University of Xiamen |
| Yang Yue | Tsinghua University | Engineering | 1990 | Chairman | Party Secretary of Fuzhou City |

⁹⁹⁶ While my interviewees did not provide any hard evidence regarding the impact of the specific ties I described in terms of protégés' future careers, they all had heard rumors and tended to take them seriously (interviews with student 12, student 24, cadre 31, and cadre 41).

⁹⁹⁷ Source: these officials' resumes can all be found on the *Chinavitae* Website (<http://www.chinavitae.com/index.php>, consulted on 1 July 2016).

The six cadres listed in Table 4.1 graduated between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, at the height of the CCP's rejuvenation policy. Still, the importance of the student cadre experience for future promotion is not only restricted to this period. Looking at the trajectories of Tsinghua's student leaders from the Mao era, three of them became ministerial level cadres or above: Zhang Fusen,⁹⁹⁸ Xu Rongkai,⁹⁹⁹ and Zhu Rongji.¹⁰⁰⁰ In addition, the experience remained valuable for ambitious young people in the post-Tiananmen period. In Table 4.2, I compiled the names of former student leaders from the 1990s and 2000s who have become leading cadres in grassroots administrations and who are therefore in a good position to access high level Party-State positions in the future.

⁹⁹⁸ Zhang Fusen was Tsinghua University Student Union Chairman in 1964, and became Minister of Justice in 2000.

⁹⁹⁹ Xu Rongkai was Tsinghua University Student Union Chairman in 1965, and became Governor of Yunnan in 2002.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Zhu Rongji was Tsinghua University Student Union Chairman in 1951, and Premier of the RPC in 1998.

Table 4.3: Former student union chairmen from Peking University and Tsinghua University who became grassroots political leaders (post 1990)

| Name | University | Major | Year in office | Experience in the All-China Student Federation | Highest ranked position in 2016 |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--|--|
| Yang Bo | Tsinghua University | Hydraulic engineering | 2002 | none | CYL secretary of Tongzhou District in Beijing ¹⁰⁰¹ |
| Wang Songtao | Tsinghua University | Geology | 2003 | none | CYL secretary of Fengtai District in Beijing ¹⁰⁰² |
| Chen Guanghao | Peking University | Chinese literature | 1993 | none | CCP deputy secretary of Nantong City in Jiangsu Province ¹⁰⁰³ |
| Lü Chenfei | Peking University | Management | 1999 | none | CCP deputy secretary of the Beijing University Of Civil Engineering And Architecture ¹⁰⁰⁴ |
| Ruan Cao | Peking University | Political science | 2002 | none | National Academy of Innovation Strategy Deputy Director ¹⁰⁰⁵ |
| Liu Kai | Peking University | Philosophy | 2005 | Chairman | CCP deputy secretary of Lingtai County in Gansu Province ¹⁰⁰⁶ |

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 highlight two striking features. First, the even representation of students from Peking University and Tsinghua University. While some authors have put forward the existence of a “Tsinghua clique” at the top echelon of the Party-State in post-Mao

¹⁰⁰¹ Source: “Ceremonious Opening of the Fifth CYL Congress of the Beijing’s Tongzhou District (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi Tongzhou qu di wu ci daibiaodahui lonzhong zhaokai*, 共青团北京市通州区第五次代表大会隆重召开),” Website of Tongzhou District government, May 6, 2014. It can be accessed here: <http://btcbd.com/fc/2014/102535.html> (Consulted on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁰² Source: “The CYL Secretary of Fengtai District Wang Songtao Goes to the Fengtai District Education Commission in order to Inspect CYL Work (*Fengtai qu tuanwei shuji Wang Songtao fu fengtai jiaowei diaocha gongqingtuan gongzuo*, 丰台团区委书记王松涛赴丰台教委调研共青团工作).”

¹⁰⁰³ His resume can be found here: <http://www.nanchong.gov.cn/10000/10003/10219/14284/14286/2014/06/13/10107207.shtml> (consulted on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁰⁴ His resume can be found here: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2925275.htm> (consulted on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁰⁵ His resume can be found here: <http://www.nais.com.cn/html/about/xrld/2015/1219/432.html> (consulted on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰⁰⁶ His resume can be found here: http://www.lingtai.gov.cn/zwgk/lingdao_index.jsp?urltype=tree.TreeTempUrl&wbtreeid=1454 (consulted on 1 June 2016).

China,¹⁰⁰⁷ data shows that student leaders from Tsinghua University do not have a clear advantage over student leaders from Peking University. Second, the distribution of majors among student leaders follows the schools' respective traditions. Peking University is mostly renowned for social sciences and humanities, and, unsurprisingly the large majority of the student union chairmen elected since 1978 come from these majors. On the contrary, Tsinghua University is famous for science majors, whose ranks produce the largest number of a student union chairmen. Student leaders' majors simply reflect the image of their university and the relative importance of each faculty within it.

This goes against the argument that majors have a very strong influence on Party-State officials' political career. In fact, despite their differences, Tsinghua University alumni who studied engineering and Peking University alumni who studied humanities have strikingly similar career trajectories as former student cadres. This contrasts with scholarship establishing that the major they studied distinguishes Chinese officials into specific groups, the engineers being technocrats by definition for instance.¹⁰⁰⁸

Another striking element is the number of student leaders who started their career as officials on campus. Among the 28 former student leaders from Peking University and Tsinghua University who became officials after graduation (1978-2008), 17 of them remained cadres on campus. This is also true of other universities: among the 34 former All-China Student Federation leaders who were appointed officials after graduation (1979-2005), 15 were university cadres. This comes hardly as a surprise as we already described the strong ties developed by student leaders within the university administration, which obviously facilitates their recruitment. I come back in the next chapter to these first jobs as university officials in more detail and demonstrate how they operate as political career accelerators.

A large number of former student leaders also have in common their working experiences in the CYL, at the local or central level. They often remain in the CCP youth organizations at the beginning of their career. Among the 28 former student union chairmen from the two universities who became officials after graduation, 12 were later appointed as CYL officials at the local or central level. This is also true of 8 of the 34 former All-China

¹⁰⁰⁷ Li, "University Networks and the Rise of Qinghua Graduates in China's Leadership," 1–30; Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*, 260–267.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cheng Li in particular developed this view that the major they studied is key in understanding the cadres' careers. See for instance : Li, "The Rise of Technocracy: Elite Transformation and Ideological Change in Post-Mao China"; Cheng Li, "The Rise of the Legal Profession in the Chinese Leadership," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 42 (2012).

Student Federation leaders who became officials after graduation. More specifically, the two youngest officials in Table 4.1, Lu Hao and Yang Yue, were appointed in 2008 respectively as the CYL Central Committee First Secretary and CYL Central Committee Executive Secretary, the two most important positions in the CYL. In the case of Yang Yue in particular, this promotion can be linked to the networks he built while he was All-China Student Federation Chairman between 1990 and 1995. In the following lines, I stress that chance has nothing to do with the fact that half the officials in Table 4.1 claim an experience in the All-China Student Federation, which is a great networking opportunity.

c) The All-China Student Federation as a networking platform

Since 1956, the All-China Student Federation Chairman rotates every five years between Peking University and Tsinghua University.¹⁰⁰⁹ Under this configuration, while the student remains chairman at the university level for only a year, he stays chairman at the national level for five years. For instance, the chairman selected in 2015 was the Peking University Student Union Chairman of the corresponding year and he should stay in his position at the national level until 2020. It is not a full-time position and student chairmen can continue their studies or start a job while in office. They mostly to represent the federation at meetings and ceremonies. Even if it is mostly a representation function, the position is valued by students as it affords national visibility and the opportunity to meet numerous senior officials. According to my interviews, the elections held on the corresponding year in Peking University are particularly competitive.¹⁰¹⁰

Student leaders from Peking University and Tsinghua University already have a privileged access to national leaders. They accompany them when they visit the campus,¹⁰¹¹ and can interact them during specific ceremonies.¹⁰¹² But among them, the All-China Student Federation Chairmen are the ones with the easiest and most regular access. Throughout their

¹⁰⁰⁹ Source for the name lists of the All-China Student Federation Presidium since 1949: Li Yan (李艳) and Min Xiaoyi (闵小益), *Compilation of Historical Documents from the Past Congresses of the All-China Student Federation (quanguo xuelian lici daibiao dahui shiliaoji, 全国学联历次代表大会史料集)*.

¹⁰¹⁰ Interviews with student 12, student 13, student 23, and student 24.

¹⁰¹¹ My interviewees underlined that for instance during then Xi Jinping's last visit to Peking University, the student union leaders were chosen to accompany him (interviews with student 1, student 2, and student 23). Chen Wei recalled that when he was a student in this same university, Jiang Zemin visited and the student leaders were surrounding him (Chen Wei (陈伟), "Student Union: The Shadiest Part of University (*xueshenghui: daxue zui yin'an de yi jiao*, 学生会：大学最阴暗的一角)").

¹⁰¹² We have seen in the case of Shen Yue that she met Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji at Tsinghua University's 90th anniversary ceremony. Similarly, Lu Hao when he was Peking University Student Union Chairman met Hu Jintao, then CYL Central Committee First Secretary, at an official event (interviews with cadre 2, academic 2, and cadre 9).

five-year position, they have numerous meetings with CCP and CYL leaders.¹⁰¹³ The CCP Central Committee General Secretary, other key CCP leaders, and the CYL Central Committee First Secretary are, for instance, present at the All-China Student Federation Congress, which take place every five years. The elected chairman is then introduced to them.¹⁰¹⁴ The CYL Central Committee First Secretary and other central CYL leaders are also present at more frequent meetings, such as the All-China Student Federation Presidium which takes place once a year.¹⁰¹⁵ The All-China Student Federation Chairman is also at the same time the All-China Youth Federation Deputy Chairman and therefore participates in similar assemblies with the All-China Youth Federation.¹⁰¹⁶

In addition to these numerous meetings, over this five-year representation position, the chairman, generally spends one year actually working full-time for the All-China Student Federation, as executive chairman (*zhixing zhuxi*, 执行主席). As the federation's offices are part of the central CYL administration, this year equals an internship at the central CYL. It is a very efficient way to develop connections in the organization. Some All-China Student Federation Deputy Chairmen can also have similar opportunities.¹⁰¹⁷

Being All-China Student Federation Chairman creates a lot of networking opportunities, which can facilitate one's career. The developed networks are strong within the central level CYL as they spend most of their time with its officials. They then get positions in the CYL more easily. Among the six All-China Student Federation Chairmen in my dataset (1978-2008), four were later appointed CYL officials at the local or central level. Two of the most successful cadres I have mentioned so far, Yang Yue and Liu Kai are among them. They became All-China Student Federation Chairmen, respectively in 1990 and 2005. As mentioned earlier, Yang Yue became later the CYL Central Committee Executive Secretary and then the youngest member nationwide of a provincial CCP Standing Committee. Liu Kai was appointed CYL Secretary of Chaoyang District in Beijing after leaving Peking University in 2010. The next

¹⁰¹³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 6, academic 6, cadre 9, student 17, and student 23.

¹⁰¹⁴ See for instance: "End of the 12th Congress of the All-China Youth Federation and of the 26th Congress of the All-China Student Federation (*quanguo qinglian shi'er jie quanweihui quan xuelian ershiliu da bimuhui*, 全国青联十二届全委会全国学联二十六次闭幕)," *China Youth Daily*, July 26, 2015.

¹⁰¹⁵ See for instance: "The 5th meeting of the 25th All-China Student Federation Presidium Opens in Beijing (*quanguo xuelian di ershiwu jie zhuxi tuan di wu ci huiyi zai Jing zhaokai*, 全国学联第二十五届主席团第五次会议在京召开)," WeChat account of Beijing CYL, December 17, 2014.

¹⁰¹⁶ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 6, academic 6, cadre 9, student 17 and student 23.

¹⁰¹⁷ Interviews with cadre 6, academic 6, cadre 9, cadre 14, and student 17.

year, he moved to Lingtai County in Gansu and became at 28 years old the country's youngest county leader.¹⁰¹⁸

These phenomena are reproduced, on a smaller scale, at the local level. The student union chairmen from the best universities in a province form the presidium of the provincial level student federation. The position of chairman is generally monopolized by the same university, the province's best one. For instance, in Jiangsu Province, the Nanjing University Student Union Chairman always heads at the same time the provincial level student federation.¹⁰¹⁹ These student cadres therefore have the opportunity to meet important provincial leaders. A member of the provincial level CCP Standing Committee, as well as the provincial CYL secretary are for instance present at the congresses of the provincial level student federation every five years.¹⁰²⁰ These student leaders also have the opportunity, along with the deputy chairmen, to become provincial level student federation executive chairmen and intern at the provincial level CYL for a year.¹⁰²¹ While to a lesser degree than at the national level, an experience as local student federation leader can hence be valuable for students who envision themselves as officials in the future.

d) The exception that proves the rule: student leaders who did not follow the political path.

I have shown that rising to the top of the student cadres' hierarchy is often a way towards officialdom, especially for students from Peking University or Tsinghua University. But nothing is automatic and individual trajectories can still take very different directions. For a variety of reasons, some student leaders simply do not choose, or do not manage, to become Party-State officials later in their life. The 1989 uprising and its repression proved an interesting moment in that regard. It changed the trajectory of student leaders who might have become officials after graduating. The case of Xiao Jianhua is particularly illustrating. At the time of the 1989 demonstrations, he was Peking University Student Union Chairman, which was the most active school in the movement. While he never opposed the government, his student union was not able to prevent students from creating parallel organizations to manage their

¹⁰¹⁸ “The 28 Years Old Peking University PhD Liu Kai is Appointed as Governor of Lingtai County in Gansu (28 sui Beida boshi Liu Kai zhengshi dangxuan Gansu Lingtai xian xianzhang ceng, 28岁北大博士刘凯正式当选甘肃灵台县县长曾),” *People's Daily* website, October 26, 2011. It can be accessed here: <http://blog.csdn.net/guoxiaoqiang88/article/details/6919707> (Consulted on 1 June 2016).

¹⁰¹⁹ Interviews with student 17 and cadre 30.

¹⁰²⁰ See for instance: “The Jiangsu Student Federation Holds its 9th Congress (*Jiangsu xuelian di jiu ci daibiao dahui juxing*, 江苏学联第九次代表大会举行),” *China Youth Daily*, August 29, 2012.

¹⁰²¹ Interviews with cadre 6, student 17, and cadre 30.

mobilization. Caught in the middle of events, his nascent political career came to a halt. However, his experience and loyalty ultimately paid off as the university supported him while he became a successful businessman. He also used the connections he built in the political world to become a prosperous financier.¹⁰²²

The Tiananmen events strongly impacted the career not only of student cadres but also campus officials. The CYL secretaries of Peking University and Tsinghua University at the time had to leave the country for some years and wait for the atmosphere to calm down. As heads of the CCP's youth organization in universities highly active during the protests they were perceived as having partly failed at their job of managing students.¹⁰²³ Zhang Laiwu who was then the Peking University CYL Secretary left to the US for five years to follow a graduate program. When he came back, he first found a job at Peking University and later became a local cadre in Ningxia Province. In 2008 he was appointed Deputy Minister of Science and Technology.¹⁰²⁴ The case of Chen Xi, who was the Tsinghua University CYL Secretary at the time, is more exceptional because he still managed to have a particularly brilliant career. After studying for two years in the US (1990-1992), he came back to Tsinghua as a university official and rose ranks within the institution. In 2002 he became Tsinghua University CCP Secretary. He then became a Party-State official in the Ministry of Education and was appointed in 2013 CCP Organization Department Executive Director, a major position in the Party apparatus.¹⁰²⁵ Chen Xi was a former classmate of Xi Jinping and his personal connection with the current PRC President might have helped him in attaining high level positions.¹⁰²⁶

Beyond the fracture of Tiananmen, such disruptive trajectories still exist. One of my interviewees, for instance, was a high level student cadre prevented from running in the Peking University Student Union elections by the CYL officials. Instead of pursuing a political career, which might have interested him at first, he went abroad and became a successful entrepreneur.¹⁰²⁷ While it can be seen as a preparatory step for officialdom, being a student leader is therefore not an automatic step towards it. These trajectories underline both the diversity of individual choices but also the existence of alternative options for resourceful

¹⁰²² David Barboza and Michael Forsythe, "With Choice at Tiananmen, Student Took Road to Riches," *The New York Times*, June 3, 2014.

¹⁰²³ Interviews with academic 6, cadre 9, and student 17.

¹⁰²⁴ His resume can be found here: <http://gbzl.people.com.cn/grzy.php?id=121000855> (consulted on 20 June 2016).

¹⁰²⁵ His resume can be found here: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/gbzl/html/121000519.html> (consulted on 20 June 2016).

¹⁰²⁶ On this relationship between Chen Xi and Xi Jinping, see: Bo, "The Rise of a New Tsinghua Clique in Chinese Politics."

¹⁰²⁷ Interview with student 23.

students hailing from elite universities in post-Mao China. In the case of Xia Jianhua and the last interviewee I mentioned, they became successful businessmen. But this was only their second choice, after they could not pursue a political career anymore. The student cadre experience itself and the various commitment building we mentioned first led them towards a political path.

This chapter has described the transformation that students raising to the top of the student cadres' hierarchy undergo at the hands of the organization. Student cadres alter their behavior and the way they envision their future, eventually developing a vocation for political office. It also transforms their social circles and the way they present themselves, setting them apart from the main student body. The organizational setting suggests that it is an overall Party strategy to reshape the students' socialization. By design, they are led to spend most of their time with other cadres and officials, which increases their political commitment.

The students' opportunities inside and outside campus are also shaped by the personal ties they manage to develop. Mentorship ties prove overall indispensable for them to get to the top of the hierarchy, due to the way the student union is supervised by campus officials. These mentoring relationships can often include more than two actors, as a protégé can in turn become mentor after serving as campus official, or as one mentor can even develop an overall clientelist network through his control over student union elections. This mentorship ties can also highly influence the students' future outside campus, in particular, when student leaders get to interact with central level CYL officials through the All-China Student Federation and its local replica.

As stressed in the previous chapter, becoming a student cadre can in itself be an important phase in one's trajectory towards officialdom. The process of becoming a student leader is an even more formative step. Student leaders cultivate a personal taste for political activities and develop an exclusive sociability. They also establish contacts that will prove useful for the first steps of their political career, which often starts with an official position on campus, as I now turn to describe.

Chapter 5: From school to politics

After graduating from university, numerous student cadres stay on campus as officials. They generally start as student counsellors and rise in the hierarchy. As the youngest officials on campus, they often occupy leadership positions in the CYL, at the faculty or university level, and can use the CYL as a fast track in the university administration's hierarchy. This chapter focuses on this first professional experience and sets forth that, for some, it is a further step in a sponsored mobility towards a political career.

By highlighting the evolution of campus officials' role in the post-Mao era I show that they are a key element in the student management apparatus, but also constitute a recruitment pool for the Party-State. These officials have numerous advantages in terms of further advancing their education or being promoted rapidly to highly ranked positions. Becoming a university official, and in particular within the CYL hierarchy, can be used as a shortcut towards leadership positions in the Party-State. It can paradoxically be a better strategy than directly becoming a local level official after graduation. In the continuation of the rejuvenation policy developed in Chapter Two, specific programs have even been put in place in elite universities to facilitate such trajectories. University CYL officials have for this reason a unique position in the Chinese Party-State, even when we compare them to CYL officials in SOEs or high schools.

A - University as a political talent incubator

In order to best analyze what a first professional experience as an official on campus can mean for a recent graduate, I first detail the evolution of the system of counsellors. I highlight how Tsinghua University played a key role in the development of this system. I show in this chapter how the term "counsellors" designates various profiles depending on the universities and their recruitment channels. They can be in their twenties and still graduate students, but also above 30 years old and full-time officials. But overall it designates low level political workers on campus, in charge of student management. The counsellors are a key element of the student management control system presented in Chapter Three. Their role evolved in the post-Tiananmen era, as they found new ways to manage students, using new technologies, or apparently depoliticizing their role. The first part of this chapter aims at unveiling the key role they play on campus and how this position can be an important formative experience leading to a rapid promotion within the university administration.

1) The institutionalization and generalization of the system of counsellors

a) The birth of the counsellors system and its development

In 1952, the Ministry of Education called for the development of a system of “political counsellors” (*zhengzhi fudaoyuan*, 政治辅导员) in pilot higher education institutions.¹⁰²⁸ Tsinghua University was the first school to develop this system, starting in 1953. At first, 25 fourth-year students were selected to stay one more year on campus as political counsellors. They had to be CCP members. Their main duty was to manage the student body and the student organizations. They generally were at the same time the CYL secretaries in their respective faculties. This system lasted until 1966 in Tsinghua University. It was later resumed in 1977, after the end of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰²⁹ The political counsellor system was also developed in some other universities. However, it is only in the late 1970s, after Deng Xiaoping endorsed the model and pushed for its spread, that it became universal across higher education institutions.¹⁰³⁰

Jiang Nanxiang, who headed Tsinghua University from 1952 to 1966 was very active in the creation of the political counsellor system. According to a former Tsinghua University official, cited by Cheng Li, Jiang Nanxiang selected himself the first group of political counsellors and their first meeting was held at his home.¹⁰³¹ Jiang’s idea was to cultivate a group of young talents capable of “carrying with both shoulders” (*shuangjiantiao*, 双肩挑), meaning that they would be both technical experts and political leaders.¹⁰³² The political counsellors system became a major promotion channel for Party-State officials in the Mao era. It allowed numerous Tsinghua University alumni to become high level officials.¹⁰³³ The former

¹⁰²⁸ “Instructions Regarding the Higher Education Institutions which Importantly will Experiment with a Working System of Political Counsellors (*guanyu zai gaodeng xuexiao you zhongdian de shixing zhengzhi fudaoyuan gongzuo zhidu de zhishi*, 关于在高等学校有重点的试行政治工作制度的指示),” Ministry of Education, 28 May 1952.

¹⁰²⁹ Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi*, 清华大学志), 1:229–230.

¹⁰³⁰ Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class*, 223.

¹⁰³¹ Li, “University Networks and the Rise of Qinghua Graduates in China’s Leadership,” 1–30.

¹⁰³² Research team on the political counsellors system (*xuesheng zhengzhi fudaoyuan zhidu yanjiu ketizu*, 学生政治辅导员制度研究课题组), “Looking Back and Investigating 40 Years of the Political Counsellors System (*xuesheng zhengzhi fudaoyuan zhidu sishi nian de huigu yu tansuo*, 学生政治辅导员制度四十年的回顾与探索),” *Tsinghua Journal of Education* 1 (1993): 3–7.

¹⁰³³ Interviews with cadre 16, cadre 41, and student 24. On this issue, see in particular : Li, “University Networks and the Rise of Qinghua Graduates in China’s Leadership,” 1–30; Xie Zheping (谢喆平) and Wang Sunyu (王孙禹), “Student Political Instructors and Governance of China by ‘Red Engineers’ (*xuesheng fudaoyuan zhidu yu hongse gongchengshi zhiguo*, 学生辅导员制度与“红色工程师治国”),” *Tsinghua Journal of Education* 6 (2013): 18–29.

PRC President Hu Jintao was for instance a political counsellor at Tsinghua in 1964-1965.¹⁰³⁴ Between 1952 and 1966, 682 counsellors were trained in Tsinghua University. A large number of them became high level cadres within the university and beyond.¹⁰³⁵

Following the decreased political attention given to political control over universities in the 1980s, the positions as political workers on campus, including the counsellors, became less attractive for young graduates. Zhao Dingxin underlined that while it was, in the Mao era, one of the best jobs one could get after graduation, this was no longer true in the 1980s. Compared to professors or businessmen, they had less financial incentives and less chances to go abroad. After the 1989 demonstrations, the Party-State implemented a variety of measures to increase control over student activities. Among others, it developed the political counsellor system and increased the status of political workers.¹⁰³⁶

Several official documents were issued in the 1990s in order to improve control over student activities on campus and to strengthen the body of political workers.¹⁰³⁷ In June 2000, a political work meeting was organized by the central CCP focusing on political counsellors more specifically.¹⁰³⁸ Following this meeting, the Ministry of Education issued a document laying out some common rules to standardize the political counsellor system across the country. It emphasized the training function of this position and, in order to guarantee turnover, established age limits (40 years old) as well as term limits for the counsellors (four to five years for full-time positions).¹⁰³⁹ Since then, the counsellors system has been gradually institutionalized though additional rules. The Document 16 of 2004 went one step further in

¹⁰³⁴ His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Hu_Jintao/career (consulted on 8 June 2016).

¹⁰³⁵ In 1984, 77 of them had reached the rank of deputy division director within the university (Xie Zheping (谢喆平) and Wang Sunyu (王孙禺), “Student Political Instructors and Governance of China by ‘Red Engineers’ (*xuesheng fudaoyuan zhidu yu hongse gongchengshi zhiguo*, 学生辅导员制度与“红色工程师治国”),” 20.

¹⁰³⁶ Zhao, “The Decline of the System for Controlling Students in Universities,” 111–112.

¹⁰³⁷ See in particular : “Opinions Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of Party Building and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions under the New Circumstances (*guanyu xin xingshi xia jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuexiao dang de jianshe he sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo de ruogan yijian*, 关于新形势下加强和改进高等学校党的建设和思想政治工作的若干意见),” CCP Organization Department and Propaganda Department, August 1993. Regarding the other documents on the matter, see: Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), “Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究)” (PhD Dissertation, East China Normal University, 2011), 17–24.

¹⁰³⁸ Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), “Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究),” 19.

¹⁰³⁹ “Opinion on Further Strengthening the Construction of Political Work teams in Higher Education Institutions (*guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang gaodeng xuexiao xuesheng sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo duiwu jianshe de ruogan yijian*, 关于进一步加强高等学校学生思想政治工作队伍建设的若干意见),” Ministry of Education, 3 July 2000.

that direction. In particular, it established that every class should have a dedicated counsellor, who should be at the same time the class director. Also, every faculty must have one dedicated counsellor for each of the yearly cohorts (*nianji*, 年级).¹⁰⁴⁰

The rules managing the counsellor system were then clarified in the Document 24 of 2006. In addition to the previously mentioned rules, it stipulates that there should be one counsellor for every two hundred students in universities.¹⁰⁴¹ The Document 24 also clarifies the status of counsellors, leading to a standardization of their recruitment across most universities. The counsellors are managed by their faculty's CCP committee and by the university's Student Work Department (*xuesheng gongzuo bu*, 学生工作部).¹⁰⁴² Their basic salary follows provincial's scale for Party-State officials, with an additional part depending on the university.¹⁰⁴³ While the Document 24 only requires an undergraduate diploma in order to become counsellor, in practice most of them have a graduate degree.¹⁰⁴⁴

According to my interviews, the counsellors are largely recruited among young graduates who decide to “stay in the university” (*liuxiao*, 留校). They have to take an exam organized by the university and to go through interviews. This “service unit exam” (*shiyedanwei kaoshi*, 事业单位考试) is widely seen as easier than the civil service exam.¹⁰⁴⁵ The recruited counsellors are generally CCP members.¹⁰⁴⁶ Also, they are supposed, according to

¹⁰⁴⁰ “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the Political Education of University students (*guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin daxuesheng sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进大学生思想政治教育的意见),” Document 16, State Council, 14 October 2004.

¹⁰⁴¹ “Regulation on the Building of Corps of Political Instructors in Ordinary Higher Education Institutions (*putong gaodeng xuexiao fudaoyuan duiwu jianshe guiding*, 普通高等学校辅导员队伍建设规定),” Document 24, Ministry of Education, 23 July 2006.

¹⁰⁴² Beyond the guidelines of Document 24, this was verified in my interviews. Tsinghua University has a peculiar situation as its CCP organization has established its own Student Work Bureau (*xuesheng gongzuo chu*, 学生工作处), parallel to the university one, to deal with the counsellors (Interviews with academic 2, cadre 10, cadre 12, student 12, student 18, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41).

¹⁰⁴³ This system is for full-time counsellors hired as university officials. For instance, counsellors' salaries in Shanghai's universities varied in 2010 between 2000 and 4000 RMB a month (Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), “Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究),” 47).

¹⁰⁴⁴ In a survey conducted in 2010 among 164 counsellors in thirteen universities in Shanghai, 70% had a Master degree (Ibid., 42). This was verified in my interviews (interviews with academic 2, cadre 10, cadre 12, student 12, student 18, and cadre 35).

¹⁰⁴⁵ Interviews with student 12, student 18, cadre 35, cadre 10, academic 2, and cadre 12.

¹⁰⁴⁶ In a survey conducted in 2010 among 164 counsellors in thirteen universities in Shanghai, 89% were CCP members (Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), “Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究),” 41). This was verified in my interviews (interviews with academic 2, cadre 10, cadre 12, student 12, student 18, and cadre 35).

Document 24, to have a previous experience in student management.¹⁰⁴⁷ As a result, most of them are former student cadres.¹⁰⁴⁸

Tsinghua University remains a unique case in that it has kept a system in which graduate students take the role of counsellors. The counsellors in Tsinghua University are therefore not actual officials hired by the university.¹⁰⁴⁹ Every year, around a hundred graduate students are selected to become counsellors, amounting to a total of around four hundred working at the same time. They are generally selected among the ones who worked as student cadres and who benefited from a “direct admission to graduate school.” They must be CCP members and have satisfactory grades. They are recommended by faculty professors or officials and the final selection is made by the faculty CCP committee. As a result, they often become counsellors, at least for the first year, in the same faculty where they did their college.¹⁰⁵⁰ While Tsinghua University is not the only university to use graduate students as counsellors, it is the only one which does so exclusively.¹⁰⁵¹

Since the 1990s, the counsellor system has been institutionalized, and expanded to universities across the country. In 2008, there were 91,808 full-time and 29,329 part-time counsellors.¹⁰⁵² As I suggest in the following lines, the actual work of the counsellors has also profoundly changed. Since the Document 16, they are designated as “student counsellors” (*xuesheng fudaoyuan*, 学生辅导员) rather than political counsellors as they used to.¹⁰⁵³ It underlines the diversification of their role beyond classic political control.

¹⁰⁴⁷ “Regulation on the Building of Corps of Political Instructors in Ordinary Higher Education Institutions (*putong gaodeng xuexiao fudaoyuan duiwu jianshe guiding*, 普通高等学校辅导员队伍建设规定),” Document 24, Ministry of Education, 23 July 2006.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Interviews with academic 2, cadre 10, cadre 12, student 12, student 18, and cadre 35.

¹⁰⁴⁹ As such, they do not get a full salary but only a stipend while they do their graduate studies. It amounts to around 1,000 RMB per month for Master students and 1,500 for PhD students (interview with cadre 41).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, cadre 18, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁵¹ In Peking University for instance, some counsellors are recruited through the “two plus two” framework (*Erjiaer*, 二加二), part of the “direct admission to graduate school” system. The recruits are young graduates who are hired to work on campus for two years before starting a two years Master’s program. They often at the same time serve as faculty level CYL deputy secretary. They have an intermediary situation between students and actual officials (Interview with cadre 10, student 24, and cadre 41).

¹⁰⁵² Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), “Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究),” 30.

¹⁰⁵³ “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the Political Education of University students (*guanyu jin yibu jiaqiang he gajin daxuesheng sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进大学生思想政治教育的意见),” Document 16, State Council, 14 October 2004.

b) From political counsellors to student counsellors

Some university officials I interviewed emphasized the similarities between the counsellors in Chinese universities and the tutors in Anglo-Saxon college campuses.¹⁰⁵⁴ However, this comparison minimizes the political function of the counsellors. At the class level, the counsellors are in charge of managing the CCP branch and its activities. For instance, they organize the Party classes, compulsory for new CCP recruits. They are also in charge of the faculty level CYL. Some are appointed as faculty level CYL deputy secretaries and the most experienced counsellors, because they already have worked in that position for some years or because they had a substantive experience as student cadres, become CYL secretaries. The selection is made by the university CCP leadership after interviews. This position is voluntary for the counsellors and they do not get an additional salary for it. However, it can be a good way to be promoted further in the university CYL organization.¹⁰⁵⁵ In Tsinghua University for instance, around 70 of the overall 400 counsellors are CYL leaders at the same time.¹⁰⁵⁶

The counsellors also have propaganda functions on campus. In particular, they manage the online information regarding on-campus activities, and especially university's internet forums. They monitor postings on these forums and can eventually commission counter posts to student cadres, to promote the official narrative on a variety of issues. University websites and forums are in fact a key information channel on campus, through which the news regarding classes or extracurricular activities are distributed to students. The forums, are also an important discussion platform where students can talk about, and sometimes criticize, certain university activities or programs. Monitoring them is a key function of the counsellors.¹⁰⁵⁷

The counsellors also play a key role on campus during the “critical and sensitive periods” (*min'gan qi*, 敏感期), defined by the State and the university administration in case of major social-political events (the anniversary of the June Fourth Movement of 1989 or a large international summit hosted in Beijing for instance), or in cases of specific crises (the SARS epidemic of 2003 for example). In this situation, the counsellors are supposed to organize more activities through the CCP and CYL organizations and reach out directly to students who are

¹⁰⁵⁴ Interviews with cadre 14, cadre 17, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Interviews with cadre 13, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 14, cadre 17, cadre 30, and cadre 41. The Document 24 also underlined that counsellors can in parallel to their position hold the positions of CCP branch secretary and of faculty CYL secretary (“Regulation on the Building of Corps of Political Instructors in Ordinary Higher Education Institutions (*putong gaodeng xuexiao fudaoyuan duiwu jianshe guiding*, 普通高等学校辅导员队伍建设规定),” Document 24, Ministry of Education, 23 July 2006).

¹⁰⁵⁶ Interview with cadre 41.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Interviews with student 12, student 18, and student 24.

missing or who might organize a political action. The activities set up by student groups outside the student union is also restricted.¹⁰⁵⁸

Beyond traditional political control, the counsellors spend an increasing amount of time managing students through less obviously political ways. Mental health monitoring has become a key function of the counsellors and a major instrument in dealing with students. Mental health is defined very widely and its monitoring includes the surveillance of behaviors and political ideas perceived as deviant. Against this background, unruly students who do not completely follow campus rules can, for instance, be considered as having a mental health issue. The counsellors interact with students on a daily basis and occasionally report abnormalities.¹⁰⁵⁹ A document issued by the Ministry of Education and the central CYL insisted on the role the CYL must play in mental health monitoring.¹⁰⁶⁰ The implication of the Party's main youth organization in this document's redaction stresses its political value. According to Gong Chunlei, this function is now more important in the daily schedule of student counsellors than the traditional political activities such as CCP branch events and political education. When recruited, the counsellors' abilities to conduct mental health monitoring is also an important criterion.¹⁰⁶¹

In addition to political work per se, most of the counsellors' time is dedicated to managing students' daily problems at the class level, such as schedule or grades issues.¹⁰⁶² They, for instance, take attendance in class or organize tutoring sessions. At the class level, the counsellor is in charge of extra-curricular activities, and he works closely with the student organizations at the faculty level. The students know very well their class' and faculty's counsellors and can go to them to solve various personal issues. They also have to deal with a number of emergencies, such as disappearances or suicides. In order to carry out this

¹⁰⁵⁸ Interviews with student 12, student 18, and student 24. See also : Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," 507–508; Perry, "Citizen Contention and Campus Calm," 213.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Interviews with student 2, student 3, and cadre 41. See also : Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," 504.

¹⁰⁶⁰ "Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the CYL Construction in Higher Education Institutions (*guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan jianshe de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进高等学校共青团建设的意见)," Document 15, Ministry of Education and CYL Central Committee, 8 April 2005.

¹⁰⁶¹ Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), "Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究)," 43–45.

¹⁰⁶² Interviews with student 2, student 3, and cadre 41. See also : *Ibid.*, 43.

multiplicity of tasks, they rely on the student cadres in their class and faculty. In some universities, they are required to live in the student dormitories as to maintain a daily contact.¹⁰⁶³

As they spend a lot of time with them and help them in numerous occasions, the counsellors are in the best position to influence students. In a survey organized among 133 university CYL cadres in Henan Province, a large majority of respondents (79.1%) saw daily interactions, such as responding to personal needs and organizing cultural activities, as the most effective way to influence students. Propaganda and ideology by contrast were put forward as key channels of influence by only a minority of cadres, respectively 38,8% and 44,8%.¹⁰⁶⁴ Overall, the counsellors are key brokers between the school administration and the students and a fundamental element of the student management system.

2) Developing political capital on campus

a) Counsellors as officials in training

A position as student counsellor is seen as a good training ground for university officials and cadres more broadly.¹⁰⁶⁵ In addition to being trained on the job, the counsellors have a large range of opportunities to further develop their skills. Short training programs are set up for them on a regular basis. Tsinghua University has been organizing an annual training program for counsellors since 1960.¹⁰⁶⁶ The counsellors who are at the same time CYL officials enjoy even more training opportunities. Since 1989 in particular, the central CYL has pushed for further training of CYL officials on campus and developed specific programs.¹⁰⁶⁷ They are granted the opportunity to follow training programs in the CYL schools, which include theoretical and more practical formations. A specific program for university CYL secretaries takes place at the Central CYL School several times a year. In addition to more job-related

¹⁰⁶³ Interviews with student 1, student 2, student 7, student 8, cadre 12, cadre 17, cadre 18, and cadre 41. See also : Yan, “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China,” 499.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Sun Tinan (孙体楠), “Research Report on the Current State of the Development of Political Education by University Youth League Cadres (*guanyu gaoxiao tuan ganbu kaizhan sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu gongzuo xianzhuang de diaocha baogao*, 关于高校团干部开展思想政治教育工作现状的调查报告),” *Evolutions in Research on Political Work* 18 (2009): 21–23.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Interviews with cadre 18 and cadre 41. See also : Xie Zheping (谢喆平) and Wang Sunyu (王孙禺), “Student Political Instructors and Governance of China by ‘Red Engineers’ (*xuesheng fudaoyuan zhidu yu hongse gongchengshi zhiguo*, 学生辅导员制度与“红色工程师治国”),” 18–29.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See : “Opinion Regarding CYL Work in Universities in the Current Period (*guanyu dangqian gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan gongzuo de ji dian yijian*, 关于当前高等学校共青团工作的几点意见),” CYL Central Committee, 13 August 1989; “Opinion Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the CYL Construction in Higher Education Institutions (*guanyu jin yi bu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan jianshe de yijian*, 关于进一步加强和改进高等学校共青团建设的意见),” Document 15, Ministry of Education and CYL Central Committee, 8 April 2005.

content, they are briefed on new policies and laws. The trainings also bring numerous networking opportunities with CYL officials from other universities but also central level CYL leaders.¹⁰⁶⁸ The local CYL organizations have also developed their own training mechanisms. The Beijing CYL Committee has, for instance, developed an annual training of four days for the CYL leaders of the city's best universities.¹⁰⁶⁹

The counsellors also have unique opportunities in the pursuit of their academic studies. The education of counsellors has been particularly emphasized by the Party-State. For instance, the “2006-2010 plan for the training of counsellors in ordinary higher education institutions” put forward a four-year plan for one thousand counsellors to follow master programs in political education in thirty universities.¹⁰⁷⁰ A similar program was initiated in 2008 for PhD students.¹⁰⁷¹

Beyond these specific plans, the political cadres on campus have the opportunity to follow graduate programs while they work. Due to their position as university officials, they can get into the programs without taking the national admission exam for graduate schools. The universities develop their own admission criteria for these specific admissions. In most cases they just have to pass an interview.¹⁰⁷² While entering grad school, the counsellors generally choose the same major they already studied as undergrads. Only a minority changes towards a major more related to their political commitment.¹⁰⁷³ For example, all six Tsinghua CYL Committee Secretaries appointed since 1997 obtained a graduate school while they were counsellors. Among them, only one switched majors to public policy.¹⁰⁷⁴

¹⁰⁶⁸ See for instance : “The 2015 First Special Training Class for University CYL Secretaries to Study the Essence of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Series of Important Speeches is Held in Beijing (2015 nian shouqi gaoxiao tuanwei shuji xuexi Xi Jinping xilie zhongyao jianghua jingshen zhuanli peixun ban zai Jing juxing, 2015年首期高校团委书记学习习近平总书记系列重要讲话精神专题培训班在北京举行),” *China Youth Daily*, March 17, 2015.

¹⁰⁶⁹ The CYL secretaries and deputy secretaries of the twenty-six “211 project” universities in Beijing join the program. See for instance: “The Training Class for the CYL Secretaries of the Capital’s Universities was Held Successfully (*shoudu gaoxiao tuanwei shuji peixunban chengong juban*, 首都高校团委书记培训班成功举办),” WeChat account of the Beijing CYL, October 28, 2014.

¹⁰⁷⁰ “2006-2010 Plan for the Training of Counsellors in Ordinary Higher Education Institutions (2006-2010 nian putong gaodeng xuexiao fudaoyuan peixun jihua, 2006-2010年普通高等学校辅导员培训计划),” Ministry of Education, 30 July 2006.

¹⁰⁷¹ Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), “Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudaoyuan zhiyehua zhuanzhuan wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究),” 24.

¹⁰⁷² The situation is of course different in Tsinghua University as the counsellors are selected among the graduate students (interviews with student 1, student 2, student 24, and cadre 35).

¹⁰⁷³ Interviews with student 1, student 2, student 24, and cadre 35.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Several name lists for the CYL secretaries can be found on the internet (See in particular for Tsinghua University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/3751112.htm>). I cross-examined them and verified them with university officials. The analysis is based on their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by

The position as counsellor is overall a good training ground and, as I now turn to show, it opens a number of promotion opportunities. For this reason, the positions as student counsellors are highly valued by students and the competition is fierce.¹⁰⁷⁵

b) Getting promoted on campus

Being a counsellor is of course a highly formative position, but its administrative ranking is also advantageous for young cadres. Administrative positions in universities, which are service units, follow the same ranking and salary system as the Party-State administration. As such, their situation is parallel to the one of Party-State officials which makes it easy to compare. The counsellors are young on average and start relatively high in the official ranking system.¹⁰⁷⁶ According to a survey conducted in 2010 among sixty-one higher education institutions in Shanghai, 56% of the 4,868 counsellors who responded were less than thirty years old, way below the official maximum of forty. Also the large majority of them (68%) were at the deputy section director level (*fu keji*, 副科级), the first rank for leading officials.¹⁰⁷⁷ There is some variation from one university to another but this is the starting rank for counsellors in the universities I studied.¹⁰⁷⁸ Being less than thirty years old and already ranked as deputy section director is very positive for one's future career, as compared to the standard age-based promotion path presented in Chapter Two of this dissertation (see Table 2.1). They are therefore up to good start to be promoted to relatively high level positions.

In a few years they can rise from lower level counsellors to key positions on campus. This is especially true in Tsinghua University, where this position is particularly valued. Indeed, between 1953 and 1993, 1,600 counsellors were trained in Tsinghua University. Around half of them stayed on campus working for some years after¹⁰⁷⁹ and a lot of them got promoted to

baidu.baikē, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Interviews with student 16, cadre 16, and cadre 35.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See the "civil service system" entry in the glossary regarding the difference between cadres working in service units and civil servants.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Gong Chunlei (龚春雷), "Study on the Professionalization and Specialization of College Student Affairs Administrators in China (*gaoxiao fudao yuan zhiyehua zhuan yehua wenti yanjiu*, 高校辅导员职业化专业化问题研究)," 56.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Xie Zheping (谢喆平) and Wang Sunyu (王孙禹), "Student Political Instructors and Governance of China by 'Red Engineers' (*xuesheng fudao yuan zhidu yu hongse gongchengshi zhiguo*, 学生辅导员制度与"红色工程师治国")," 28.

relatively high level positions.¹⁰⁸⁰

In the various universities I studied, the counsellors have numerous promotion opportunities. Most student counsellors remain at this initial hierarchical level for two to three years, by opposition to the normal five-year terms in office for Chinese officials.¹⁰⁸¹ They can then rise in the hierarchy, becoming top level counsellors. They often at the same time hold a position of faculty CYL secretary. In major universities such as the ones I studied, this is a position ranked section director (*zheng keji*, 正科级) and therefore a good step towards future promotion.¹⁰⁸² They can then become director of university level CYL department, which has the same rank but opens more opportunities than staying at the faculty level. It can allow them to come back to the faculty level as a CCP deputy secretary or to become university level CYL deputy secretary, both positions being ranked deputy division director. The most successful ones then become CCP secretary at the faculty level or university level CYL secretary, an important position on campus, generally ranked as division director. They take an exam internal to the university in order to reach this rank.¹⁰⁸³

The university CYL leadership positions are particularly competitive. A university level CYL congress is organized every five years on campus and, following the framework of the National CYL Congress, every faculty sends representatives. While on paper they elect the CYL secretary and the deputy secretaries,¹⁰⁸⁴ the selection is actually made beforehand by the university CCP Standing Committee. The CYL congress simply validates the CCP leadership's

¹⁰⁸⁰ In 1993, 45.1% of the 129 officials in the university, and its related organizations, who were ranked division director and above used to be counsellors. Among the 12 most highly ranked university officials, 9 had such an experience (Research team on the political counsellors system (*xuesheng zhengzhi fudaoyuan zhidu yanjiu ketizu*, 学生政治辅导员制度研究课题组), "Looking Back and Investigating 40 Years of the Political Counsellors System (*xuesheng zhengzhi fudaoyuan zhidu sishi nian de huigu yu tansuo*, 学生政治辅导员制度四十年的回顾与探索)," 6.

¹⁰⁸¹ See Chapter two regarding term length for Chinese officials.

¹⁰⁸² This is true of all the "211 project universities", including the four I focused on. For details on the Chinese Party-State ranking system, see Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁸³ Three of the universities I studied (Tsinghua University, Beijing University and Nanjing University) are elite universities administratively directly under the Ministry of Education. In these three cases, the university president and the CCP secretary are ranked as deputy ministers (*fu buji*, 副部长). In a given administrative unit, the CYL leader is theoretically one full rank below the CCP leader, he should therefore be ranked deputy bureau director (*fu tingji*, 副厅长), equaling the rank of the deputy mayor of a medium sized city. However, being too young and not experienced enough they in practice almost never have this rank. The CYL secretaries then remain ranked as division director like in most other high level universities (interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41). For a list of the deputy minister level universities, see: "A list of China's 31 deputy minister level universities (*Zhongguo 31 suo fubuji gaoxiao mingdan*, 中国31所副部级高校名单)", *Rednet.cn*, 9 March 2009. It can be accessed here: <http://learning.sohu.com/20090309/n262683167.shtml> (Consulted on 15 June 2016).

¹⁰⁸⁴ In the universities I studied, there were three to four university CYL deputy secretaries.

choice which actually manages these promotions. Most appointments of CYL leaders actually happen without the congress' intervention as they often stay less than five years in office. The CYL secretary is generally selected among the previous deputy secretaries, as having a working experience in the CYL is a key criterion. The number of candidates on campus is limited: they should be in their early-thirties, already be ranked deputy division director and have a previous working experience in the CYL. Also they need to have a graduate diploma and often a PhD, which they generally got while working as officials on campus.¹⁰⁸⁵ In addition, they need to have good relationships with the university CCP leadership in order to get appointed. As a result, they most of the time graduate from the university where they are hired and have a student cadre experience.¹⁰⁸⁶

According to my interviewees, the most important for the young cadres is to move rather quickly from one position to the next, at least every four or five years. Their trajectories are particularly quick compared to their equivalent outside campus. Whereas they sometimes have the opportunity to rise in rank every two years, it is much more complicated in Party-State administrations as the officials there must stay a full five-year term in each position before they can be promoted. Such rules are less fully implemented in service units such as universities.¹⁰⁸⁷

Some universities even institutionalized such a fast path for young political cadres, accelerating their promotion within the university. In 2008, Peking University established for example a "three-year plan" (*san nian jihua*, 三年计划) for two or three student counsellors selected by the university CCP leadership.¹⁰⁸⁸ The officials changed position every year, each time going up a rank. In three years they reached a deputy division director position. It was a way to promote quickly some recent graduates to a position where they could leave the university and become directly relatively high level officials. The CYL organizations in Beijing and its districts were then looking for cadres born after 1980 to renew the ranks. They could for instance become deputy secretary of a CYL committee in one of Beijing's districts. However, other universities also developed similar programs and it created an oversupply of cadres with

¹⁰⁸⁵ The pool of candidates for the position of university CYL secretary is particularly narrow in Tsinghua University as he must have the academic credentials to be an assistant professor at the same time. Since 1989, all the CYL secretaries had a PhD. In addition, the academic standards often imply having a PhD or a post-doc from a foreign university. At the time of my fieldwork the CYL secretary was not assistant professor at the same time because the school could not find a suitable candidate (interviews with cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 31, cadre 41).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41. Regarding the term length rules, see Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁸⁸ According to my interviews, the selection was far from transparent and several sons and daughters of officials were given this unique opportunity (interviews with student 16 and student 24).

similar backgrounds and rank. The program was cancelled in 2012 as it became hard to find positions for them.¹⁰⁸⁹ While rather unsuccessful, this programs underlines the opportunities young university officials can get if they choose to pursue a career outside campus.

B - Taking the risk of politics

I noted in the previous chapter that a number a student leaders stay on campus after they graduate. I have also shown that many of them actually aim at becoming a Party-State official and often manage to do so. One could therefore wonder why choose to stay on campus and not directly pass the civil servant exam. How can it help them in their future career? In order to tackle this issue, the second part of this chapter is dedicated to the university officials who choose to abandon their position in order to start a career in the Party-State outside campus. I focus more precisely on the CYL officials on campus, since, as stated above, the organization provides a number of high ranked position on campus to ambitious officials.

I stress that while campus CYL officials can often rely on their experience on campus as a springboard for a future career, only part of them take that risk. I unveil the mechanisms which push some campus CYL officials to take the risk of a political career and the unequal opportunities they are presented with. There is a clear difference between the ones who fully persevere in a politically committed path and the ones who do not take the risk of leaving a comfortable position on campus. Beyond the fact that some are simply disillusioned by their first experience outside campus, I show that gender in particular can be a determining factor. No statistic is available regarding the ratio of female CYL officials in the various universities. I gathered from my interviews that there is no clear gender imbalance in the recruitment and that there is no clear gender-based distinction in terms of job contents.¹⁰⁹⁰ However, I underline that, compared to their male counterparts, female officials tend to tone down their political ambitions. CYL officials from different universities also have unequal access to a future political career.

While the majority of campus CYL officials continue to work in higher education, the ones who choose to pursue a political career have a strong advantage compared to officials who would have taken the civil service exam after graduation, and especially if they come from a Beijing-based elite university. To question the specificity of these officials, I compare their

¹⁰⁸⁹ Interviews with student 16, student 24, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41.

situation with that of CYL officials in high schools and State-owned enterprises, for whom such a trajectory is rarer.

1) CYL officials leaving campus: a worthwhile bet

a) A rewarding strategy

As stated above, the student cadres who stay on campus can become counsellors and eventually rise up in the CYL hierarchy at the faculty and university levels. As a result, many use this as a fast track in order to leave campus, when they already have a rather high rank, and get directly appointed as local leading cadres. According to my interviews, it becomes a good option when the official has reached a ranked of deputy division director or division director, such as university CYL deputy secretary or secretary for example. At this level they can transfer to a leadership position in a local CYL committee. Numerous CYL secretaries from Peking University or Tsinghua University have in fact relocated to become district level CYL secretaries in Beijing.¹⁰⁹¹

Yang Yue is a good example of such a successful trajectory. He was the Tsinghua University Student Union Chairman in 1990-1991. After graduating from Tsinghua University, he stayed on campus as a political instructor while doing his graduate studies. Ten years later he became the CYL secretary of the university and was then transferred to a leadership position in a Beijing district. He later pursued his career going back and forth between CYL and CCP posts. In 2008, he became the younger official seating at a provincial level CCP Standing Committee.¹⁰⁹² He indeed got promoted very fast at every steps of his career and at an early age. The difference in terms of age of promotion is striking if we compare his trajectory to the one of a normally successful cadre as illustrated in Table 2.1. Instead of the common 50 years old promotion age for a deputy bureau director position, he got there at 30 years old as CCP Deputy Secretary of Tongzhou District in Beijing.

¹⁰⁹¹ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 16, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁹² “Already 15 Officials Born After 1965 Are Members of Party Provincial Standing Committees (‘65 hou’ shengji dangwei changwei yida 15 ren, “65 后”省级党委常委已达 15 人).”

Table 5.1: Career of Yang Yue¹⁰⁹³



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| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1990 | College graduation (22 years old) |
| 1990—1991 | Chairman, Tsinghua University, Student Union (22 years old) |
| 1990—1995 | Chairman, All-China Students' Federation |
| 1991—1997 | Political Instructor, Tsinghua University (23 years old) |
| 1997—2000 | Secretary, CYL Committee of Tsinghua University (29 years old) |
| 2000—2001 | Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Tongzhou District (30 years old) |
| 2001—2004 | Secretary, CYL Central Committee (31 years old) |
| 2005—2008 | Executive Secretary, CYL Central Committee (35 years old) |
| 2008—2016 | Member, CCP Standing Committee, Fujian Province (38 years old) |
| 2012—Now | Alternate Member, 18th CCP Central Committee (42 years old) |
| 2016- Now | Vice-Governor, Jiangsu Province (46 years old) |

In addition to being promoted more rapidly than other cadres, starting one's career on campus is also a way to avoid taking the civil servant exam. When recruited, they take an exam organized by the university and are therefore already considered officials in a service unit. When they reach a leadership position rank, they can directly transfer to an equally ranked position outside campus without taking an exam. They are already part of the overall Party-State system.¹⁰⁹⁵ This is especially common at the rank of division director, which equals the rank of most county leaders across the country.¹⁰⁹⁶

The transfer of university officials can also be facilitated by going through a “temporary transferred duty” (*guazhi duanlian*, 挂职锻炼). Under this framework, commonly practiced by Party-State officials, a dispatching unit transfers a cadre to a receiving unit for a certain period of time, generally a year.¹⁰⁹⁷ The dispatching unit remains responsible of the official and his

¹⁰⁹³ His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Yang_Yue/career (consulted on 14 September 2016).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Source: <http://baike.baidu.com/item/杨岳/12067> (consulted on 31 August 2016).

¹⁰⁹⁵ See the “civil service system” entry in the glossary regarding the difference between cadres working in service units and civil servants, as well as on the status of CYL cadres in the system.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 10, cadre 12, cadre 16, cadre 17, cadre 18, cadre 35, and cadre 41.

¹⁰⁹⁷ I come back to the uses of this framework beyond campus officials in Chapter Six. On the framework, see : Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 163.

salary. The goal is to train the official in a different setting. The practice has been progressively formalized since the 1990s, in particular through two documents issued by the central CCP Organization Department, respectively in 1994 and 2000.¹⁰⁹⁸ However, some universities have started to send officials for temporary transferred duty since the late 1980s. Tsinghua University started for instance in 1989.¹⁰⁹⁹

This system is particularly useful for university students as it allows them to get used to a completely different working environment for a short period of time, and be tested at the same time. If the receiving unit's leaders are satisfied with their work, they can be fully appointed in the position at the end of the temporary transferred duty.¹¹⁰⁰ The CYL is especially active in organizing such transfers, pushing CYL cadres to do it. In particular, CYL officials from various universities are selected by the central CYL every year for temporary transferred duty. They are generally sent to rural counties where they hold leadership positions in the CYL committees for at least a year. They are selected by the university CCP with the agreement of the local CYL and the Ministry of Education.¹¹⁰¹ For example, in 2012, 2,473 university CYL officials were sent for temporary transferred duty to county level CYL committees.¹¹⁰²

Interestingly, a temporary transferred duty can also be a very difficult experience, leading some university officials to rethink their career options. They realize how harsh the job of a local official can be and how protected they are on campus. This is in particular true of officials transferred to poor regions of China, as stressed by my interviewees.¹¹⁰³ An article published by the *China Youth Daily* highlighted the difficulties of university CYL officials sent to Tibet as local officials. In addition to not being used to rural life and lack of comfort, they realized that local CYL work can be much more intense than the equivalent on campus.¹¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁹⁸ “Notice Regarding the Issues Concerning the Training of Cadres Through Temporary Transferred Duty (*guanyu ganbu guazhi duanlian gongzuo youguan wenti de tongzhi*, 关于干部挂职锻炼工作有关问题的通知),” Central CCP Organization Department, 29 September 1994 ; “Program Regarding the Deepening of the Reform of the Cadre Personnel System (*shenhua ganbu renshi zhidu gaige gangyao*, 深化干部人事制度改革纲要),” Central CCP Organization Department, 23 June 2000.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi*, 清华大学志), 1:833.

¹¹⁰⁰ Interviews with cadre 11, student 16, and cadre 35.

¹¹⁰¹ See for the year 2015: “Notice Regarding the 2015 Selection of University CYL Cadres and Young Teachers to be Sent for Temporary Transferred Duty in County Level CYL Committees (*guanyu 2015 nian cong quanguo gaoxiao xuanpai tuanganbu he qingnian jiaoshi dao xianji tuanwei guazhi gongzuo de tongzhi*, 关于2015年从全国高校选派团干部和青年教师到县级团委挂职工作的通知),” Central CYL, 12 June 2016.

¹¹⁰² Central Communist Youth League, *Yearbook of the Chinese Communist Youth League 2012 (Zhongguo Gongqingtuan nianjian 2012*, 中国共青团年鉴 2012), 198.

¹¹⁰³ Interviews with cadre 11 and cadre 35.

¹¹⁰⁴ “The Jiangsu University CYL Cadres Enjoy a ‘Sudden Maturation’ at the Grassroots (*Jiangsu gaoxiao tuangan jiceng xiangshou ‘chengchang tuji*, 江苏高校团干基层享受‘成长突击’),” *China Youth Daily*, January 1, 2012.

Overall, temporary transferred duty is often an opportunity to leave campus and work for the first time in a local administration. But when confronted to the actual work, some university cadres realize that it is not for them and reevaluate their career. Positions on campus are largely seen as more comfortable and only a minority leave them in order to follow the political path I described. In the following lines, I focus on the reasons why someone would stay on campus or not and the different opportunities they get.

b) Risk avoidance and unequal opportunities

Working in the university's administration right after graduation is a popular choice among young graduates. It is seen as stable, relatively well paid, and, as I already stressed, these positions have become increasingly valued due to rising unemployment among young graduates. While some may use this experience as a springboard for a future career in the Party-State, others simply value the position itself and want to remain in the university.¹¹⁰⁵

While not exclusively, female interviewees were overall more interested in keeping a job in the university administration rather than transferring to the local level. They put forward how stable and comfortable a job on campus was. These positions are seen as less stressful than working in a local administration. They also underlined the advantages which come together with a position in a university, such as enjoying university vacations or being able to send one's children to the affiliated kindergarten. They have also an easier access to the primary schools and high schools affiliated to the universities. Schools affiliated to the country's elite universities, such as the "high school attached to Tsinghua University" (*Qinghua daxue fushu zhongxue*, 清华大学附属中学), are considered as among the best. As a result, holding a position as counsellor or as CYL official is widely considered as a perfect situation to have children.¹¹⁰⁶

The position's stability was particularly emphasized by female interviewees. In contrast to university ones, local level officials often have to transfer regularly from one place to another in order to advance their career. This can be particularly complicated for female officials as the social pressure is very strong for them to get married and follow their husbands where the job takes them rather than the other way around.¹¹⁰⁷ More broadly, female officials have less

¹¹⁰⁵ Interviews with cadre 6, student 7, student 8, cadre 10, student 16, and cadre 35.

¹¹⁰⁶ Interviews with academic 2, cadre 6, student 12, student 16, student 17, and cadre 41.

¹¹⁰⁷ Interviews with academic 2, cadre 6, student 12, student 16, student 17, and cadre 41.

chances of promotion in the Chinese system, which is widely dominated by male cadres.¹¹⁰⁸ As a result, they tend to curb their political ambitions. To be sure, such considerations are by far not only put forward by female officials and several male interviewees also stressed how they value the stability of a university position or how they decided not to take a local Party-State position for family reasons.¹¹⁰⁹

Beyond their willingness to leave campus and to become Party-State officials, university officials face very different situations and have various opportunities depending on the institution they come from. According to my interviews, officials from universities which are directly managed by the Ministry of Education, rather than a provincial government, have more transfer opportunities. They have a direct contact with the Central CCP Organization Department and have more opportunities to meet relevant officials. Among the universities I focused on, this is the case of Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Nanjing University.¹¹¹⁰ By contrast, my interviewees from Nanjing Normal University emphasized how rare it was for their CYL officials to become local officials. Even if they go through a temporary transferred duty, most of them come back afterwards and stay on campus.¹¹¹¹

Even among the top level universities, Peking University and Tsinghua University stand out. Many of their cadres become local Party-State officials. It is particularly true of CYL officials who, as shown before, are in a good position to be transferred. The two schools had altogether 25 CYL secretaries between 1978 and 2012. Among them, only 7 remained on campus right after and 15 became local officials, mostly in Beijing.¹¹¹²

In addition to coming from the country's best universities, these cadres have wide networking opportunities. The CYL secretaries from Tsinghua University and Peking

¹¹⁰⁸ There is little systematic research regarding female officials in China. On this topic, see : Tatlow, "Women Struggle for a Foothold in Chinese Politics"; Shih, Adolph, and Liu, "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China," 178.

¹¹⁰⁹ Interviews with cadre 10, cadre 15, cadre 35.

¹¹¹⁰ Interviews with academic 2, academic 3, academic 6, cadre 10, academic 11, cadre 12, cadre 16, cadre 18, academic 21, academic 22, cadre 30, cadre 31, and cadre 35.

¹¹¹¹ Interviews with academic 2, academic 11, and cadre 35.

¹¹¹² Several name lists for the CYL secretaries can be found on the internet (See in particular : <http://blog.renren.com/share/36924648/3903186873>, consulted on 1 June 2016), I cross examined them and verified them with university officials and older lists published by the two universities (Fang Huijian (方惠坚) and Zhang Sijing (张思敬), *Local Records of Tsinghua University (Qinghua daxue zhi, 清华大学志)*, 1:879; Peking University Youth League Committee, *The Communist Youth League in Peking University (Gongqingtuan zai Beida, 共青团在北大)*, 358–388. The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites. I found at least partial career data for all of the CYL secretaries between 1978 and 2012. I started the analysis at 1978 because at that time the CYL organization was being redeveloped on campus. I stopped at 2012 since, at the time of the analysis, no CYL secretary from neither school had been since then transferred to another position.

University are members of the CYL Central Committee.¹¹¹³ They can therefore meet the most important CYL leaders who also seat in the committee.¹¹¹⁴ As a result, 8 of the 25 CYL secretaries from these two schools (1978-2012) got positions in the CYL, in Beijing or at the central level, later in their career. By comparison, the CYL secretaries from Nanjing University have much less networking opportunities in the CYL organization as they are only members of the Jiangsu Province CYL Committee.¹¹¹⁵

The networking opportunities of the officials from Peking University and Tsinghua University were largely put forward by my interviewees. They also underlined that there is a certain path dependency as large numbers of officials come from these universities and favor alumni when recruiting.¹¹¹⁶ Former Tsinghua University officials are presented as having a uniquely strong alumni culture, cultivated through the university's particularly developed counsellor system. Tsinghua University alumni are in fact numerous among high level cadres and a large number of them have a student counsellor background.¹¹¹⁷ For instance, there were four Tsinghua University alumni among the 16th CCP Politburo, among whom three had an experience as counsellors.¹¹¹⁸

Working on campus, and in particular within the CYL, can overall become a springboard towards a future political career for a minority of university officials. To assess the specificity of the university setting, I now turn to comparing this phenomenon with the situation of CYL officials in other organizations, in high schools and State-owned enterprises (SOEs), as to see if they can enjoy similar opportunities and career trajectories.

¹¹¹³ The list of CYL Central Committee members can be found here: "Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央)." I cross-analyzed it with the name lists of Peking University and Tsinghua University CYL secretaries.

¹¹¹⁴ In addition to central CYL leaders, the secretaries of the provincial level CYL committees are also for example members of the CYL Central Committee (Source: "Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央)").

¹¹¹⁵ Interview with cadre 6.

¹¹¹⁶ Interviews with academic 3, academic 6, cadre 10, cadre 16, cadre 18, academic 21, academic 22, and cadre.

¹¹¹⁷ Interviews with cadre 16 and academic 22.

¹¹¹⁸ Xie Zheping (谢喆平) and Wang Sunyu (王孙禹), "Student Political Instructors and Governance of China by 'Red Engineers' (*xuesheng fudao yuan zhidu yu hongse gongchengshi zhiguo*, 学生辅导员制度与"红色工程师治国")," 18-29.

2) A promotion channel within the institution: CYL officials in high schools and State-owned enterprises

a) High schools CYL officials largely remain in the school system

In order to question the exceptionality of university CYL cadres in terms of career options, I conducted interviews among CYL officials in two high schools in Nanjing. Both are elite high schools and not representative of the national situation. Focusing on high level institutions was a way to see what high school CYL officials can expect in terms of career, in the best possible situation. In particular, my objective was to assess whether they can use this experience as a springboard for a political career, like in universities. I concluded that it is largely not the case.

High schools in general do not have full-time CYL cadres. The high school CYL secretary is only a part-time position. The CYL secretary generally heads at the same time the office in charge of student affairs. While part-time, CYL secretary is an important position within the school organization. He is a school official, paid by the school administration and selected by the school CCP leadership. He has to deal with CYL recruitment, and the first steps of CCP recruitment for the older students. For example, the CYL supervises the “preparatory CCP school” (*yubei dangxiao*, 预备党校), i.e. classes regarding CCP ideology and history for “activists entering the Party.”¹¹¹⁹

The CYL organizes cultural and sports activities, as well as volunteering work for students. In some elite high schools, students now have to validate a certain number of hours of volunteering work per year to pass, which takes up a lot of their vacation time. This can take place in the city or in poorer parts of the province for instance. The CYL also supervises the student associations and in particular the high school’s student union. The CYL manages the budget of these associations and selects the union’s leadership. The CYL overall supervises all extra-curricular activities on campus. In elite high schools, the large majority of students are CYL members (more than 95% in the two high schools I studied). As a result, the CYL targets the whole student body in its activities.¹¹²⁰

Being a CYL secretary is seen by the cadres as a good training position in order to be further promoted within the school or to transfer to another high school. They are rather young and have a lot of responsibilities. After a few years they can be appointed as a school’s deputy director for example. Training programs can also be organized for these officials, at the local

¹¹¹⁹ Interviews with cadre 5 and cadre 8. For more details on Party recruitment procedures, see Chapter Three.

¹¹²⁰ Interviews with cadre 5 and cadre 8.

or central level, emphasizing the promotion function of CYL positions. However, it is rare for them to leave the school system and to pursue a political career, since they have very little connections with cadres outside the school.¹¹²¹

b) State-owned enterprises: the CYL is at the firm's service

In addition to high schools, I conducted interviews among CYL officials from four different SOEs based in Beijing, Nanjing, and Guiyang. One is a central level SOEs while the three others are provincial level ones.¹¹²² While the sample is not representative of all the different SOEs which can be found nationally, an analysis of their situation can give an idea of the career options open to CYL officials in rather high level SOEs.

By comparison to the situation in a university or a high school, the CYL activities are not key to the functioning of a SOE. The firm is, first of all, concerned with its profitability. Extra-activities such as the ones the CYL offers are only a secondary concern. In addition, young employees, and even more CYL members, often represent only a minority of the workforce. As a result, there is generally no full-time CYL position.¹¹²³ The CYL secretaries are often at the same time in charge of political work more broadly or of social responsibility. CYL work itself takes up less than a quarter of their working time.¹¹²⁴

Despite CYL work being seen as of secondary importance, being CYL secretary in a large SOE is a formative position for young cadres. The CYL secretary is selected by the firm's CCP leadership and it is often a way to test young officials before further promotion. They have to organize a number of large scale activities and therefore demonstrate their "organization abilities" (*zuzhi nengli*, 组织能力). The CYL cadres are mostly evaluated by the CCP organization on how satisfied employees are regarding the activities, and how many participate. Having no power over the employees' career or pay, they have to find ways to attract them.

¹¹²¹ According to my interviews, the situation is similar for vocational higher education institutions. These schools are often rather small and cannot afford a full-time CYL official. They generally pursue their career in the school system (interviews with cadre 4, cadre 5 and cadre 8).

¹¹²² There are different categories of State-owned enterprises depending on which level of government is responsible for their supervision. Around a hundred SOEs are managed at the central level by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (*Guowuyuan guoyou zichan jiandu guanli weiyuanhui* 国务院国有资产监督管理委员会). A list can be found here: <http://www.sasac.gov.cn/n1180/n1226/n2425/> (Consulted on 21 June 2016).

¹¹²³ This is true even in the very large firms. According to a survey conducted in 2010 among 285 former CYL officials from 70 central SOEs, only around half of the central SOEs had full-time CYL secretaries (Xu Gaofeng (许高峰) et al., "Research on Team Building among Central State-Owned Enterprises Youth League Cadres (*zhongyang qiye jituanji tuan ganbu duiwu jianshe yanjiu*, 中央企业集团级团干部队伍建设研究)," *China Youth Studies* 6 (2010): 49).

¹¹²⁴ Interviews with cadre 7, cadre 25, cadre 26, cadre 36, cadre 40.

They are therefore in a good position to learn how to influence and manage large groups of employees.

Beyond political activities, such as discussion groups regarding new Party-State policies, the CYL mostly organizes leisure activities for the employees below 35 years old, generally without taking into account whether they are CYL members or not. While not directly related to the firms' production, the various activities organized by the CYL have a team-building goal, which is supposed to indirectly improve the employees' productivity. This echoes the evolution of Party activities in firms. Patricia Thornton has indeed stressed how the Party cells in companies are increasingly developing activities turned towards "corporate culture" and "team-building."¹¹²⁵ The CYL organizes for example sports competitions to create a more relaxed work environment. It can also organize English language competitions to push the employees to master this language. In some firms, it puts in place volunteering babysitting so the employees learn to support each other in their family life. In addition, the CYL sometimes organizes dating events for the employees who are single.¹¹²⁶

A major mission of the CYL is also to survey the young employees regarding their views on work conditions. It regularly gives reports to the firm's leadership on this regard. Compared to other young cadres in the firm, the CYL secretary has in fact a privileged access to the leadership. In particular, he has a direct relationship with the CCP secretary who gives directives for CYL activities.¹¹²⁷ The CYL secretary also generally seats, without a voting-right, at the meetings of the SOE's CCP team (*dangzu*, 党组) which includes the firm's most important leaders.¹¹²⁸

As a good training ground and a perfect situation to develop close relationships with the SOE's leadership, CYL secretary is considered a perfect position to get promoted in the company.¹¹²⁹ The SOEs CYL secretaries also have numerous training opportunities which can

¹¹²⁵ Patricia M. Thornton, "The New Life of the Party: Party-Building and Social Engineering in Greater Shanghai," *The China Journal*, no. 68 (July 2012): 58–78.

¹¹²⁶ Overall, the activities organized by the CYL in SOEs is very similar to what Ekman described regarding CYL events in administrations. In that case also it mostly has a team building function (Alice Ekman, "The Shaping of National Diplomatic Practices : Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy as a Case Study" (PhD dissertation, Sciences Po, 2013), 104. Interviews with cadre 7, cadre 25, cadre 26, cadre 36, cadre 40.

¹¹²⁷ Like in other organizations, the CYL is under the leadership of the CCP. Its funding also comes in large part from the SOE's CCP organization. For specific activities, other departments or other companies can also help sponsoring (Interviews with cadre 7, cadre 25, cadre 26, cadre 36, cadre 40).

¹¹²⁸ Interviews with cadre 7, cadre 25, cadre 26, cadre 36, cadre 40.

¹¹²⁹ Interviews with cadre 7, cadre 25, cadre 26, cadre 36, cadre 40.

help them advance their career.¹¹³⁰ According to my interviews, they often get promoted to key managing positions within the firm, and in particular in its CCP organization. A survey conducted in 2010 among 285 former CYL officials from 70 central SOEs in fact shows that in most cases (70%) they get promoted to political and management positions, rather than production oriented ones.¹¹³¹

Yet, pursuing a political career outside the company is much rarer for SOEs CYL secretaries. The ones who do so generally leave the SOE later in their career, using the CYL experience first as a promotion channel within the company. Rather than the CYL experience itself, it is then the close relations between SOEs and the Party-State which can facilitate their transfer to a position as an official.¹¹³² Researchers have stressed the rotating doors existing between the SOEs and local administrations for high level cadres.¹¹³³ In this configuration, a CYL experience is mainly a way to promote someone within the SOE itself to a managing position.

The career of Xu Jinrong, former CYL secretary of Jiangsu and vice-governor of the province since 2012, is a good illustration of such a trajectory. She was in 1978-1980 the CYL deputy secretary of a SOE in Jiangsu. This might have helped her political career later on, but it was mostly a way to get ahead in the SOE itself. It is only after becoming the SOE's CCP deputy secretary that she moved to a CYL position at the provincial level. Like for Yang Yue, if we compare Xu Jinrong's professional trajectory with the one of a normally successful cadre, as illustrated in Table 2.1, we can notice the large gap in terms of age of promotion. For example, instead of the supposed promotion age of 55 years old for a bureau director position, she got there at 40 years old as Jiangsu CYL Committee Secretary.

¹¹³⁰ According to survey conducted in 2010 among 285 former CYL officials from 70 central SOEs, 80% of the central SOEs CYL secretaries have participated in a training program at least once a year (Xu Gaofeng (许高峰) et al., "Research on Team Building among Central State-Owned Enterprises Youth League Cadres (*zhongyang qiye jituanji tuan ganbu duiwu jianshe yanjiu*, 中央企业集团级团干部队伍建设研究)," 51). Also, a training program is organized for central SOEs CYL secretaries by the central CYL. Beyond the training itself, it allows them to meet cadres from other firms and the central CYL leadership ("The 2015 National Training Class for Backbones in Charge of Firm CYL Organizations was Satisfactorily Completed (*2015 nian quanguo guban qiye tuan zuzhi fuzeren peixunban yuanman jieshu*, 2015年全国骨干企业团组织负责人培训班圆满结束)," *China Youth Daily*, June 4, 2015).

¹¹³¹ Xu Gaofeng (许高峰) et al., "Research on Team Building among Central State-Owned Enterprises Youth League Cadres (*zhongyang qiye jituanji tuan ganbu duiwu jianshe yanjiu*, 中央企业集团级团干部队伍建设研究)," 50.

¹¹³² Like university CYL officials, they can also start to enrich their experience and their network while in a CYL position, through the opportunities they often have for a "temporary transferred duty" in a local administration (Interviews with cadre 7, cadre 25, cadre 26, cadre 36, cadre 40).

¹¹³³ See in particular : Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, "Politics and Business Group Formation in China: The Party in Control?," *The China Quarterly* 211 (September 2012): 624-48.

Table 5.2: Career of Xu Jinrong¹¹³⁴



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1975—1978 Worker, Changzhou Plastic factory (Jiangsu) (19 years old)
1978—1980 Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of the Changzhou Plastic company (22 years old)
1980—1983 Training for cadres at the Nanjing Institute of Chemical Industry (24 years old)
1983—1984 Head, Technical Department of the Changzhou Plastic company (27 years old)
1985—1987 Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of the Changzhou Plastic company (29 years old)
1987—1988 Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of Changzhou City (Jiangsu) (31 years old)
1988—1990 Secretary, CYL Committee of Changzhou City (32 years old)
1990—1996 Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (34 years old)
1996—1999 Secretary, CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (40 years old)
1999—2001 Deputy Director, Jiangsu CCP Committee United Front Work Department (43 years old)
2001—2003 Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Wuyi City (Jiangsu) (45 years old)
2003—2008 Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Zhenjiang City (Jiangsu) (47 years old)
2008—2012 Secretary, CCP Committee of Zhenjiang City (52 years old)
2012—Now Vice-Governor, Jiangsu Province (56 years old)

Xu's case is particularly interesting since she did not go to college when in age of doing so during the late years of the Cultural Revolution. Instead, she followed various trainings reserved for officials at the local and central levels. In particular, she followed two training programs at the Central Party School, where she finally obtained a master degree in 2001, while she was Jiangsu Province CYL Committee Secretary.¹¹³⁶ As I demonstrate in the next chapter, it is common for CYL officials, to use this position in order to further their education.

Coming back to the broader picture, the trajectories of CYL officials in high schools and SOEs contrast with the specificity of university CYL officials. While it is perceived as a training position and can accelerate one's career within the institution, it is rarely used as a direct springboard for a political career. By contrast, the opportunities offered to university CYL leaders stand out as unique. In addition to the specific importance given to the CYL organization in higher education institutions, it aligns with the individual strategies of a large number of

¹¹³⁴ Her official resume can be found here: <http://gbzl.people.com.cn/grzy.php?id=121001036> (consulted on 7 March 2016).

¹¹³⁵ Source: <http://gbzl.people.com.cn/grzy.php?id=121001036> (consulted on 7 March 2016).

¹¹³⁶ Her official resume can be found here: <http://gbzl.people.com.cn/grzy.php?id=121001036> (consulted on 7 March 2016).

these officials. After a considerable experience as student leaders, working on campus is often a way for young university officials to use to their advantage all the organizational shortcuts available.

The second part of this dissertation has shed light on the major role played by universities in Chinese politics. I highlighted the importance of the student cadre experience, in particular for those who pursue this path during most of their education and become student leaders, in terms of political vocation and commitment building. Chinese campuses are key networking platforms for these students. The specific relationships they entertain with professors and officials, which sometimes evolve into solid mentorship ties, are key to their success as student cadres, and eventually later on as campus officials. As counsellors and CYL officials, they can then build on these relationships to rise within the campus hierarchy, and even find a leadership position outside campus, a good start for a political career. In parallel, they can also develop their own mentorship networks among new student cadres.

The political role of universities is far from being a Chinese specificity. A cross-national study by Weinberg and Walker showed how the political recruitment of students is widespread in centralized political systems, including France for instance.¹¹³⁷ In addition, in countries where institutions highly rely on sponsored mobility, universities play an important political recruitment role. In the United Kingdom for instance, Oxford University and Cambridge University are key elite cultivation platforms and some organizations, such as the debating group Oxford Union Society, play a more specific role in channeling future politicians.¹¹³⁸ I also mentioned how universities used to be a major recruiting and networking hub for the Institutional Revolutionary Party politicians in Mexico.¹¹³⁹

While in most cases the differences in terms of political regimes lead to rather limited analogies, the comparison with the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party regime is particularly relevant to our study of post-Mao China. The Institutional Revolutionary Party is a revolutionary party which was progressively institutionalized into a ruling administration.

¹¹³⁷ Ian Weinberg and Kenneth N Walker, “Student Politics and Political Systems: Toward a Typology,” *American Journal of Sociology* 75, no. 1 (1969): 77–96.

¹¹³⁸ On sponsored mobility in the British education system, see : Turner, “Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System.” On the Oxford Union Society more precisely, see : David Walter, *The Oxford Union: Playground of Power* (London: Macdonald, 1984).

¹¹³⁹ Camp, *Mexico’s Mandarins: Crafting a Power Elite for the Twenty-First Century*, 27.

Functioning as a Party-State, it held hegemonic power for over seventy years (1929-2000).¹¹⁴⁰ In addition, the Institutional Revolutionary Party relied heavily on sponsorship recruitment, targeting in particular college students, which makes the parallel all the more valuable. Camp has underlined the networking role played by institutions of higher education and how education was used as “a vehicle for enhancing political contacts leading to recruitment into this elite.”¹¹⁴¹ A key difference with the Chinese case is that in Mexico, the increasingly important role played by universities in political recruitment went hand in hand with a decline of the Party’s role in this matter.¹¹⁴² In the Chinese case, by contrast the two are closely intertwined as the Party and its youth organization are jointly structuring the sponsored mobility of future officials.

The Chinese specificity resides in the level of structuration displayed by youth political organizations on campus. As a result of its Leninist blueprint, the Party’s main youth organization, the CYL, enjoys a monopoly over student politics. This unique organization and its subsidiaries oversee the recruitment and cultivation of young cadres across the country’s universities, creating a highly managed system of political mobility. While each personal experience remains unique, the overarching presence of the CYL channels the ambitious cadres’ individual tactics into a widely standardized sponsored mobility framework. The same organizational framework englobes and links the student cadres who start working for the youth organizations while finishing their studies, the young CYL officials on campus, and the CYL officials outside campus. This organizational continuity facilitates the constant screening and selection of cadres and constitutes a springboard for the career of the most committed ones.

¹¹⁴⁰ On the Institutional Revolutionary Party regime, see : Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴¹ Camp, *Political Recruitment across Two Centuries: Mexico, 1884-1991*, 82.

¹¹⁴² Camp, “The Political Technocrat in Mexico and the Survival of the Political System.”

III. L'Enfance d'un Chef

This final part of the dissertation is titled after a short story by Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'enfance d'un chef* (childhood of a leader), which was published in the collection *Le Mur* in 1939. It is the story of a cute and puny young boy, Lucien, who follows his ambition by any means necessary. He decides he wants to become a “leader” and progressively cultivates this role, mimicking the professors and adults he admires. The political themes touched upon and the historical periods are largely different from my study. However, Lucien’s trajectory is a good illustration of the CYL cadres’ paths in link with personal ambition and with the necessity to develop a role of leader-to-be, but also in their complexity.

After analyzing the first steps of the political career on campus, both before and after graduation, I turn now to the local and central CYL officials themselves. I focus in particular on the CYL leaders, secretary and deputy secretaries at the different levels, who have much more career opportunities than their subordinates. They are in a good position to get promoted to leadership positions within the Party-State. The CYL can then become a key nexus in the political trajectory of an official, often in continuity of the first step of the career presented in the previous part of the dissertation. While clear statistics are not available, all my interviewees underlined how, since the 1990s, most CYL leaders had an experience as student cadres on campus.¹¹⁴³

This continuity illustrates the specific trajectories of leading cadres in the Chinese system, by opposition to the multitude of lower level officials. In line with the elite dualism literature, these two paths are increasingly separated.¹¹⁴⁴ The studies on the evolution of Chinese officials often overlook this distinction. They focus on the development of the civil service system and the implementation of civil service exams,¹¹⁴⁵ which rarely concern the generalist leading cadres, by opposition to specialized mid-level officials.¹¹⁴⁶ They instead take other paths, such

¹¹⁴³ Regarding these trajectories, see also : Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), “Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角),” 161.

¹¹⁴⁴ While it stresses the increasing separation between technical positions and political ones, the elite dualism literature I reviewed in the Introduction presents the difference between State jobs and Party jobs as embodying this position. By contrast, I develop that the distinction between leading cadres and non-leading ones, within the State or the Party, is a far more crucial distinction.

¹¹⁴⁵ Burns and Wang, “Civil Service Reform in China: Impacts on Civil Servants’ Behaviour.”

¹¹⁴⁶ The article 4 of the Civil Servant Law underlines the specific status of leading cadres, whose appointment remains in the hands of the Party (“Civil Servant Law of the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongwuyuan fa*, 中华人民共和国公务员法),” National People’s Congress, 27 April 2005). This

as the ones described so far for graduates: starting their career on campus or in an SOE before transferring to a leadership position or taking the “assigned graduates” exam, which accelerates their promotion.¹¹⁴⁷ Other organizational shortcuts are also available to them, as I develop in this Third Part.

A leadership position in the CYL is often an important step in these trajectories. They can use this position, to get promoted faster than their counterparts from outside the CYL following the age rules developed in Chapter Two, but also to train themselves and develop a social role as future leaders. Rotating from one position to the next, these young leading cadres develop a multiplicity of personal ties which can become useful in their career. They enter a tight network of reciprocity among cadres, of crosscutting ties, which, I argue, strengthen on the long run their commitment to the Party-State.

This last part of the dissertation is largely based on my fieldwork. As explained in the Introduction, I focused on the different administrative levels of the CYL and the trajectories of its cadres in Beijing, Jiangsu and Guizhou. Through the comparative study of these two provinces I can account for similarities and make general claims regarding the recruitment and promotion processes, but I can also see how the organization adapts itself to local specificities.

To present comprehensively the role played by the CYL in career trajectories, this part is divided in two chapters, with almost competing perspectives. One stresses the specific nature of the CYL and how it makes it an ideal training ground for officials, how it turns cadres into political leaders. The other puts forward the multiplicity of experiences and personal ties developed during a cadre’s career, stressing that the CYL is often one step among others, one network among others, even though rather important. By underlining the complexity of cadres’ trajectories I can also better dissect a Party-State often seen as monolithic or constituted of large and unified political groups and factions.

opposition is also put forward by : Tsai and Kou, “The Party’s Disciples: CCP Reserve Cadres and the Perpetuation of a Resilient Authoritarian Regime.”

¹¹⁴⁷ On the variety of trajectories for leading cadres, see : Pan Teng (潘腾), “A cohort of young CCP officials (*Zhonggong nianqing ganbu tidui*, 中共年轻干部梯队),” *Phoenix Weekly*, Vol 6, N°463, 2013.

Chapter 6: Youth League officials as *political managers*

I now move to the issue of the uniqueness of the CYL experience for young officials. I argue that, in link with the generalist content of CYL work, and the unique status of the organization in the Chinese political system, its officials develop a specific identity in their eyes and in their colleagues⁷. Focusing on CYL leaders in particular, both at the central and local levels, I show that the generalist feature of their job sets them apart from more specialized officials, working in sectorial administrations for instance. While underlining the survival of generalist cadres in the Chinese system by opposition to the literature describing an overall technocratization of the regime,¹¹⁴⁸ I also stress how the younger cadres differ from the traditional political cadres. They have a stronger educational background and importantly they now work and evolve in a socio-economic environment highly different from the Mao era.

The CYL officials are overall similar to the “political managers” that Jowitt saw emerging in the Soviet Union and Eastern European Communist regimes, in the post-Stalin era. Against a static vision of Communist regimes, Jowitt underlined the progressive evolution of the political elite and the ways in which they dealt with a broader society. The revolutionary cadres, specialists in ideology and coercion techniques, were progressively replaced by “political managers.” More technically trained than their predecessors, the managers relied less on coercion and more on their relational and entrepreneurial skills.¹¹⁴⁹ They were better equipped to deal with a variety of social and economic situations. While Jowitt described this elite-change focusing on the skills of these different types of officials, I think it could also be analyzed through the lens of political roles. Indeed, in addition to focusing on what the CYL cadres do and how it shapes their status compared to other officials, I also analyze the way they present themselves and try to valorize their experience in order to get promoted in the Party-State hierarchy.

¹¹⁴⁸ On the technocratization of the Chinese regime, see in particular : Li, “The Rise of Technocracy: Elite Transformation and Ideological Change in Post-Mao China”; Xiao, “The Rise of the Technocrats.”

¹¹⁴⁹ Jowitt, *New World Disorder. the Leninist Extinction*, 98.

A - Organizational flexibility and individual ambition

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the organizational features of the CYL which make it a good training ground for ambitious young cadres. The CYL followed the Party's evolution, especially in its core missions which are propaganda and organization. It targets new sectors of society, which emerged with the economic reforms of the 1980s, in order to recruit members and find new ways to reach them. More broadly, it evolves towards a hub-like organization, taking advantage of its networks of support within and outside the Party-State to develop projects. It is a way to make up for its financial and organizational weaknesses. Paradoxically, these weaknesses of the CYL can also be used to their advantage by the cadres in order to train themselves and build their reputation as uncorrupt officials.

1) At the front-line of Party transformation

a) The Party and the League follow the society's diversification

In Chapter One, I stressed the organizational similarities between the CYL and the CCP. Beyond the overall structure, the CYL also follows the CCP's recent evolutions. This is particularly striking when focusing on the changes in organization and propaganda work, the two pillars of Party work which consist in the development of the organization itself and its membership on one side, and on the political education of its members as well as the advertisement of its policies and values on the other.¹¹⁵⁰

After the Tiananmen movement and its repression, the CCP issued in December 1989 a document calling for a strengthening of Party control over its three major mass organizations: the Federation of Trade-Union, the Federation of Women and the Communist Youth League.¹¹⁵¹ Regarding the CYL, the little autonomy it had, and which was supposed to be expanded by the reform project of Zhao Ziyang, was constrained.¹¹⁵² It led in particular to a model of organizational development under which "Party-building leads League-building" (*dangjian dai tuanjian*, 党建带团建). The League must follow the Party's strategy in terms of organizational expansion and the recruitment of new members. It must go where the CCP goes.

¹¹⁵⁰ On organization and ideology as the two key pillars of the Chinese Party-State system (I understand propaganda as "ideology in action" in Shurmann's terminology): Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*.

¹¹⁵¹ "Notice Regarding the Strengthening and Improvement of the Party's Control over the Work of the ACFTU, the CYL and the Women Federation (*Zhongong zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang he gaishan dang dui gonghui, gongqingtuan, fulian gongzuo lingdao de tongzhi*, 中共中央关于加强和改善党对工会, 共青团, 妇联工作领导的通知)," CCP, 12 December 1989.

¹¹⁵² Regarding Zhao Ziyang's reform project, see Chapter One.

This new model was finally engraved in the CYL charter at its Fifteenth National Congress in 2003.¹¹⁵³

The CYL followed the Party in its strategy to expand its coverage over the new organizations which started to develop with the reform and opening up policy. Since the 1990s, the Party has targeted in particular the “two new” (*liangxin*, 两新) organizations created since the reforms, meaning the new economic organizations, such as private companies, and social organizations.¹¹⁵⁴ In 1993 the first CYL branch in a private company was established in Beijing. In 1999, 197 Beijing-based companies had CCP units and they all also had CYL cells.¹¹⁵⁵

The “two new” organizations became an increasingly important sector of CYL expansion. Between 2003 and 2007, CYL members within such organizations went from 3.1 to 3.6 million (4.7% of the total CYL membership), while the number of CYL members in SOEs decreased.¹¹⁵⁶ Reflecting this new trend, the CYL committees established specific departments to deal with these structures. For example, the CYL of Haidian District in Beijing opened in the 2000s a Non-Public Organizations Department (*feigong zuzhi bu*, 非公组织部) to make the link with CYL units in private enterprises and associations.¹¹⁵⁷ The central CYL also pushed for the strengthening of local CYL units, at the sub-district (*jiedao*, 街道) or township (*xiangzhen*, 乡镇) levels in particular, to supervise membership expansion in the “two new” organizations but also in the businesses and associations too small to have their own CYL branches. In that case they would be directly affiliated with the local CYL rather than within a CYL branch in their unit. The local CYL committees also have to deal with an increasing number of moving CYL members (*liudong tuanyuan*, 流动团员), who are not attached to a CYL branch in a firm or a university. They were 7.6 million nationwide in 2007.¹¹⁵⁸ In Beijing, a program for sub-district CYL cadres was initiated in 2000 to train them in dealing with these

¹¹⁵³ “Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程),” Congress of the CYL, 26 July 2003.

¹¹⁵⁴ Regarding the Party’s policy to expand in the “two new” organizations, see in particular : Thornton, “The New Life of the Party: Party-Building and Social Engineering in Greater Shanghai”; Patricia M. Thornton, “The Advance of the Party: Transformation or Takeover of Urban Grassroots Society?,” *The China Quarterly* 213 (March 2013): 1–18.

¹¹⁵⁵ Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui*, 共青团北京市委员会), ed., *Chronicle of the Youth Movement in Beijing 1919-2004 (Beijing Qingnian Yundong Jishi 1919-2004, 北京青年运动纪事 1919-2004)* (Beijing: People’s Press, 2004), 79–80.

¹¹⁵⁶ An Guoqi (安国启), *A research report on contemporary communist youth league work in urban areas (dangdai chengshi Gongqingtuan gongzuo yanjiu baogao, 当代城市共青团工作研究报告)*, 63.

¹¹⁵⁷ Interview with cadre 2.

¹¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

new trends.¹¹⁵⁹ The CYL overall followed the evolution of the Party's expansion to new sectors of society.

The CCP and the CYL also modernized their propaganda apparatus through the use of modern technology. The CYL Central Committee established its website in 1998 and provincial level CYL committees followed. The Beijing CYL Committee created its own in 1999.¹¹⁶⁰ Online propaganda expanded in the 2000s as to reach young people through new means.¹¹⁶¹ The central level CYL initiated in 2007 a "Project for the construction of an internet for young people" (*Qingshaonian wangluo jianshe gongcheng*, 青少年网络建设工程). The project aimed at establishing a number of educational platform and propaganda websites. The official goal was to suggest "healthy cultural online products for young people" (*jiankang de qingshaonian wangluo wenhua chanpin*, 健康的青少年网络文化产品) and to promote CYL activities.¹¹⁶²

The Party and the Youth League also became active on social network websites. The Party issued a decision in 2011 advocating for more implication in the internet as to develop a "healthy online culture" (*jiankang de wangluo wenhua*, 健康的网络文化).¹¹⁶³ In the months that followed the CCP Propaganda Department pushed for cadres to use Weibo¹¹⁶⁴ as to have more impact on the content of the internet. As a result, in late 2012, over 100,000 Weibo microblogs were hosted by government institutions.¹¹⁶⁵ The CYL was very active in this development. The CYL unit of the official press agency Xinhua was the first to open a Weibo account as soon as June 2011.¹¹⁶⁶ In 2015, CYL units and cadres had over 60,000 Weibo

¹¹⁵⁹ Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui*, 共青团北京市委员会), *Chronicle of the Youth Movement in Beijing 1919-2004* (*Beijing Qingnian Yundong Jishi 1919-2004*, 北京青年运动纪事 1919-2004), 81.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹¹⁶¹ Young people below thirty constituted the majority of Internet users in China, 57% as to June 2015. "The 36th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China (*di 36 ci Zhongguo hulianwangluo fazhan zhuanghuang tongji baogao*, 第 36 次中国互联网络发展状况统计报告)," *China Internet Network Information Center*, July 2015.

¹¹⁶² Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League* (*zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 118.

¹¹⁶³ "Central CCP Decision Regarding the Deepening of the Reform of Cultural Institutions to Propel the Great Development and Great Flourishing of Socialist Culture (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu shenhua wenhua tizhi gaige tuidong shehui zhuyi wenhua dafazhan dafanrong ruogan zhongda wenti de jue ding*, 中共中央关于深化文化体制改革推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣若干重大问题的决定)," CCP Central Committee, 18 October 2011.

¹¹⁶⁴ Weibo is a microblogging platform. It is very similar to the American website Twitter.

¹¹⁶⁵ Ashley Esarey, "Winning Hearts and Minds? Cadres as Microbloggers in China," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44, no. 2 (2015): 69–103.

¹¹⁶⁶ "Using Online Thinking to Improve CYL Work (*yong hulianwang siwei tisheng gongqingtuan gongzuo*, 用互联网思维提升共青团工作)," *China Youth Daily*, July 13, 2014.

accounts.¹¹⁶⁷ Training programs were also set up starting in 2011 for CYL to learn how to better use this technology.¹¹⁶⁸ In my interviews, CYL cadres stressed the transformation brought by social network websites in terms of propaganda work: the spreading of information regarding activities or policies goes much faster than with paper publications or even traditional internet websites. It therefore makes their job much easier.¹¹⁶⁹

b) Towards a hub-like organization

The CYL also followed the Party's evolution regarding its ways to interact with other organizations more broadly. Thornton showed how the Party evolves towards a "hub-like" organization, trying to stay in touch with the various groups and structures emerging in an evolving society. It finds new frameworks to expand its membership in new types of organization but also increasingly serves as platform linking various actors to organize activities and projects.¹¹⁷⁰ The CYL evolves in the same direction, which highly influences the work of CYL cadres. They become "generalists" as defined by Nay and Smith, meaning that they facilitate the interaction between various organizations and sectors, both in practice but also in terms of framing common goals and bringing together different organizational cultures.¹¹⁷¹

The CYL organizes its own political and cultural activities as developed in Chapter One but it also increasingly sets up projects together with other actors. In these cases, it provides a management platform and functions as a communication channel with the Party-State administrations. It interacts with very different actors, depending on which echelons of the CYL are implicated. At the provincial level, it interacts with large universities and SOEs for instance, whereas at the county level it mostly deals with smaller firms or associations. The various departments of the CYL also differ in their interlocutors.¹¹⁷² For example, the Schools Department connects with education institutions, while the Propaganda Department is in touch

¹¹⁶⁷ "How the CYL Organizations in Universities use the New Media (*gaoxiao tuan zuzhi ruhe wan zhuan xin meiti*, 高校团组织如何玩转新媒体)," *China Youth Daily*, April 14, 2015.

¹¹⁶⁸ See for instance : "Jiangsu: the CYL Uses New Media to Lead the New Youth (*Jiangsu: wanshuan xin meiti yinlingxin qingnian*, 江苏: 玩转新媒体 引领新青年)," *China Youth Daily*, April 18, 2012.

¹¹⁶⁹ Interviews with cadre 20 and cadre 40.

¹¹⁷⁰ Thornton, "The Advance of the Party: Transformation or Takeover of Urban Grassroots Society?," 1–18.

¹¹⁷¹ Olivier Nay and Andy Smith, eds., *Le gouvernement du compromis: courtiers et généralistes dans l'action politique [Compromise Government: brokers and generalists in political action]* (Paris: Economica, 2002).

¹¹⁷² Interviews with cadre 1, cadre 2, and cadre 27.

with cultural organizations, such as press agencies or publishing houses, and the Urban Youth Work Department with urban firms.¹¹⁷³

Local CYL committees are particularly active in bringing various actors together, in order to both improve local economy and to keep control over emerging sectors. Since the 2000s, the Haidian District CYL Committee organizes, for instance, start-up competitions, connecting potential investors and young entrepreneurs. It also organizes employment forums to help graduates contacting potential employers, as well as training programs with new technologies companies for unemployed young people. At the same time, it has set up various regular meetings and clubs for young people in the area. The clubs focus on specific hobbies or are made for people from the same province to meet. The Haidian District CYL Committee has created a youth center where such meetings can take place and where young people can also find legal or job-related advice.¹¹⁷⁴ Similar activities are organized by the CYL in the various locales.¹¹⁷⁵

To better fulfill its function of coordination platform, the CYL has also been setting up numerous associations or companies to reach out to different sectors of society. In addition to traditional structures such as its press agency, China Youth Press, which was established in 1951,¹¹⁷⁶ or the Central CYL School, founded in 1948,¹¹⁷⁷ it created numerous new ones such as the China Youth Development Foundation in 1989,¹¹⁷⁸ or Youth Business China (*Zhongguo qingnian chuangye guoji jihua*, 中国青年创业国际计划) in 2003.¹¹⁷⁹ These latter two structures symbolize the project-oriented coordination between the CYL and the business sector. The China Youth Development Foundation developed the “Project Hope” that I described in Chapter One. With an initial funding from the People’s Bank of China, among others, its goals is to develop primary education in the poorest provinces of China.¹¹⁸⁰ Youth Business China

¹¹⁷³ Interviews with cadre 1, cadre 2, and cadre 27. For a detailed list of the central CYL departments, which are largely reproduced at the lower levels of the organization, see Figure 1.1 in Chapter One.

¹¹⁷⁴ Interviews with cadre 1 and 2.

¹¹⁷⁵ Interviews with cadre 1, cadre 2, cadre 16, cadre 27. To have an idea of the variety of similar activities organized by the Beijing CYL Committee, see: Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui*, 共青团北京市委), *Records and Documents of Beijing’s Youth Organizations (Beijing Qingnian Zuzhi Zhiwengao*, 北京青年组织志文稿), 365–373.

¹¹⁷⁶ Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 39.

¹¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹¹⁷⁸ Wang, “Project Hope and the Hope School System in China: A Re-Evaluation.” On the China Youth Development Foundation also see Chapter One.

¹¹⁷⁹ Thornton, “The Advance of the Party: Transformation or Takeover of Urban Grassroots Society?,” 9.

¹¹⁸⁰ Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan*, 社会变革中的共青团), 43; Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 103.

was established in coordination with the Prince's Trust Enterprise Leadership Conference and the UK-based Youth Business International. It aims at facilitating entrepreneurship among Chinese youth. It organizes training seminars and internships for young entrepreneurs.¹¹⁸¹

The local CYL committees developed their own sub-organizations following a similar pattern.¹¹⁸² In addition to the organizations it directly manages, the CYL also has collaboration or supervision ties with a very large number of social organizations. In 2002, among the 8 million social organizations officially registered in China, 2.47 million were linked to the CYL.¹¹⁸³

Most of CYL projects are the same from one locale to another. However, through its sub-organizations it can partially adapt its activities to the local context.¹¹⁸⁴ The “Chunhui Project” (*Chunhui xingdong*, 春晖行动) developed in Guizhou is a good example of such adaptation. In 2004 the Guizhou Province CYL Committee launched this poverty relief project, especially targeted at rural and national minority areas. An office in the provincial level CYL was set up to supervise the implementation. It became in 2007 the Guizhou Province Chunhui Project Development Center (*Guizhou sheng Chunhui xingdong fazhan zhongxin*, 贵州省春晖行动发展中心). Through its own organizational network, its branches in the various villages of Guizhou, the CYL was able to contact key actors in villages and to put them in touch with charity organizations or investors. It led among other things to scholarship programs for students from these villages or support packages for local entrepreneurs.¹¹⁸⁵

Among the organizations supervised by the CYL, the All-China Youth Federation (ACYF) and its local equivalents play a particularly important role. As described in Chapter One, the All-China Youth Federation is mainly an advisory body composed of young representatives from the CYL and from unrelated organizations from various sectors of society, such as economic, intellectual or religious elites. It serves as an interface between the CYL and these groups. Through this institution, the young representatives can voice their concern

¹¹⁸¹ Thornton, “The Advance of the Party: Transformation or Takeover of Urban Grassroots Society?,” 9.

¹¹⁸² For more details regarding the organizations managed by the Beijing CYL, see : Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui*, 共青团北京市委员会), *Records and Documents of Beijing's Youth Organizations (Beijing Qingnian Zuzhi Zhiwengao*, 北京青年组织志文稿), 90–110.

¹¹⁸³ Shaoguang Wang and Jianyu He, “Training Ground for Democracy : Associational Life in China,” in *State and Civil Society the Chinese Perspective*, ed. Zhenglai Deng (Singapore; Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2010), 271–310.

¹¹⁸⁴ Interviews with cadre 1, cadre 2, cadre 16, and cadre 27.

¹¹⁸⁵ Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui*, 共青团北京市委员会), *Records and Documents of Beijing's Youth Organizations (Beijing Qingnian Zuzhi Zhiwengao*, 北京青年组织志文稿), 264–276.

regarding the CYL activities in link with their sector. According to my interviews, its practical effect at the national or local level is very limited and it therefore mainly functions as a networking platform for the representatives themselves. Most of them become members for the networking opportunities and the prestige it offers. They can also use it as a training ground in order to later become representative in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference or the National People's Congress.¹¹⁸⁶ From the CYL's perspective, the ACYF is a way to expand its network of influence beyond its members and to create contacts with potentially successful businessmen or religious leaders. It is often also used as a public relations tool as the CYL use the ACYF's name to appear more neutral politically.¹¹⁸⁷ The ACYF has developed exchanges with Taiwan since the early 1990s¹¹⁸⁸ and organizes regular delegations to a variety of countries.¹¹⁸⁹

Beyond building relationships with the business sector or overseas organizations, the CYL also develops its links to the State itself. As a mass organization managed by the Party, the CYL helps in practice in the implementation of the Party-State policy but until recently it was not officially defined as a state instrument. It was with the promulgation in 1991 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors that, for the first time, the CYL was cited as having to help the State in implementing its policies.¹¹⁹⁰ Since then, the CYL established a hotline and more broadly has been functioning as a key communication and coordination platform among the administrations concerned with the protection of minors. It also started to send delegations of young people to meet with representatives from the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference or the National People's Congress, so they can discuss their needs and grievances.¹¹⁹¹ Beyond protection of minors specifically, the role of the CYL as a State instrument has been included in its charter in 2003: it has to “actively assist the

¹¹⁸⁶ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, and cadre 32.

¹¹⁸⁷ For examples of exchanges organized by the Beijing Youth Federation, see : Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui*, 共青团北京市委员会), *Records and Documents of Beijing's Youth Organizations (Beijing Qingnian Zuzhi Zhiwengao*, 北京青年组织志文稿), 400–417.

¹¹⁸⁸ In 2011 for example, seven large forums or cultural events have been organized with Taiwanese delegations (Central Communist Youth League, *Yearbook of the Chinese Communist Youth League 2012 (Zhongguo Gongqingtuan nianjian 2012*, 中国共青团年鉴 2012), 227.

¹¹⁸⁹ In 2011 for instance, the All-China Youth Federation organized exchanges of delegations with a variety of countries: North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, Indonesia, Brazil, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, Italy, Russia, Portugal, Turkey, France, Germany, UK, Cuba, US, Australia (*Ibid.*, 228–235).

¹¹⁹⁰ The Chinese version is : *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo weichengnian ren baohu fa*, 中华人民共和国未成年人保护法.

¹¹⁹¹ Interview with cadre 16. See also : Shen Jianping (沈健平), *A Political Science Approach Towards the Communist Youth League (zhengzhixue shiyexia de Zhongguo Gongqingtuan*, 政治学视野下的中国共青团), 109; Hu Xianzhong (胡献忠), *The CYL in a transforming society (shehui biange zhong de gongqingtuan*, 社会变革中的共青团), 141.

government in managing youth affairs” (*jiji xiezhu zhengfu guanli qingnian shiwu*, 积极协助政府管理青年事务).¹¹⁹²

Local CYL committees have experimented further in developing relationships with the State. In coordination with the CYL, the government of Zhabei District in Shanghai has established in 2005 a Department of Youth Affairs. This governmental department is in practice managed by the local CYL, which hence gain in administrative power.¹¹⁹³ This experiment stresses the current evolution of the CYL, increasingly serving as a hub-like organization linking the Party, the State and various sectors of society.

2) The strength of a weak organization

a) Doing the job with little means

The evolutions I have just stressed show the close relationship between the CCP and the CYL. The latter follows the former in its transformation towards a hub-like organization. But the CYL does not have the Party’s political power and therefore has a stronger need of finding other organizations to set up projects with. As largely underlined by CYL officials, the CYL has “no power and no money”, thus it needs to coordinate with other actors to get things done, in particular to fund activities. We have seen in Chapter One that in 2015 the budget of the central level CYL equaled only 26.5% of the All-China Federation of Trade-Unions’ one. At the local level, the annual working budget for a county level CYL committee often does not reach 50,000 RMB, with which they can mainly pay the cadres’ salaries and offices’ operating fees and not much more,¹¹⁹⁴ this despite new provincial regulations in 2011 which set a minimum annual budget of 100,000 RMB for a county level CYL.¹¹⁹⁵

Interestingly, CYL cadres entertain a certain pride in the weakness of the organization. For them it is a sign that they are capable of doing a lot with little means. All the CYL cadres I interviewed stressed these weaknesses and contrasted them with the numerous projects they

¹¹⁹² “Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程),” Congress of the CYL, 26 July 2003.

¹¹⁹³ Interview with cadre 2. See also : Ni Jin (倪瑾), “The Functional Position of the Communist Youth League: Integration of Organizational Mobilization and Resources (*Gongqingtuan de gongneng dingwei : zuzhi dongyuan he ziyuan zhenghe*, 共青团的功能定位 : 组织动员和资源整合)” (PhD Dissertation, Huadong Normal University, 2014), 108–109.

¹¹⁹⁴ Interviews with cadre 23 and 24. See also : Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), “Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角),” 162.

¹¹⁹⁵ “Upgrading the Organizational Framework, Grabbing the Water Source (*chuangxin zuzhi geju zhuzhu huoshui yuantou*, 创新组织格局, 抓住活水源头),” *China Youth Daily*, February 8, 2012.

handle. This is also put forward by Chinese academics studying CYL work.¹¹⁹⁶ For CYL officials, underlining this contrast is a way to legitimate themselves, especially compared to other officials from Party-State departments with more means. This is particularly clear for CYL cadres in poorer parts of the country, such as Guizhou, or for the ones working at the county level CYL and below, as they are the ones with the less funding.¹¹⁹⁷ A cadre in the Guiyang City CYL Committee for example stressed how they had less funding than a Community Resident Committee (*shequ jumin weiyuanhui*, 社区居民委员会) in the city and, at the same time, organized far more activities.¹¹⁹⁸ According to my interviews, having worked in less wealthy parts of the country is seen as positive when promoting an official to high level positions.¹¹⁹⁹ For instance, they insist on the example of former PRC President Hu Jintao who was promoted in the 1980s from a local CYL leadership position in Gansu Province to the Central CYL Secretariat.¹²⁰⁰

Local CYL officials in general emphasize their organization's limited resources much more than university CYL cadres. As shown previously, the CYL is a major organization on campus and has a key role in supervising students' extracurricular activities in general. It is much less central in the case of a local administration. Young people are only a part of the constituency. In addition, CYL officials who moved from the university to the local level stressed how their work became more complicated and demanding. Instead of interacting mainly with students, they now have to deal with young people from very different sectors of society and often with less means.¹²⁰¹

As to legitimate their position, CYL officials stress in particular how the organization's weakness creates a perfect training situation. The less resources they can access, the more they have to rely on their own work and skills to find potential collaborators. In addition to actually organizing the activities, they have to be able to find funding for the various projects, from

¹¹⁹⁶ Interviews with academic 16, academic 17, academic 21. See also: Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 159; Li Wei (李伟), *Reflections on the Position Transfers of Former Communist Youth League Cadres (huimou Gongqingtuan suiyue: zhuan yehou de sikao*, 回眸共青团岁月: 转业后的思考) (Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2011), 27.

¹¹⁹⁷ Interviews with cadre 20, cadre 22, cadre 27, cadre 28, and cadre 29.

¹¹⁹⁸ Interview with cadre 29.

¹¹⁹⁹ Interviews with cadre 12, cadre 14, cadre 22, cadre 27, and cadre 29.

¹²⁰⁰ His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavita.com/biography/Hu_Jintao/career (consulted on 7 July 2016).

¹²⁰¹ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 31, and cadre 41.

Party-State administrations or firms, and to advertise them. It pushes them to develop their “coordination skills” and to learn how to convince and develop useful relationships across a variety of organizations and sectors, which was often referred to as “charisma” (*meili*, 魅力). In general, CYL cadres stress how they have to develop strong public relations skills, which they learn on the job itself rather than in school.¹²⁰²

However, it is not only a question of skills. In practice, accepting to collaborate with CYL officials in developing certain specific projects can be seen, from another cadre’s point of view or a businessman’s, as an investment: the CYL cadre that one helps out by funding his activity might become in the future an important official able to return the favor.

CYL officials stress their generalist abilities to counter the common discourse among Party-State officials regarding their lack of technical skills, as they do not work in a specialized administration, and lack of experience, as they are often young for their rank.¹²⁰³ They put forward their public relations skills, and the “generalist” (*zonghe*, 综合) abilities they train while developing a variety of projects with very different actors. To compensate for their lack of experience, they stress their youth and their ability to innovate, for instance to be active on social network websites.¹²⁰⁴ They overall develop a discourse based on the limitations of their organization, which they have to compensate by their own work, in order to counter the critics.

b) An “uncorrupted government office”

CYL officials also put forward how little corruption can be found in the organization, compared to most Party-State administrations. This idea is also largely spread in the Chinese and Foreign media.¹²⁰⁵ While some cadres emphasize the high moral standards of the CYL officials and the legacy of Hu Yaobang or Song Defu, both former CYL Central Committee First Secretaries reputed to be incorruptible, the interviewees generally came down to the lack

¹²⁰² Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 3, cadre 11, cadre 14, cadre 20, cadre 27, cadre 28, and cadre 29.

¹²⁰³ Interviews with academic 4 and academic 21. On the lack of technicity and experience, see also: Zhang Hua (张华), *Studies on the functions of the Communist Youth League of China (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhineng yanjiu, 中国共产主义青年团职能研究)*, 167; Li Wei (李伟), *Reflections on the Position Transfers of Former Communist Youth League Cadres (huimou Gongqingtuan suiye: zhuaneyhou de sikao, 回眸共青团岁月: 转业后的思考)*, 60–70.

¹²⁰⁴ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 3, cadre 11, cadre 14, cadre 20, cadre 27, cadre 28, and cadre 29. See also : Li Wei (李伟), *Reflections on the Position Transfers of Former Communist Youth League Cadres (huimou Gongqingtuan suiye: zhuaneyhou de sikao, 回眸共青团岁月: 转业后的思考)*, 34.

¹²⁰⁵ See for example : “CYL Officials Focus their Appointment on Key Government Positions (*Gongqingtuan ganbu jizhong churen zhengfu yaozhi, 共青团干部集中出任政府要职*),” *21st Century World Herald*, March 3, 2003; Keith Zhai, “Seven Rising Stars Tipped to Lead Sixth Generation of China’s Leaders,” *South China Morning Post*, October 1, 2012.

of corruption opportunities in the CYL. By opposition to a “fat position” (*feizhai*, 肥宅), they described the CYL as an “uncorrupted government office” (*qingshui yamen*, 清水衙门), using an expression referring to imperial times. With “no power and no money”, the CYL cadres have little avenues for corruption, they do not handle large infrastructure projects or do not give administrative licenses.¹²⁰⁶

An article by Gu Yali argues, on the contrary, that the weak position of the CYL cadres can push them to try and buy their way out, bribing their superiors to get a promotion. She gives examples of cadres arrested on different accounts of corruption.¹²⁰⁷ CYL cadres are no exception as corruption is largely practiced in the Chinese bureaucracy. Office selling in particular is a common practice. Several authors have underlined how the decentralized but concentrated framework under which appointment and promotion decisions are made in the Chinese system facilitates such practices. The decisions are decentralized in the sense that they are taken at the local level but the final say is also highly concentrated in the hands of few Party-State leaders who can easily manipulate the process, in particular the Party secretary and the Director of the Organization Department.¹²⁰⁸ Yan Sun argues that the appointment procedures encourage systematic office selling, despite various innovations supposed to make procedures more transparent and democratic.¹²⁰⁹

The corrupt CYL officials are therefore only cases among others, highlighting that they know the rules of the game. Like other cadres, some of them engage in corrupt practices, even though it remains generally on a small scale, due to the limited opportunities they have in that regard. However, this petty corruption is mostly the fact of cadres with little options and career prospects: my interviewees stressed that if such opportunities can always be found, it was not a good bargain for CYL cadres who were often at the beginning of their career and would risk their future ambitions on small sums of money.¹²¹⁰ In line with the idea that this position is often only a career starting point, in the next part of this chapter I show that the CYL cadres learn to know their place and their role in the system, that they are future leaders *par excellence*.

¹²⁰⁶ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 3, cadre 11, cadre 14, cadre 20, cadre 27, cadre 28, and cadre 29.

¹²⁰⁷ Gu Yali (古雅丽), “On the Passive Corruption of Youth Leaders: Some Issues (*qianyi jiceng Gongqingtuan ganbu de xiaoji fubai wenti*, 浅议基层共青团干部的消极腐败问题),” *Journal of Guangxi Youth Leaders College* 20, no. 4 (August 2010): 43–46.

¹²⁰⁸ Yan Sun, “Cadre Recruitment and Corruption: What Goes Wrong?,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 49, no. 1 (February 2008): 61–79; Smith, “Political Machinations in a Rural County”; Hillman, *Power and Patronage: Local State Networks and Party-State Resilience in Rural China*.

¹²⁰⁹ Sun, “Cadre Recruitment and Corruption: What Goes Wrong?,” 68–70.

¹²¹⁰ Interviews with cadre 14 and cadre 27.

B - The making of future leaders

After having stressed the evolution of the CYL and its specific features as a dependent organization, I now turn to how this influences its cadres, and to what extent they are in fact leaders in their childhood. Beyond the skills they may cultivate and the legitimizing discourse they develop around it, appointing young officials to an organization with little means appears as a good way to test them, both in terms of commitment and abilities.

The CYL learn to give a certain image of their work and of themselves, to embody a role as officials which can give weight to their political ambitions. As defined by Lagroye, the role is understood as the set of behaviors which are linked to a specific position and which make it palpable to others.¹²¹¹ The role is therefore made of the public expectations towards an individual in this position, but also of the individual's own views on what it implies. The role is progressively interiorized by the actor and becomes both constraints on his behavior but also models which enable his actions.¹²¹²

As argued by Briquet, the role should not only be seen negatively as a constraint: it could also be used strategically by the actors.¹²¹³ In fact, the CYL officials through their embodiment of the role of future leaders reflect that they are fit for the job. Through their performance they show that they are part of a specific elite group. Beyond the role they embody, I also show that CYL leaders are largely treated as future leaders: they are provided with prestigious training opportunities and the Party makes sure they have the right diverse and generalist working experience to be considered as fit for leadership. Promised to top positions in the Party-State, the profiles of CYL leaders evolve overtime in line with the regime's transformations.

¹²¹¹ Lagroye, "Être du métier [Insiders]."

¹²¹² Ibid., 5–15; Lefebvre, "Se conformer à son rôle. Les ressorts de l'intériorisation institutionnelle [Conforming to One's Role. The Mechanisms of Institutional Internalization]," 219–247.

¹²¹³ Jean-Louis Briquet, "Communiquer en actes. Prescriptions de rôle et exercice quotidien du métier politique [Communicating through Actions. Role and the Daily Exercise of Power]," 25.

1) Cultivation of a role as politician

a) Individual tactics to stand out

Since the 1980s, the cadre management system has progressively been developed in order to integrate precise methods and criteria in the evaluation of officials' work. As I have developed in the Introduction, this was brought further with new regulations in 1993 and eventually the Civil Service Law of 2005.¹²¹⁴ Local officials are evaluated based on their performance, looking for instance at the GDP growth when evaluating the local Party-State leaders.¹²¹⁵ Evaluation criteria are far less strict in the case of CYL officials, including CYL leaders.

The CYL officials are evaluated based on yearly objectives regarding the projects and activities of the organization. They have to report on their work twice a year. The leaders of a CYL committee, the secretary and deputy secretaries, are evaluated by the CCP leadership at the corresponding level. Lower CYL cadres have to report to their superiors within the CYL. But beyond the organization of the activities themselves no clear criteria are set concerning the impact these activities must have. The evaluations are not based on any clear quantifiable target. The only figure they can use is how many people turned out to the different events organized by the CYL, but this does not say much about their actual impact. The performance targets for CYL cadres are therefore far less clear than in the case of Party leaders. In addition, as I develop in the next chapter, the CYL leaders often rotate so quickly to another position that they cannot be evaluated on the impact of their projects few years later as they are already not in their position anymore. Moreover, the policies and projects suggested by the central level CYL do not always have to be implemented by the local CYL committees as they follow first of all the local CCP committee's orders. As described in Chapter One, the upper level CYL committees have little power over the cadres' promotions, which prevent the establishment of a strong evaluation system within the organization.¹²¹⁶

In the absence of clear performance targets, the CYL officials mainly have to please their superior, to make their work look convincing in their eyes. My interviewees stressed the subjective nature of evaluation, as different leaders have different priorities, and the importance

¹²¹⁴ “Temporary Regulation Regarding Civil Servants (*guojia gongwuyuan zanxing tiaoli*, 国家公务员暂行条例),” State Council, August 1993 and “Civil Servant Law of the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongwuyuan fa*, 中华人民共和国公务员法),” National People's Congress, 27 April 2005.

¹²¹⁵ Edin, “State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective”; Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, “Cadre and Personnel Management in the CPC,” *China: An International Journal* 10, no. 2 (2012): 69–83.

¹²¹⁶ Interviews with cadre 9, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 27, cadre 31, cadre 42.

of being able to present well one's own work. They put forward the importance of personal rhetorical and writing skills at the time of the reports. The officials stress their personal abilities rather than the actual content of their projects.¹²¹⁷ Like Walder described regarding workers' evaluation in the Mao era, the cadres have to understand clearly what their superior is expecting and "display" (*biaoxian*, 表现) their obedience and zeal, which includes making a good personal impression.¹²¹⁸ In this configuration, what is key for CYL officials is to be noticed by their superior in order to be in a good position for further promotion. In the case of CYL leaders, the relationship they develop with the CCP leadership at the corresponding level is particularly important as its members would decide of their further promotions within the locale.¹²¹⁹

Organizing major events is often a good way to get noticed.¹²²⁰ For instance, the CYL organizations in Nanjing took part in setting up the Nanjing 2015 Youth Olympic Games. The CYL was in charge of recruiting and managing volunteers: 103,000 young people applied and around 20,000 served as volunteers for the events.¹²²¹ In order to deal with these large numbers, the Nanjing City CYL Committee set up a special office. The team included around 400 staff members, among which officials sent by the CYL but also by the city government's departments, such as the Education Department or the Sports Department.¹²²² This type of large events can then lead to a certain degree of competition among CYL committees in order to get the honor of managing it. If well managed, the event puts the cadres in charge under the spotlight and might facilitate further promotions. In the case of the Nanjing Olympics, interviewees from the Nanjing CYL told me that the Jiangsu CYL was trying to get some control over the organization of the event as to share the spotlight.¹²²³

Another way to get noticed by superiors is by advertising one's projects and more broadly the work of the CYL committee. CYL leaders for instance publish articles regarding their CYL committee's activities in internal Party-State publications and the media. For them it is a way to advertise their work but also to show their writing skills and their mastery of

¹²¹⁷ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 3, cadre 9, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 27, cadre 31, and cadre 42. See also : Li Wei (李伟), *Reflections on the Position Transfers of Former Communist Youth League Cadres (huimou Gongqingtuan suiye: zhuan yehou de sikao, 回眸共青团岁月: 转业后的思考)*, 40.

¹²¹⁸ Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, 134–160.

¹²¹⁹ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 27, cadre 31, and cadre 42. See also : Li Wei (李伟), *Reflections on the Position Transfers of Former Communist Youth League Cadres (huimou Gongqingtuan suiye: zhuan yehou de sikao, 回眸共青团岁月: 转业后的思考)*, 53.

¹²²⁰ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 16, cadre 9, cadre 27, cadre 18, cadre 31, and cadre 42.

¹²²¹ "Volunteering Work for the Nanjing Youth Olympics Advances Steadily (*Nanjing qing'aohui zhiyuanzhe gongzuo wenbu tuijin, 南京青奥会志愿者工作稳步推进*)," *China Youth Daily*, June 4, 2016.

¹²²² Interviews with Student 5 and cadre 37.

¹²²³ Interviews with cadre 6 and cadre 37.

official language and policies. It is an efficient way to get noticed.¹²²⁴ It also shows that they know the rules of the game and fully embody their role as officials, through the use of a specific language and propaganda tools. I now stress how important the CYL experience is for young cadres as to learn how to speak and behave like officials and future leaders.

b) Embodying the “organizational charisma”

I have stressed how the limited means available to CYL officials in order to implement their projects force them to rely on their ability to convince other actors to collaborate with them. The cadres hence develop their skills of persuasion. These abilities are also key in the evaluation process and therefore necessary for them to get promoted. They need to speak and write well, using the right terms to stress their political correctness. As shown by Oksenberg, communication and persuasion skills were already important in order to rise in the Party-State hierarchy during the Mao era.¹²²⁵ These skills remain key.

As stressed by Putnam, the ability to convince and maneuver small groups of people is a basic political skill in any system.¹²²⁶ The politicians develop these abilities through practice, the process of competing for positions in itself trains them in many of the competences required by the system.¹²²⁷ Lagroye stressed that politics is a unique profession, as most of it has to be learned “on the job”.¹²²⁸

CYL leaders have in particular to give a number of speeches and write reports on various topics in link with the generalist nature of the organization. It places them apart from leaders of functional departments in the Party-State, who generally have to intervene on a limited set of issues. In that regard, their position is similar to the one of Party-Leaders, such as a city level Party secretary or a mayor, who can be expected to talk about almost everything. The difference is that, apart from the central level CYL leadership, CYL leaders do not have office secretaries to write speeches or reports for them. They develop *de facto* their speaking and writing skills and learn to adapt them to a variety of interlocutors.¹²²⁹

The CYL officials learn to master the “bureaucratic jargon” (*guanhua*, 官话) that they encounter through their meetings with other cadres, training programs and the official

¹²²⁴ Interviews with cadre 2, academic 6, cadre 9, and academic 19.

¹²²⁵ Oksenberg, “The Institutionalisation of the Chinese Communist Revolution: The Ladder of Success on the Eve of the Cultural Revolution.”

¹²²⁶ Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, 68.

¹²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²²⁸ Lagroye, “Être du métier [Insiders],” 5–15.

¹²²⁹ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 22, cadre 42.

documents they have access to depending on their rank.¹²³⁰ The cadres' mastery of the "bureaucratic jargon" underlines two things: their ability to follow political and ideological trends and their capacity to speak in the name of the group, to act as representatives of the Party-State.

In Communist regimes in particular, a cadre's ability to decrypt the political language and to use it properly reflects his ability to understand and follow the official political line.¹²³¹ Welsh showed in the case of the Soviet Union how the ideology, understood as a specific type of language, progressively became increasingly about displaying one's commitment to the Party line rather than actually giving it content. From a cadre's perspective, using the right ideological terminology was a way to show that they understood what was expected from them rather than displaying that they actually believed in the content.¹²³² It is highly similar to Wedeen's analysis of Syrian propaganda under Hafez Al-Assad. She argued that ideological rituals did not really aim at convincing people to believe in the content of the message, but rather at ensuring their compliance. The message appeared as phony to both the officials and the population but it gave the framework within which public discourse had to be limited.¹²³³ Yan Xiaojun drew the parallel with post-Mao China.¹²³⁴ Through their mastery of the bureaucratic jargon and its ideological terminology, the cadres in fact display their understanding of the political line and their compliance, rather than their personal belief in the content of the message.

Beyond compliance to the Party-State, the use of bureaucratic jargon is also a way for cadres to display their status to colleagues or people from outside the Party-State. By using a certain tone and vocabulary, they show that they represent more than themselves, that they speak in the name of their administration, their CYL committee and, more broadly, the Party-State. For instance, the CYL officials refer to what is good for the "masses", meaning people outside the Party-State, and what they do for them.¹²³⁵ As such they position themselves apart

¹²³⁰ Interviews with cadre 6, cadre 9, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 27, cadre 31, and cadre 42.

¹²³¹ Bourdieu, "La représentation politique. Éléments pour une théorie du champ politique [Political Representation. Elements for a Theory of the Political Field]," 5–6.

¹²³² Welsh, "The Comparative Study of Political Leadership in Communist Systems."

¹²³³ Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹²³⁴ Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," 502.

¹²³⁵ The term "masses" (*qunzhong*, 群众) refers to people who are not members of the Party, or affiliated organizations, such as the CYL or the "democratic parties." On this distinction in the Chinese system, see: Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, 39.

from the “masses” and as representatives of a ruling elite.¹²³⁶ Overall, this elitist discourse shows that what they say and do is in the name of these institutions. It is what Bourdieu called the “oracle effect”.¹²³⁷

Among smaller groups of colleagues, the use or misuse of bureaucratic jargon is also a sign to show one’s position within the group. During the dinners among officials which I was able to assist to, the most ranked officials were the one taking the liberty to explain specific official expressions and mottos and even to laugh about it, while their subordinates would not dare taking the initiative. The “Mass line educational campaign” (*Qunzhong luxian jiaoyu shijian huodong*, 群众路线教育实践活动) launched in 2013 was, for example, a major topic at the time of my fieldwork.¹²³⁸ The CYL leaders discussed for instance to what extent it actually concerned the “masses” or not, which could appear as rather unorthodox to someone from outside their circles.¹²³⁹ One’s ease in handling bureaucratic jargon in that case displays one’s position in the hierarchy. As Link underlined, playing with the jargon is often a sign that the speaker in fact accepts its rules and masters them.¹²⁴⁰ It is a way for the officials to demonstrate that they are, as Pieke put it, “privy to the main manifestations and metonyms of the exercise of power within the party: policies, documents, opinions, speeches, exhortations and gossip.”¹²⁴¹ Bourdieu also stressed that the experienced politician must be capable of playing with different registers, and always knowing what is expected from him in a certain setting, what is the limit not to cross, what is not to be said.¹²⁴² Through their use of bureaucratic jargon, the CYL leaders therefore mark their position in the hierarchy and their potential future as Party-State leaders.

Beyond language, CYL officials also show their status through their specific behavior. As stressed by Pieke, being a cadre is linked to a certain “technique of the self”, meaning specific ways to behave, speak, eat, smoke, walk...¹²⁴³ Pieke showed in particular how the Party schools play a major role in transforming administrators into political elites who embody “the

¹²³⁶ Interviews with cadre 16, cadre 9, cadre 27, cadre 18, cadre 31, cadre 42.

¹²³⁷ Bourdieu, “La délégation et le fétichisme politique [Delegation and Political Fetishism].”

¹²³⁸ The campaign aimed at transforming the officials’ workstyle, by fighting against the “four (bad) work styles”: formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagance. On the Mass line campaign, see: Doyon, “The End of the Road for Xi’s Mass Line Campaign: An Assessment.”

¹²³⁹ Observation at dinners with officials, in Nanjing in February 2015 and Shijiazhuang in July 2016.

¹²⁴⁰ On Official Chinese Language, see : E. Perry Link, *An Anatomy of Chinese Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 239–348.

¹²⁴¹ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today’s China*, 16.

¹²⁴² Bourdieu, “La représentation politique. Éléments pour une théorie du champ politique [Political Representation. Elements for a Theory of the Political Field],” 6.

¹²⁴³ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today’s China*, 16.

charisma of the party and its ideology.”¹²⁴⁴ Through their daily job and interactions with Party-State leadership, the CYL leaders develop the same features. Just like Lagroye highlighted in the case of contemporary France, formal and informal meetings with more experienced politicians are often a key source of inspiration and information for the newcomers.¹²⁴⁵ The CYL officials have, as I have underlined, a frequent access to Party-State leaders in particular, giving them numerous opportunities to mimic and learn from them.

Among other things, CYL officials learn how to reflect the organizational hierarchy through their behavior, to act as leaders. I could observe in official dinners how the hierarchy transpired from where people seated around the table, but also from how they interacted with each other, beyond the discussion itself. The younger and lesser ranked officials were seated the farther from the leader and had little interaction with him. They mostly talked to the leader when drinking to his health. The intermediate level cadres sat next to the leader and were interacting constantly with him. It showed how close they were from him but also underlined their subordination, as they for instance filled his glass or lit his cigarette. The leader himself was the most comfortable with the situation.¹²⁴⁶

The CYL leaders overall behave like young Party-State leaders, following similar codes. The role they embody could be seen as disproportionate as compared with the limited power and means of the organization itself. In practice they are already seen as leaders-to-be by their colleagues and they behave as such. Through their behavior they embody the organizational charisma of the Party-State which both gives presence to the institutions and in return legitimates their own position of power, or future position.¹²⁴⁷ It propagates the idea that they are legitimate to rule.

2) From League leadership to Party leadership

a) The perfect reserve cadres

As developed in Chapter Two, a “third echelon” policy was developed in the early 1980s to bring to power a new generation of better trained Party-State leaders. The practice to train a pool of candidate for leadership positions progressively extended to the different echelons of the Party-State. It led to a comprehensive “reserve cadre” (*houbei ganbu*, 后备干部) system.

¹²⁴⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹²⁴⁵ Lagroye, “Être du métier [Insiders],” 5–15.

¹²⁴⁶ Observation at dinners with officials, in Nanjing in February 2015 and Shijiazhuang in July 2016.

¹²⁴⁷ Regarding the link between social roles and institutions, see : Lefebvre, “Se conformer à son rôle. Les ressorts de l’intériorisation institutionnelle [Conforming to One’s Role. The Mechanisms of Institutional Internalization],” 220.

The basic idea is to have a list of young officials from which the Party-State leaders should be selected. This system is managed by the Party Organization Department, parallel to the civil service system dealing with non-leading cadres.¹²⁴⁸ For each leading position, at least two reserve cadres must be listed. In addition to rules regarding minimum levels of education, the reserve cadres have to be below a certain age, generally around ten years below the actual age of ineligibility for the related position. For example, an official has to be below 40 in order to be on the reserve list for a division director position, the rank of a county Party secretary, and the age of ineligibility for the position is 50 years old.¹²⁴⁹

Due to their age advantage, CYL leaders are reserve cadres *par excellence*, and generally make their way into the lists. For instance, in order to be a reserve cadre for a bureau director position, such as the mayor of a medium city, a cadre has to be at the same rank or one below and be less than 45 years old. A provincial CYL committee secretary is in perfect position to be put on the list: he is already ranked as bureau director and is generally below 40 years old.¹²⁵⁰ As a result, among the 76 provincial CYL secretaries appointed since 2003 who already transferred to another position, 34 did as city CCP deputy secretaries. According to Pan Teng, this is the most common transfer position for provincial CYL leaders.¹²⁵¹ Looking at the trajectories of the provincial level CYL secretaries of Jiangsu, Guizhou and Beijing, among 29 secretaries for the period 1978-2014, 18 were directly appointed to a position of leader of deputy leader of a city, or a similarly ranked locale.¹²⁵²

They often at the same time hold a position of CCP leader in a district or county below the city administration. This phenomenon shows that they are still in training as young leaders: they can hence experience to be a county leader and a city vice leader at the same time.¹²⁵³

¹²⁴⁸ See the entry “civil service system” in the glossary regarding the distinction between leading and non-leading cadres, and for more information on the civil service system.

¹²⁴⁹ On the reserve cadre system and age-related rules, see: Tsai and Kou, “The Party’s Disciples: CCP Reserve Cadres and the Perpetuation of a Resilient Authoritarian Regime,” 1–20.

¹²⁵⁰ Between 2003 and 2013, the age mean for CYL provincial leaders across the country was 38 years old (Pan Teng (潘腾), “A Cohort of Young CCP Officials (*Zhonggong nianqing ganbu tidui*, 中共年轻干部梯队).”

¹²⁵¹ Pan Teng (潘腾), “A Cohort of Young CCP Officials (*Zhonggong nianqing ganbu tidui*, 中共年轻干部梯队).”

¹²⁵² Source: several name lists for the CYL secretaries can be found online (See in particular: <http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=6CkeCdHdaccTUzcNsK2ISVUojtAD-t39uPIfjnDQS3UWnuTKkAPDsHv-5f0S3mbWR-f066pgqR5DJGxIE3PhGnIBeUTm5MGfWmpsOva9VWG>). I cross-examined them and verified them with local officials. The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites. I found at least partial career data for all of the provincial level CYL secretaries between 1978 and 2014.

¹²⁵³ Pan Teng (潘腾), “A Cohort of Young CCP Officials (*Zhonggong nianqing ganbu tidui*, 中共年轻干部梯队).”

Overall a large number of CYL officials become local CCP leaders. Between 2001 and 2005, 37.82% of the members of provincial CCP committees had a working experience in the CYL at various levels.¹²⁵⁴ More recently, when looking at the official resumes of the provincial Party secretaries and governors in charge by March 2015, 45% of them had such an experience in the CYL.¹²⁵⁵

Being a reserve cadre goes together with training opportunities, unavailable to basic cadres. Since the 1980s, training programs have been developed for young officials and reserve cadres, such as the “young cadre training courses” (*zhongqingnian ganbu peixunban*, 中青年干部培训班) created by the Central Party School in 1980 and attended by provincial level reserve cadres. The reserve cadres generally follow trainings of six months to a year, to develop their understanding of central policies, but also their skills in management or economics.¹²⁵⁶ This is true in particular for CYL officials. A large number of CYL leaders take part in extensive training program, from three months to two years, while holding their position. Between 1982 and 2013, at least 19 of the 49 central level CYL secretaries did so, generally going to the Central Party School.¹²⁵⁷

The central level CYL secretaries also take part in specific study sessions organized by the CYL. They follow the template of the CCP Politburo study sessions, which have been standardized since 2002.¹²⁵⁸ The sessions take place every one or two months and focus on a timeline topic, generally presented by an external speaker. In addition to central level CYL secretaries, the leaders of central CYL departments and some subsumed units, such as the Central CYL School, also join. To give an example of the topics studied, Table 6.1 lists the study sessions which took place in 2014, as well as the main speaker. The central CYL secretaries are treated as leaders on the making, with their own study sessions, same as CCP Politburo members.

¹²⁵⁴ Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), “Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角),” 147.

¹²⁵⁵ Data sources: the official CVs of the cadres found on *Xinhua*.

¹²⁵⁶ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 65–71.

¹²⁵⁷ Some information can be missing in their resumes regarding the training programs they followed. The number of cadres who followed a program is therefore probably higher. Source : name list for central CYL secretaries can be found here : “Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央).” Their CVs can be found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹²⁵⁸ On the CCP Politburo study sessions, see : Alice Miller, “Politburo Processes under Xi Jinping,” *China Leadership Monitor* 47 (July 2015): 10.

Table 6.1: Study sessions for the CYL Central Committee Secretariat in 2014¹²⁵⁹

| Date | Session Main Topics | Main Speakers |
|---|---|---|
| 10.01.2014 (6 th session of the 17 th Central CYL Secretariat) | Study of the Third Plenum of the 18th CCP Central Committee | Yang Weimin, Central Finance Small Leading Group Office Deputy Director |
| 24.03.2014 (7th) | Study of the handbook for officials, “Fifty Years of International Socialism” (<i>Shijie shehui zhuyi wushinian</i> , 世界社会主义五百年) | Gu Hailiang, National Academy of Education Administration Chairman and editor of “Fifty years of international socialism” |
| 11.04.2014 (8th) | Study of the handbook for officials, “Ten Speeches of Marxist Philosophy” (<i>Makesi zhuyi zhexue shijiang</i> , 马克思主义哲学十讲) | Yang Geng, Beijing Normal University Deputy Chairman and co-author of “Ten Speeches of Marxist Philosophy” |
| 26.05.2014 (9th) | Theory and practice of the socialist core values | Dai Mucai, Deputy Director of the Research Institute on Political Thinking of the Propaganda Department. |
| 30.06.2014 (10th) | Study of the second central meeting on Xinjiang | Li Zhao, Deputy Director of the Coordination team on Xinjiang issues |
| 30.07.2014 (11th) | Youth in a society in transition | Lian Si, University of Foreign Trade’s Graduate School Deputy Director |
| 08.10.2014 (12th) | Study of the evolution in the CYL’s role in implementing government policies. | Wang Yukai, Professor in the National Academy of Education Administration |
| 01.12.2014 (13 th) | Study of the Fourth Plenum of the 18 th CCP Central Committee | Zhang Laiming, Deputy Director of the Development Research Center of the State Council |

¹²⁵⁹ “The 6th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di liu ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第六次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, January 10, 2014; “The 7th Study Session is Held for the Central CYL Secretariat (*tuan zhongyang shujichu juxing di qi ci jiti xuexi*, 团中央书记处举行第七次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, March 25, 2014; “The 8th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di ba ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第八次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, April 14, 2014; “The 9th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di jiu ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第九次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, May 27, 2014; “The 10th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di shi ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第十次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, July 1, 2014; “The 11th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di shiyi ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第十一次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, July 30, 2014; “The 12th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*Tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di shier ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第十二次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, October 9, 2014; “The 13th Study Session is Held for the 17th Central CYL Secretariat (*Tuan shiqi jie zhongyang shujichu juxing di shisan ci jiti xuexi*, 团十七届中央书记处举行第十三次集体学习),” *China Youth Daily*, December 2, 2014.

Local CYL leaders also have special training opportunities, in particular at the Party or CYL schools. Between 1978 and 2014, out of the 29 CYL secretaries of Jiangsu Province, Guizhou Province and Beijing, at least 10 followed an intensive training while holding their post, generally at the Central Party School.¹²⁶⁰

The Central Youth League School is very active in training CYL cadres and leaders. Between its creation in 1948 and 1997, 42,000 CYL officials were trained, including 15,868 officials ranked as CYL county secretaries and above. The training particularly accelerated since the late 1980s and the Party-State's emphasis on rejuvenating the cadres corps.¹²⁶¹ In 1991, the "Opinion regarding the strengthening of the training of cadres at the Central CYL School" gave clear targets to be met. For example, 50 provincial level CYL secretaries and deputy secretaries were to be trained every year, as well as 400 city level CYL leaders.¹²⁶² The targets were later renewed: the "2006-2010 National plan for the education of Youth League cadres" stressed that every year, 50 provincial level CYL leaders have to be trained in the Youth League and Party schools every year, as well as 1,000 city level CYL leaders.¹²⁶³

Training in the CYL schools followed the same evolution as for Party schools. Since the reform and opening up policy, the programs became shorter and the content evolved.¹²⁶⁴ While ideological content is still part of the curriculum, the schools give an increasingly important weight to practical skills.¹²⁶⁵ Following the business school model, they provide case-

¹²⁶⁰ Some information can be missing in their resumes regarding the training programs they followed. Source: several name lists for the CYL secretaries can be found on the internet (See in particular: <http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=6CkeCdHdACPtUzcNsK2ISVUojtAD-t39uPIfjnDQS3UWnuTKkAPDsHv-5f0S3mbWR-f066pgqR5DJGxIE3PhGnIBeUTm5MGfWmpsOva9VWG>). I cross-examined them and verified them with local officials. For Tsinghua University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/3751112.htm>. And for Peking University: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2394305.htm> (Both Consulted on 1 June 2016). The analysis is based on their career data which could be found in their official resumes, available on *Xinhua.cn*, or on the ones compiled by *baidu.baiké*, a Chinese version of Wikipedia, at the condition that their positions were sourced from media reports and official websites. I found at least partial career data for all of the CYL secretaries between 1978 and 2014.

¹²⁶¹ On the history of cadre training in the Central CYL School, see: Central Communist Youth League School, ed., *Records of the Central CYL School 1948-1998 (Gongqingtuan zhongyang tuanxiao zhi, 共青团中央团校志 1948-1998)* (Beijing: Reform Press, 1998), 96–142.

¹²⁶² "Opinion regarding the strengthening of the training of cadres at the Central Youth League School (*Guanyu jiaqiang zhongyang tuanxiao ganbu peixun gongzuo yijian, 关于加强中央团校干部培训工作的意见*)", Central CYL, 04 January 1991.

¹²⁶³ "2006-2010 National Plan for the Education of Youth League Cadres (*2006-2010, nian quanguo tuan ganbu jiaoyu peixun guihua, 2006—2010年全国团干部教育培训规划*)," Central CYL, 15 January 2007.

¹²⁶⁴ Central Communist Youth League School, *Records of the Central CYL School 1948-1998 (Gongqingtuan zhongyang tuanxiao zhi, 共青团中央团校志 1948-1998)*, 100–107.

¹²⁶⁵ On the evolution of the Party school curriculum, see: Emilie Tran, "École du parti et formation des élites dirigeantes en Chine [Party school and ruling elite formation in China]," *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 122, no. 1 (2007): 123–44; David L Shambaugh, "Training China's Political Elite: The Party School System," *The China Quarterly* 196 (2008): 827–44.

study based teachings and they emphasize management as well as negotiation skills.¹²⁶⁶ I come back in the next chapter to the trainings at the different levels and their networking value.

In addition to actual training programs, the reserve cadres are often also given practical working experiences through the “temporary transferred duty” framework.¹²⁶⁷ They are sent by their unit to work in other locales or administrations for generally a year. They can therefore experience other working conditions and train themselves. “Temporary transferred duty” is also good for an official’s resume and they often get promoted after such an experience.¹²⁶⁸ It is in particular a good way for city or provincial level officials to get a working experience at the grassroots, or the other way around. It can also be a way for officials from a rural area to get a urban working experience and vice versa.¹²⁶⁹

b) From revolutionaries to political managers

The CYL officials, are generally depicted as “generalist” cadres. This is linked to specific status of their position, made for future Party-State leaders. They are in that sense set apart from specialized civil servants who often continue their career in the same sector or administration, in a specific functional ministry for example. Different studies have described the increasing specialization of Chinese officials¹²⁷⁰ and the development of the civil service system, which manages these specialized officials.¹²⁷¹ But little have been written regarding the generalist cadres destined to leadership positions and how their background evolved in the post-Mao era. Most of the literature on the topic focused on the evolution of their educational background, which, as I have noted in Chapter Four, does not tell us much about their actual career trajectories.¹²⁷² Looking at the trajectories of CYL leaders, as trainees for future Party-State leadership, can shed light on this evolution, unveiling what a “generalist” cadre means at different period of times.

¹²⁶⁶ Interviews with cadre 2, academic 6, academic 23 and cadre 42.

¹²⁶⁷ See the glossary on the “temporary transferred duty” framework.

¹²⁶⁸ Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 164.

¹²⁶⁹ Interviews with cadre 29, cadre 43 and cadre 44.

¹²⁷⁰ This is especially clear in the dual-elite literature presented in the Introduction. See : Andrew G Walder, Bobai Li, and Donald J Treiman, “Politics and Life Chances in a State Socialist Regime: Dual Career Paths into the Urban Chinese Elite, 1949 to 1996,” *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 2 (2000): 191–209; Zang, *Elite Dualism and Leadership Selection in China*.

¹²⁷¹ I developed this literature in the Introduction. See: Burns and Wang, “Civil Service Reform in China: Impacts on Civil Servants’ Behaviour.”

¹²⁷² See in particular : Li, “The Rise of Technocracy: Elite Transformation and Ideological Change in Post-Mao China”; Li, “The Rise of the Legal Profession in the Chinese Leadership.”

During the Mao era, central level CYL secretaries were revolutionary cadres, who joined the CCP during the civil war and whose previous career was mostly as local CCP and CCP leaders or in charge of organization and propaganda.¹²⁷³ They were classical revolutionary cadres in Jowitt's sense, specialist in propaganda and coercion.¹²⁷⁴ The central CYL leadership started to become more diverse after it restarted its activities in 1978.

Wang Zhaoguo, who became the CYL Central Committee First Secretary in 1982 was directly transferred from a SOE position. He had a university diploma and was previously the CCP secretary of an automobile factory. He hence had a very different background than the classic revolutionary cadres who preceded him, such as Hu Yaobang. He could be seen as a "political manager" in Jowitt's terminology, a technically trained cadre with entrepreneurial skills.¹²⁷⁵ However, remnants of the Maoist past could still be found in the central level CYL leadership at the time. Following the important role given to the military in the latter phase of the Cultural Revolution, some People's Liberation Army officers had been promoted to the central CYL.¹²⁷⁶ Among the 14 members of the 10th Central CYL Secretariat (1978-1982), 2 were directly appointed from the military: Chan Haosu and He Guangwei.¹²⁷⁷ This tendency persisted for some years as in 1983 Song Defu was transferred from the Air Force to CYL secretary. He then became CYL Central Committee First Secretary in 1985. After Song, no more officers were promoted to the central level CYL leadership and the political managers became the norm.

An increasing number of central CYL leaders came from outside the organization and had a certain technical expertise, as they for instance worked in SOEs. While some former CYL secretaries already had previous experiences in SOEs, as we have seen with Wang Zhaoguo, this became increasingly true in the late 2010.¹²⁷⁸ Four of the seven members of the 17th CYL Central Committee Secretariat, appointed in 2013, have such a background.¹²⁷⁹ Another tendency is to appoint directly as first secretaries cadres with no or little experience in the CYL. This is the case for the last three: Hun Chunhua appointed in 2006, Lu Hao appointed in 2008,

¹²⁷³ The eleven officials who were part of the 6th Central Youth League Secretariat, between 1949 and 1953, exemplify this tendency: Hu Yaobang, Xu Shiping, Liu Daosheng, Song Yiping, Luo Yi, Feng Wenbin, Liao Chengzhi, Jiang Nanxiang, Li Chang, Rong Gaotang. Source: official CVs found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹²⁷⁴ Jowitt, *New World Disorder. the Leninist Extinction*, 98.

¹²⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁷⁶ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, academic 13, and academic 18.

¹²⁷⁷ Source: official CVs found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹²⁷⁸ It was the case of Wang Zhaoguo, Hu Jintao, and Liu Yandong. Chen Liangfei (陈良飞), "From SOEs to the Central CYL (*cong guoqi dao tuanzhongyang*, 从国企到团中央)," *Xinmin Weekly*, August 14, 2013.

¹²⁷⁹ It is the case of the CYL Central Committee First Secretary Qin Yizhi, as well as He Junke, Xu Xiao, and Fu Zhenbang (Ibid.).

and Qin Yizhi, appointed in 2013. They all have been directly transferred from a local CCP leadership position, and the two latter had previous working experiences in SOEs.¹²⁸⁰ The fact that they have a diverse career background is valued, making them high level generalist cadres.¹²⁸¹ Cadres who did most of their career within the CYL are on the contrary rarer among the central level CYL leadership. In this regard, Li Keqiang, who was CYL Central Committee First Secretary in 1993-1998, stands as an exception as he spent all his previous career within the central level CYL administration.¹²⁸²

The CYL leaders increasingly fit the political manager model. They are appointed to this key position as the multiplicity of their experiences and their technical skills are valued by the Party-State. As argued by Shen, the officials who are transferred across a variety of positions and administrations show that they are “inter-transferable” and have strong managerial skills. They are therefore perfect material for leadership positions.¹²⁸³ In that respect they are similar to the high level officials Suleiman studied in contemporary France, who constantly move across very different positions in the State administration, and hence show they adaptability and generalist skills.¹²⁸⁴

In addition to their generalist features and managerial skills, the CYL cadres’ status within the system also lies on more traditional attributes, such as classical displays of loyalty. Beyond their relative youth I already mentioned, they all have joined the CCP very early, often within two years of their eighteenth birthday, the minimum age for joining.¹²⁸⁵ Having joined at such a young age is a proof of commitment to the Party-State and to their career. They also, for a lot of them, have cultivated their commitment while they were student cadres in college, following the mechanisms I developed in the Second Part of the dissertation. In fact, four of the seven members of the 16th CYL Central Committee Secretariat were previously student union chairmen.¹²⁸⁶ They therefore started very early their professionalization process and have proven their commitment to the Party-State, which legitimize their position as future leaders.

¹²⁸⁰ Source: official CVs found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹²⁸¹ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 14, and academic 18.

¹²⁸² His CV can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Li_Keqiang/career (consulted on 30 June 2016).

¹²⁸³ Shen, “A Policy-Driven Elite Transformation and Its Outcomes a Case Study of the New Local Elites in China.”, 65.

¹²⁸⁴ Suleiman, *Elites in French Society: The Politics of Survival*, 174.

¹²⁸⁵ Looking at the different first secretaries since Wang Zhaoguo: Wang Zhaoguo joined the CCP at 23 years old, Hu Jintao joined at 21, Song Defu joined at 19, Li Keqiang joined at 20, Zhou Qiang joined at 18, Hu Chunhua joined at 20, Lu Hao joined just before turning 18, Qin Yizhi joined at 19. Source: official CVs found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹²⁸⁶ It was the case of Lu Hao (Peking University), Yang Yue (Tsinghua University), Wang Xiao (University of Science and Technology of China), Lu Yongzheng (Wuhan University) (“The CYL Chooses the First Female

I have unveiled in this chapter how the evolution of the CYL reflects the evolution of the Party-State and of its leaders, going from classical revolutionary cadres to political managers. I have stressed the specificity of the CYL experience as a cradle for future Party-State leaders. CYL leaders are put on a specific promotion path within the Party hierarchy, benefitting from all the advantages of being “reserve cadres”. Getting into the details of their working experience, I showed that in addition to the managerial skills and the image of generalist they develop on the job, the CYL leaders are trained to act and behave as future Party-State leaders. The CYL plays for this reason a key role in the Chinese polity: it turns cadres into leaders. After having underlined this specific role played by the CYL in a sponsored mobility framework towards political leadership, the next chapter replaces it in a broader context. It puts the uniqueness of the CYL experience into perspective, by showing that, if important, it often remains a professional experience among others, in complex career trajectories which imply a variety of personal experiences and networks.

Secretary Born After 1970 (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang xuanchu shou wei 70 hou nü shuji*, 共青团中央选出首位70后女书记”).

Chapter 7: Complex careers, networks and political commitment

This last chapter of the dissertation aims at situating the CYL experience in the broader context of Party-State cadres' trajectories. It stresses the variety of positions cadres go through and the multiple networks they develop in their career. The goal is not to minimize the importance of the League as a promotion channel but to contextualize the role it plays in the Chinese political system. I also underline the gap within the CYL between leading cadres and non-leading cadres, which entails very different personal trajectories. The leading cadres have a strong advantage and can often use the Party-State's rules to their advantage. They also develop particularly diverse personal networks as they rotate quickly from one position to the next. In particular, I argue that the multiple experiences these cadres have lead them to develop various cross-cuttings personal ties, across administrations and locales, making it harder to organize in unit-based factional groups with clear common interests.

A - Individuals tactics and multilayered careers

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the personal tactics Party-State officials can develop in order to advance their career in a highly formalized Leninist hierarchy. It highlights the various organizational shortcuts, in terms of recruitment procedures or gender quotas for instance, which can be used by young ambitious officials and in particular by CYL leaders. These individual tactics are shaped by the opportunities officials can access to, depending on their position. Despite the system's strictness, I show that the actors can play with the rules, taking advantage of them and especially of their grey areas.

By illustrating the variety of career trajectories which can be found among CYL cadres, I stress the fundamental inequality which exist between leading cadres and non-leading cadres within the CYL, in their ability to use organizational shortcuts to their advantage and more broadly in their chances to be promoted. CYL leaders are in a unique position: they are favored by the Party-State in the current configuration, and they make sure to use it. They sometimes bend the rules so shamelessly that they get singled out and fall from grace.

1) Playing with the rules

a) A Leninist recruitment process and its shortcuts

Since the mid-1980s, the Party-State has adopted a system of cadre management “one level downward” (*xia guan yi ji*, 下管一级), meaning that appointment power resides in the administration one rank higher. For example, a city level CCP secretary is managed by the provincial CCP leadership. Or, in the case of the Youth League, a city level CYL secretary is appointed by the city CCP leadership. By opposition to the previous system, in which the local appointments were managed by higher administrative levels, this one leads to more decentralization and local autonomy. At the same time, it gives local leaders a lot of appointment power over the cadres right below them.¹²⁸⁷ According to Shen, this framework has led to the development of local clientelist networks.¹²⁸⁸

Against this framework, Sun stressed how the Party-State developed since the 1990s, various procedures to try and make appointments more transparent and fairer.¹²⁸⁹ In parallel to the development of the civil service exams for basic cadres, it started to experiment in the 1990s with the “open selection” (*gongkai xuanba*, 公开选拔) of leading cadres.¹²⁹⁰ This practice, along with “competitive appointments” (*jingzheng shangang*, 竞争上岗), were both formalized by the “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres” of 2002 (a revised version of the same regulation dating from 1995).¹²⁹¹ These two methods imply the public announcement of vacant positions, open procedures for candidates to submit job applications and to take the related exams and evaluations.¹²⁹² Following the 2002 document, “competitive appointments” became the main procedure for promotions within an administration, whereas “open selection” became the rule for appointment of external

¹²⁸⁷ On the “one level downward” cadre management system, see: Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*, 88; Zeng, “Democratic Procedures in the CCP's Cadre Selection Process: Implementation and Consequences.”

¹²⁸⁸ Shen, “A Policy-Driven Elite Transformation and Its Outcomes a Case Study of the New Local Elites in China,” 200.

¹²⁸⁹ Sun, “Cadre Recruitment and Corruption: What Goes Wrong?”

¹²⁹⁰ See the entry “civil service system” in the glossary regarding the separation between leading and non-leading cadres.

¹²⁹¹ “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例),” Central CCP, 23 July 2002.

¹²⁹² On these two methods, see: Sun, “Cadre Recruitment and Corruption: What Goes Wrong?,” 63; Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 168; Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 166–168; Zeng, “Democratic Procedures in the CCP's Cadre Selection Process: Implementation and Consequences,” 78.

candidates, such as cadres from another locale.¹²⁹³ “Open selection” is generally limited to positions ranked as bureau director and below.¹²⁹⁴

Overall, these new procedures are presented in vague language, leading to large regional disparities in their implementation, and making them easy to manipulate.¹²⁹⁵ In practice, the procedures do not drastically limit the appointment power of the local CCP leaders, and can even be used to cover up abuses. When drafting the job offer, the CCP leaders can for instance get into so much details that only a handful of people can apply, reserving the position for a specific person. Appointment power over leadership positions remains largely in the hand of the local CCP secretary.¹²⁹⁶

While it does not fundamentally alter the concentration of power in the hands of CCP leaders, the mechanism of open selection can be used by ambitious young officials in order to accelerate their career. Any cadre who fulfils the conditions on the job description can apply to the position. The conditions generally include a minimum administrative rank (the selection process is only for people already in the system), a maximum age, a minimum level of education and a certain professional experience. Any cadre who fulfils the criteria can apply, leading sometimes to the appointment of individuals who were not already on the reserve cadre list for a position, because they were based in another locale for instance.¹²⁹⁷

Open selection also often facilitates “non-regulation promotions” (*poge tiba*, 破格提拔). Non-regulation promotions are cadre transfers which do not follow tenure regulations. In particular, it happens when a cadre is promoted to a higher ranked position before having completed his five years terms at the lower level, as normally mandated.¹²⁹⁸ Open selection is one of the main ways to circumvent these rules and to get promoted faster in the Party-State hierarchy. For example, a young official is often allowed to candidate to an open selection process for a division director ranked position, even though he has only worked for a year or

¹²⁹³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 29, and cadre 44. See also : “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例),” Central CCP, 23 July 2002; Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 168.

¹²⁹⁴ Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System,” 167.

¹²⁹⁵ Zeng, “Democratic Procedures in the CCP’s Cadre Selection Process: Implementation and Consequences,” 78.

¹²⁹⁶ Interviews with cadre 2 and cadre 9. See also : Sun, “Cadre Recruitment and Corruption: What Goes Wrong?,” 68.

¹²⁹⁷ Tsai and Kou, “The Party’s Disciples: CCP Reserve Cadres and the Perpetuation of a Resilient Authoritarian Regime,” 16.

¹²⁹⁸ See Chapter Two regarding the tenure regulations for officials.

two in a deputy division director position.¹²⁹⁹ The CYL officials being young and often highly ranked for their age, they are in a perfect position to use this organizational shortcut. According to my interviews they very often do so.¹³⁰⁰

In addition to open selections, other Party-State regulations can be tactically used to accelerate one's career. In particular, gender quotas for officials have been institutionalized in the Party-State hierarchy since the early 2000s. While mechanisms have been set up to push for the recruitment of female CCP members and cadres since the 1950s, it is in 2001 that a document formalized the use of gender quotas.¹³⁰¹ The "Opinion regarding the improvement of the training and promotion of female cadres and the development of female CCP members" established that the leadership teams of CCP committees and government organs, at the various echelons of the Party-State, must include at least one female official. It also set minimum ratio of female officials to be included in reserve cadres list: they must for instance represent 20% of the lists at the county level.¹³⁰² These quotas being relatively recent, they mainly impacted the ratio of women among young leading cadres, and in particular within the CYL. There were 22.4% female among the provincial CYL secretaries between 2003 and 2013, whereas the ratio was below 10% according to Pan Teng for equivalent positions in other administrations.¹³⁰³

The document also insists on the promotion of female officials from an ethnic minority and who are not CCP members, meaning generally that they are members of one of the eight democratic parties.¹³⁰⁴ Quotas in fact also exist for a number of subgroups and to be part of several of them at the same time is particularly positive for promotion.¹³⁰⁵ This can shape individual tactics. A female interviewee, who is also part of an ethnic minority, explained that it was not a good strategy for her to become a CCP member. Instead, she applied to membership in one of the democratic parties as to better fit the quotas and get appointed more easily as an

¹²⁹⁹ Kou and Tsai, "'Sprinting with Small Steps' Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System," 166.

¹³⁰⁰ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41. See also: Ibid., 166.

¹³⁰¹ Xiajuan Guo and Yongnian Zheng, "Women's political participation in China", The University of Nottingham China Policy institute, Briefing Series, Issue 34, January 2008.

¹³⁰² "Opinion Regarding the Improvement of the Training and Promotion of Female Cadres and the Development of Female CCP Members (*guanyu jinyibu zuohao peiyang xuanba nü ganbu, fazhan nü dangyuan gongzuo de yijian*, 关于进一步做好培养选拔女干部、发展女党员工作的意见)," Central CCP Organization Department, 2001.

¹³⁰³ Pan Teng (潘腾), "A Cohort of Young CCP Officials (*Zhonggong nianqing ganbu tidui*, 中共年轻干部梯队)."

¹³⁰⁴ On the eight democratic parties which are part of the CCP's united front strategy, see Chapter One. Also see: Groot, *Managing Transitions the Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism, and Hegemony*.

¹³⁰⁵ Interviews with cadre 9 and cadre 29. See also: Shih, Adolph, and Liu, "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China."

official. By recruiting her, an administration would check three boxes at a time.¹³⁰⁶ This testimony is a perfect example of how cadres play with the rules to their advantage.

b) Rocket promotions and public opinion scrutiny

Some officials climb so quickly the Party-State hierarchy, using the organizational shortcuts I described, that they attract the attention of the public and the media. The “rocket promotion” (*huojian tiba*, 火箭提拔) of Sun Jingjing is a good example. At 25 years old she became in 2009 deputy CYL secretary of Taizhou City in Jiangsu, a deputy division director position she reached after only two years of working experience. This case attracted a lot of attention online, as the forums discussing her case had more than 15,000 views in a few days, and internet users started to look for explanations for this extremely quick promotion. An article from the *China Youth Daily*, the CYL’s official newspaper developed the details of her trajectory and the rumors which could be found online. While published by an official newspaper, the article appears balanced and reliable as it does not sugarcoat the story but widely presents the negative comments regarding Sun’s case.¹³⁰⁷

Coming back to Sun’s career, right after graduating from college in 2006 she passed the exam in order to get into the “assigned graduates” program, which I discussed in Chapter Three. Under this specific trainee procedure, she was sent to work in a township level administration, and after a few months she was promoted as county level deputy CYL secretary. She eventually became the county’s CYL secretary, a section director position, and from there applied in 2008 to the open selection process for the position of Taizhou City CYL Committee Deputy Secretary. The job description listed that the applicant had to be less than 30 years old, be female, be posted in Jiangsu Province, and be ranked as deputy section director or above. Sun checked all the boxes.¹³⁰⁸

The internet discussion reported by the *China Youth Daily* article revolved around her limited previous experiences and the selection process itself. She was selected before completing the minimum two full years of work in the “assigned graduates” framework. In addition, she was finally selected for the position among twenty candidates, even though she had only the fifth best grade on the written exam. The oral interview, which counts for 60% of the overall grade whereas the written exam counts for 40%, brought her to the top of the list.

¹³⁰⁶ Interview with student 5.

¹³⁰⁷ “The Whole Story of the Appointment of a 25-year-old as a Deputy Division Director (25 sui fuchu renzhi shimo, 25岁副处任职始末),” *China Youth Daily*, February 4, 2009.

¹³⁰⁸ Ibid.

Internet users questioned the objectivity of such interviews and if she had enough previous experience to get to such a highly ranked position. While the selection process was highly criticized, some users took her defense on the forums, highlighting that there was no evidence of grave manipulation. They also stressed that the selection committee made interviews among her former colleagues to know more about their work, and appointed her with all the necessary information.¹³⁰⁹ These debates highlight how the career of young officials, and rocket promotions especially, attract public attention. This case is also particularly interesting as Sun used almost all the organizational shortcuts we have so far listed, from the “assigned graduates” system, to the open selection, and including gender quotas.

Rocket promotions are sometimes so surprising that they become the target of internal discipline inquiries which can end a cadre’s career. This was the case of Chang Junsheng who became deputy CYL secretary of a county in Anhui Province at 22 years old. He got appointed in 2013 through an open selection process only six months after graduating from college. His case also attracted a lot of attention, revealing that he did not have the necessary working experience as listed in the job description and that his father was a mid-level official in the same county. The internet users were particularly active in denouncing the apparent nepotistic practices, finally leading to Chang’s demise.¹³¹⁰

The family background was also put forward by internet users in the case of Jiang Zhongyong, who at 27 years old replaced his father as vice-governor of a county in Guangdong. He benefitted from “non-regulation promotions” several times in a row, leading to this appointment in 2011. He was eventually dismissed in 2013. The same happened to Xu Tao in Hunan. At 27 years old, she became county vice-governor, in 2012. An investigation unveil that both her parents were officials in the county and that her resume was full of holes. These two cadres who got dismissed both had previous experiences in the CYL, which helped to accelerate their career.¹³¹¹

These extreme cases illustrate the ways in which young officials can use organizational shortcuts, and sometimes personal ties, to rotate quickly from one position to another and to accelerate their career. My interviews reflected this obsession with rotation and fast promotions,

¹³⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹³¹⁰ “The Discipline and Inspection Commission Investigates the Selection Process of a Cadre Born after 1990 in Wangjiang County” (*jiwei diaocha Wangjiang 90 hou ganbu xuanba jingguo*, 纪委调查望江90后干部选拔经过), *China Youth Daily*, May 16, 2013.

¹³¹¹ Ibid.

presented as the only way to overcome the age limits presented in Chapter Two.¹³¹² Often, the cadres benefiting from rocket promotions only stay a short period of time in their various positions and cannot be evaluated on their work. When they go through an open selection process, they are therefore mainly appointed based on their rank, age and diplomas.¹³¹³

Under Xi Jinping, the opportunities for rocket promotions have declined. In particular, the revised version of the “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres”, published in 2014, reemphasizes the necessity to have a grassroots working experience as well as step-by-step promotions. It also narrows the scope of “open selections”: it can now only be used when the local Party-State units cannot find suitable candidates internally, and no longer to transfer candidates across provinces.¹³¹⁴

Overall “non-regulation promotions” become rarer and officials deemphasize the importance of age in the selection process. The most recent development program regarding leading cadres has in fact underlined that age limits should not be used too strictly for individual transfers.¹³¹⁵ The goal put forward by my interviewees and the media is to limit the abuses linked to this specific appointment method, illustrated by the cases above.¹³¹⁶ At the same time, this evolution reinforces the personnel selection power of the CCP secretary at every echelon by limiting the use of procedures which are malleable but push for some transparency by listing clear selection criteria and opening to various candidates. From my interviewees’ perspective, it has a particularly negative influence on young officials’ careers, including CYL cadres, as it limits the opportunities to accelerate their promotion.¹³¹⁷ However, these changes are still very new and their full-fledge effects have yet to be felt within the Party-State hierarchy.

¹³¹² Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41.

¹³¹³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41. See also: “Are Cadres Getting Younger? (*ganbu yuelaiyue nianqing?*, 干部越来越年轻?)” *Southern Weekend*, February 4, 2012.

¹³¹⁴ “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例),” Central CCP, 15 January 2014.

¹³¹⁵ “Development Program Concerning the Establishment of a National Party and State Leadership for 2014-2018 (*2014-2018 nian quanguo dangzheng lingdao banzi jianshe guihua gangyao*, 2014-2018 年全国党政领导班子建设规划纲要),” Central Office of the CCP, 25 December 2014.

¹³¹⁶ Interviews with cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41. See also: “The Selection of Young Cadres Becomes More Severe! (*Xuanba nianqing ganbu, yanle !*, 选拔年轻干部, 严了!),” *China Youth Daily*, August 22, 2014.

¹³¹⁷ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41.

2) A variety of individual trajectories

a) A dual-track promotion system

While individual cadres can develop personal tactics using the organizational rules to their advantage, their options largely depend on the position they already occupy. For CYL officials in particular, there is a clear dual track system separating the secretaries and deputy secretaries from other CYL officials at all echelons. The formers have much more career opportunities. As we have seen in Chapter One, the CYL leaders, secretaries and deputy secretaries are, at every administrative echelon, answerable to the CCP leadership at the same level. A provincial level CYL secretary is for instance selected by the provincial CCP Standing Committee. On the contrary, the lower ranked CYL cadres, the department directors and below, are managed by the organization itself. They are appointed by the CYL leaders.¹³¹⁸ This dual track reflects the distinction between leading cadres and non-leading cadres which can be found in the entire Chinese system.¹³¹⁹

The lower level CYL cadres have limited career options in this configuration. They cannot rely on the CCP leadership and the CCP's Organization Department to promote them. Most of their promotion options are within the CYL itself. They therefore stay longer than the CYL leaders within the organization itself, but as they age this becomes problematic.¹³²⁰ When they start to reach the age limits for CYL positions, they need to be transferred to another organization.¹³²¹ However, the CYL Organization Department often does not have the means to help them looking for another position and they have to do it themselves. The career trajectories of lower level CYL cadres highly depend on the opportunities they manage to find themselves and on the help CYL leaders are willing to provide them, by talking about their case to CCP leaders for instance. However, the CYL leaders often stay in their position only for a short amount of time and do not develop very strong ties with their subordinates.¹³²² It leads to a large disparity in terms of career trajectories among these lower level officials.

¹³¹⁸ See : Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 188.

¹³¹⁹ On the distinction between leading and non-leading cadres, see the entry "civil service system" in the glossary.

¹³²⁰ Interviews with Cadre 2, cadre 16, academic 18, cadre 29.

¹³²¹ On the age limits within the CYL, see Chapter Two.

¹³²² Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 16, and cadre 29. See also: Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), "Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角)," 156; Li Wei (李伟), *Reflections on the*

On the contrary, the CYL leaders can be appointed to very diverse positions under the control of the CCP leadership at the same level. They often benefit from the rocket promotions that I just developed. However, some differences can also be found even among CYL leaders. On the one hand, the secretaries are generally transferred to the CYL from another unit, a SOE or a CCP department for example, and are often appointed from the CYL to a leading position in the Party-State. On the other hand, the deputy secretaries are often promoted from within the CYL and rotate less quickly.¹³²³

This diversity of individual situations is reflected in the differences of rank among leaders, very clear at the central level. In the central CYL, the first secretary is ranked as a minister, the executive secretary is ranked as a deputy minister and the other five or so secretaries are ranked as bureau directors.¹³²⁴ As a result, these cadres have very different career trajectories. The central CYL first secretaries are, as described in the previous chapter, often transferred from another administration. Given the rank and age limits linked to the position, only a handful of candidates are fit countrywide. After their time in the CYL, they are appointed to another minister or deputy minister level position within the Party-State, most of them as local leaders. They all became province leaders since Li Keqiang who headed the League between 1993 and 1998.¹³²⁵

While to a lesser degree than the first secretaries, the executive secretaries also tend to have very successful career trajectories. However, they stay longer in the CYL, and often have a previous experience in the organization. They are in practice the real leaders of the central CYL, they take care of the functioning of the organization, while the first secretaries have a more representative function and tend to be focused on their more powerful position to come.¹³²⁶

Overall, central CYL secretaries and executive secretaries are set on a trajectory towards high positions in the Party-State hierarchy, especially as they are young for their rank. Between 1978 and 2011, central CYL first secretaries were 40 years old on average. Other central CYL

Position Transfers of Former Communist Youth League Cadres (huimou Gongqingtuan sui yue: zhuan yehou de sikao, 回眸共青团岁月：转业后的思考), 165.

¹³²³ Interviews with cadre 16, cadre 42, cadre 43, and cadre 44.

¹³²⁴ At the local level, the deputy secretaries all have the same rank but a parallel hierarchy exists: the CYL executive deputy secretary is at the same time the deputy secretary of the CYL's "Party team" (*dangzu*, 党组), while the other CYL deputy secretaries are only members of the team. The CYL secretary is "Party team" secretary (Interviews with cadre 9, cadre 14, cadre 43). On the role played historically by Party teams in the different Party-State administrations, see: Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, 16.

¹³²⁵ Source: official CVs found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹³²⁶ Interviews with cadre 9, cadre 14 and academic 18.

officials waited on average until 53 years old to get a position similarly ranked as ministerial, if they ever did. Executive secretaries were 40 years old on average over the period, and if they did, other central CYL officials generally obtained a position similarly ranked as deputy ministerial at 48 years old on average.¹³²⁷

b) The Youth League as a political springboard

The CYL is not an autonomous promotion channel within the Chinese political system. The CYL leaders are not selected by the organization itself and, as a result, they often come from outside the CYL and get transferred to another Party-State unit after a few years in their position. Instead of a separate promotion channel, the CYL can be used at different points in time as a springboard in a cadres' career trajectory: one can be transferred to a leadership position in the CYL for few years in order to further advance in the hierarchy. The former CYL leaders rotate rapidly from one leadership post to the next. Such transfers are key in order to get rapidly promoted and to not fall into the trap of age limits described in Chapter Two.¹³²⁸

Some cadres therefore spend only a short amount of time in the CYL, once in their career, as a way to access more rapidly high level positions in the Party-State. This was the case of Liao Fei, for instance, who is since 2015 Director of the Office of Science and Technology of Guizhou Province. As we can see in Table 7.1 below, between 2002 and 2006 Liao was the Guizhou CYL Committee Secretary, without any previous experience in the organization. It was for him a way to transfer from a previous career in an SOE to a local leadership position. As a provincial level CYL leader, he became a reserve cadre for local Party-State positions and was appointed as CCP Deputy Secretary of Qianxinan Prefecture in Guizhou. Liao Fei followed the common practice described in the previous chapter and participated in specific training programs while he was in the CYL and a reserve cadre.¹³²⁹ In particular, he followed a one year "young cadre training course" at the Central Party School in 2004-2005.¹³³⁰ Liao Fei is a good illustration of the various backgrounds CYL cadres can emerge from.¹³³¹

¹³²⁷ Kou, "The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top," 148.

¹³²⁸ On this issue, see: Kou and Tsai, "'Sprinting with Small Steps' Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System."

¹³²⁹ On reserve cadres, see Chapter Six.

¹³³⁰ His official resume can be found here:

http://district.ce.cn/newarea/sddy/201509/25/t20150925_6585055.shtml (consulted on 7 June 2016).

¹³³¹ On this issue, see also: Pan Teng (潘腾), "A Cohort of Young CCP Officials (*Zhonggong nianqing ganbu tidui*, 中共年轻干部梯队)."

Table 7.1 : Career of Liao Fei¹³³²



| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1993 | College graduation (23 years old) |
| 1993—1996 | Technician, Guizhou Aviation Industry Corporation (23 years old) |
| 1996—2000 | Deputy Director, Guizhou Aviation Industry Corporation, Base 11, Design Institute (26 years old) |
| 2000—2002 | Director, Guizhou Aviation Industry Corporation, Base 11, Design Institute (29 years old) |
| 2002—2006 | Secretary, CYL Committee of Guizhou Province (31 years old) |
| 2006—2012 | Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Qianxinan Prefecture (35 years old) |
| 2012—2015 | Governor, Qianxinan Prefecture (41 years old) |
| 2015—Now | Director, Guizhou Province Office of Science and Technology (44 years old) |

Officials can also go back and forth between leadership positions in the CYL and the CCP at various administrative levels. For instance, CYL secretaries at the county level are often promoted as CCP leader of a township. From there they can get to the city level CYL committee and so on. Until they get to ministerial level positions they often stay within the same province as they are managed by the local CCP Organization Department. By rotating quickly back and forth between CCP and CYL positions, the cadres keep their age advantage within the Party-State hierarchy and at the same time can develop their local leadership experiences.¹³³⁴

Chen Changxu, whose resume is summarized in Table 7.2 below, exemplifies this trajectory. From the village to the city level, he went back and forth between CYL and CCP positions at every step. Interestingly, Chen extensively used his time in the CYL as a training period, not only politically but also academically. Chen Changxu had no university degree when he started his career in 1988 but he went to several training programs while in the CYL. Between 1994 and 2006, he followed three long-term programs at the provincial and central

¹³³² Source: http://district.ce.cn/newarea/sddy/201509/25/t20150925_6585055.shtml (consulted on 7 June 2016).

¹³³³ His official resume can be found here:

http://district.ce.cn/newarea/sddy/201509/25/t20150925_6585055.shtml (consulted on 7 June 2016).

¹³³⁴ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 18, and cadre 42.

levels Party schools. Then in 2008-2010, he followed a Master program in management co-organized by a Canadian university. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the CYL leaders have numerous training opportunities as reserve cadres. In addition to improve his education, his constant rotation allowed Chen to become Mayor of Bijie City, a bureau director level position, at only 42 years old.¹³³⁵

Table 7.2 : Career of Chen Changxu¹³³⁶



1337

| | |
|------------------|--|
| <i>1988—1991</i> | Secretary, CYL Committee of Yanping Village (Guizhou Province) (18 years old) |
| <i>1991—1993</i> | Vice-Governor, Government of Yanping Village (Guizhou Province) (21 years old) |
| <i>1993—1995</i> | Vice-Governor, Government of Kuankuo Township (Guizhou Province) (23 years old) |
| <i>1995—1997</i> | Secretary, CYL Committee of Suiyang County (Guizhou Province) (25 years old) |
| <i>1997—1998</i> | Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Wang Cao Township (Guizhou Province) (27 years old) |
| <i>1998—2000</i> | Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of Zunyi City (Guizhou Province) (28 years old) |
| <i>2000—2001</i> | Secretary, CYL Committee of Zunyi City (30 years old) |
| <i>2001—2002</i> | Deputy Secretary, CCP Committee of Zheng’an County (Guizhou Province) (31 years old) |
| <i>2002—2007</i> | Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of Guizhou Province (32 years old) |
| <i>2007—2011</i> | Secretary, CYL Committee of Guizhou Province (37 years old) |
| <i>2011—2012</i> | Deputy Secretary, Qian’nan Autonomous Prefecture (Guizhou Province) (41 years old) |
| <i>2012—Now</i> | Mayor, Bijie City (Guizhou Province) (42 years old) |

Some officials also climb the ranks and reach leadership positions within the CYL itself, even though this is less common due to the organization’s lack of autonomy. They generally start at a lower ranked position in a specific department, by opposition to a grassroots leadership position, and make their way up within the organization. Wan Wenhua has taken this career path, having worked her way over fifteen years from a very bottom position in the Jiangsu

¹³³⁵ The difference with the trajectory of a normally successful cadre as illustrated in Table 2.1 is striking: the presumed age of promotion for such a position is 55 years old.

¹³³⁶ His official resume can be found here: <http://gbzl.people.com.cn/grzy.php?id=140400264> (consulted on 7 June 2016).

¹³³⁷ Source: <http://gbzl.people.com.cn/grzy.php?id=140400264> (consulted on 7 June 2016).

Province CYL Committee, up to becoming the CYL secretary. Notably, before Wan Wenhua was promoted to the provincial CYL leadership, she spent the year 2009 as county level CCP deputy secretary in Jiangsu, through the “temporary transferred duty” framework. As we have seen in the previous chapter, temporary transferred duty is very common for young officials, and reserve cadres in particular, in order to discover a new position for a few months. In the case of Wan Wenhua, as she was coming from a specific department in the CYL and not a generalist position, an experience as a local leader was a necessary step in order for her to get to a leadership position in the CYL.

Table 7.3 : Career of Wan Wenhua¹³³⁸



1339

1996 College graduation (22 years old)

1996—2000 Cadre, Propaganda Department of the CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (22 years old)

2000—2001 Cadre, General Office of the CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (26 years old)

2001—2002 Assistant to the Director, General Office of the CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (27 years old)

2002—2003 Cadre, Urban Work Department of the CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (28 years old)

2003—2005 Deputy Director, Youth Right Department of the CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (29 years old)

2005—2007 Director, United Front Work Department of the CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (31 years old)

2007—2011 Deputy Secretary, CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (33 years old)

2011—Now Secretary, CYL Committee of Jiangsu Province (37 years old)

However, trajectories such as Wan Wenhua’s are rare. The separation between leading and non-leading positions is not really permeable, especially within the CYL. By opposition to the secretaries who are managed by the CCP Organization Department, lower ranked cadres within the CYL have to be more proactive if they want to get promoted. They have to be noticed by the CCP leaders in order to be appointed to a leadership position.¹³⁴⁰ It is overall uncommon for CYL leaders to have spent a long and continuous period of time in the organization. In that

¹³³⁸ Her official resume can be found here: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/gbzl/html/130400024.html> (consulted on 7 March 2016).

¹³³⁹ Source: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/gbzl/html/130400024.html> (consulted on 7 March 2016).

¹³⁴⁰ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 18, and cadre 42.

respect, Li Keqiang or Jiang Daming, respectively former first secretary and former secretary of the central CYL between 1993 and 1998, stand as exceptions.¹³⁴¹ Li worked in the central CYL from 1983 to 1998¹³⁴² and Jiang from 1982 to 1998.¹³⁴³

While it is often used as a political springboard, the CYL is generally a step in a cadres' career rather than a specific and parallel promotion channel. As such, it is hard to determine a unique overreaching identity common to CYL cadres, which would link them together. They instead, are part of large networks of relationships which include the diversity of cadres they encounter in their career.

B - Crosscutting ties and commitment to the Party-State

After having presented in the first part of this chapter the complex careers of Chinese officials and the specific role the CYL can play in these trajectories, I now turn to the personal ties they cultivate throughout their career. As I have developed in the Introduction, a large literature focuses on the role played by personal relationships in Chinese politics. In particular, having personal ties to the good officials is largely presented as a key factor for promotion.¹³⁴⁴ However, personal relationships are also important in terms of information sharing and in creating mutual engagements and obligations.¹³⁴⁵ As underlined by Sawicki and Duriez through the example of trade-union members in contemporary France, the relationships of mutual engagements one develops within an organization eventually transform one's personal commitment to the organization itself.¹³⁴⁶ Exit becomes costlier as leaving the organization often means losing the personal network that goes with it. More broadly and as I have stressed in the Introduction, the denser the personal ties are within an organization, the stronger is the commitment to the organization.

¹³⁴¹ They are exceptional compared to the trajectory of other central CYL secretaries since 1982. Source: official CVs found on *Xinhua.cn*.

¹³⁴² His resume can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Li_Keqiang/career (consulted on 30 June 2016).

¹³⁴³ His official resume can be found here:

<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/252/9667/9684/5863436.html> (consulted on 7 July 2016).

¹³⁴⁴ See in particular : Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*; Shih, Adolph, and Liu, "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China."

¹³⁴⁵ Thomas Gold, Doug Guthrie, and David L Wank, eds., *Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Balme, *Entre soi: l'élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine [Self-segregation: the power elite in contemporary China]*.

¹³⁴⁶ Sawicki and Duriez, "Réseaux de sociabilité et adhésion syndicale. Le cas de la CFDT [Social Networks and Trade-Union Membership. the Case of CFDT]."

Following this approach, I highlight in the second part of this chapter how the officials' trajectories, which are largely shaped by the organization's rules, lead to diverse personal networks, which in turn transform their personal commitment and their approach to the Party-State. Focusing first on the CYL experience itself I show that the specific status of the organization and its decentralized structure lead to the establishment of relatively weak ties among the CYL officials themselves. I also stress that these ties are only one part of the story, as throughout their complex careers the cadres develop a multiplicity of crosscutting ties linking them to numerous cadre largely outside the CYL, directing their personal commitment to the Party-State as a whole rather than to the CYL itself. Overall, by focusing on these crosscutting ties among a variety of officials we can better analysis the overall cohesion of a segmented Party organization.

1) Weak ties within a decentralized organization

a) Superficial meetings across CYL units

In Chapter One I have shown that compared to CCP units at the same echelon, upper level CYL units have only little power over the lower ones. The CCP is in charge of the appointment and promotion of CYL leaders. However, the CYL officials from the different levels meet rather frequently, which creates a network across hierarchical borders. They meet in particular during the CYL congresses and CYL committee plenums at the different echelons. At the CYL National Congress assembled every five years, around 1,500 representatives from the various parts of the country are brought together.¹³⁴⁷ They are sent by the numerous CYL units in locales and other structures, such as universities or SOEs. They select a CYL Central Committee which includes around 200 full representatives and 120 alternate ones.¹³⁴⁸ The ones who are selected to become part of the CYL Central Committee itself meet more often, at least once a year for the plenum, and therefore develop closer relationships.¹³⁴⁹ To have a better idea of whom takes part in the CYL Central Committee, I looked at the ones sent to the 10th (1978-1982), 11th (1982-1988) and 12th (1988-1993) CYL Central Committees by the various CYL units from Jiangsu Province. It included each time between five and ten full members as well as around two alternate members. They generally included the provincial level CYL secretary,

¹³⁴⁷ See for example : “The 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan di shiqi quanguo daibiao dahui*, 中国共产主义青年团第十七次全国代表大会).”

¹³⁴⁸ The list of CYL Central Committee members can be found here: “Previous sessions of the central CYL (*lijie tuan zhongyang*, 历届团中央).”

¹³⁴⁹ See for instance : “The fifth plenum of the 17th Congress of the CYL (*Gongqingtuan shiqi jie wu zhongquanhui bimù*, 共青团十七届五中全会闭幕)”, *China Youth Daily*, 18 January 2016.

one provincial deputy secretary and the Nanjing City CYL Committee Secretary. The others were sent either by smaller cities in the province or by SOEs and universities.¹³⁵⁰

These meetings are also reproduced at the lower level of the hierarchy, which creates the same kind of links within locales. The Nanjing CYL for example organizes its congress every five years, which include around 400 representatives. They are from the various lower CYL committees, including the various districts, counties, SOEs, schools as well as CYL units in city level administrations. They then choose a committee of around 50 full members and 10 alternates.¹³⁵¹ Compared to the central level, these cadres have more chances to meet frequently as they often work in the same city.¹³⁵²

In addition to these major meetings, more specific ones are organized at the various levels of the organization, bringing together different categories of officials. The central level CYL organizes, for example, meetings bringing together a specific group of officials, such as the youngest CYL officials or the CYL provincial secretaries for example, as well as functional meetings on a timely topic, which bring together the central and provincial level officials in charge of internet or of united front policies for instance.¹³⁵³ The local CYL committees organize similar meetings, as well as others, gathering all the CYL leaders from one area as to present the overall direction taken by the local CYL.¹³⁵⁴ Finally, the CYL committees at the different levels also organize exceptional ceremonies to commemorate a specific event. The

¹³⁵⁰ Compilation Committee for local records of Jiangsu Province (*Jiangsu sheng difangzhi pianzuan weiyuanhui*, 江苏省地方志编纂委员会), *Local Records of Jiangsu Province - Records on Social Groups - Volume on Youth Organizations (Jiangsu sheng zhi - shetuanzhi - qingnian tuanti pian*, 江苏省志—社团志—青年团体篇), 130–131.

¹³⁵¹ Various considerations enter in the selection of the congress representatives. Specifically, 60% of them must be CYL officials, while the rest are only CYL members. In addition, there should not be more than 70% of CCP members and there should be at least 25% of female representatives. Specific groups also have to be represented such as the ethnic minorities, the military, and the CYL members from non-public firms. See: “Notice Regarding the Selection of Representatives for the 16th Congress of the Nanjing CYL (*guanyu zuohao Gongqingtuan Nanjing shi di shiliu ci daibiao dahui daibiao xuanju gongzuo de tongzhi*, 关于做好共青团南京市第十六次代表大会代表选举工作的通知),” Nanjing CYL, 2007.

¹³⁵² Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41.

¹³⁵³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41. See for instance: “The Central Administration of the CYL Held the 38th Study and Discussion Meeting for Young Cadres (*tuan zhongyang jiguan juban di sanshiba ci nianqing ganbu xuexi jiaoliu hui*, 团中央机关举办第三十八次年轻干部学习交流),” *China Youth Daily*, September 29, 2012; “A Meeting on the CYL United Front Work is Convened in Beijing (*Gongqingtuan tongzhan gongzuo huiyi zai Jing zhaohui*, 共青团统战工作会议在京召开),” *China Youth Daily*, April 19, 2012.

¹³⁵⁴ See for instance: “The 2015 Meeting for City-wide CYL Work Starts (*2015 nian quanshi gongqingtuan gongzuo huiyi zhaokai*, 2015年全市共青团工作会议召开),” Beijing CYL WeChat account, March 31, 2015.

central CYL set up for example a massive ceremony bringing together numerous CYL cadres for the 90th anniversary of the organization in 2012.¹³⁵⁵

Overall, these meetings organized by the CYL itself allow the CYL leaders from various units and locales to meet. Even though they do not necessarily have the time to build strong relationships, they become aware of each other. These meetings obviously coexist with others organized by the CCP, or the different units the CYL officials are part of. However they are rather unique as they bring together people from various levels of administration, whereas the other meetings are more locally focused according to my interviews.¹³⁵⁶

In addition to these meetings, CYL officials from various levels can also meet through evaluations. The upper level CYL units evaluate yearly the lower level leaders, which can imply visits and inquiries when they have to account for the implementation of activities proposed by the central CYL.¹³⁵⁷ The central CYL leaders can for instance visit a specific locale to investigate their development and new projects. For example, Lu Hao, then CYL Central Committee First Secretary, visited the Guizhou Province CYL Committee for five days in 2009: in addition to meeting with the provincial CYL leaders, he visited districts and villages ; he also went to CYL units in SOEs and universities, and to the office in charge of the Chunhui project, specific to Guizhou Province.¹³⁵⁸

These evaluations and visits are not determinant for the local cadres' careers, as their professional fate is in the hand of local CCP leaders instead of upper level CYL units. The reports made by CYL units can however influence greatly the CCP leaders in one direction or another.¹³⁵⁹ The upper level CYL units also deliver prizes to CYL committees and CYL branches, as well as to CYL officials. These can also positively influence the way the cadres are evaluated by the relevant CCP organization.¹³⁶⁰ But overall, these meetings and inspections

¹³⁵⁵ “The Commemorative Ceremony for the 90th Anniversary of the CYL is Solemnly Held in Beijing (*jinian Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan chengli 90 nian dahui zai Jing longzhong juxing*, 纪念中国共产主义青年团成立90周年大会在京隆重举行),” *China Youth Daily*, May 5, 2012.

¹³⁵⁶ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 42, and cadre 43.

¹³⁵⁷ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41.

¹³⁵⁸ On the Chunhui project, see Chapter Six. On Lu Hao's visit, see: CYL Committee of Guizhou Province, ed., *History of the Youth Movement in Guizhou (1998-2009)* (*Guizhou qingnian yundong shi 1998-2009*, 贵州青年运动史 1998-2009) (Guiyang: Guizhou People's Press, 2010), 197–203.

¹³⁵⁹ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 42, and cadre 43. See also : Kou, “The Rise of Youth League Affiliates and Their Paths to the Top,” 153.

¹³⁶⁰ The CYL Central Committee for instance selects every year a number of “national level exceptional CYL cadres” (*quanguo youxiu tuan ganbu*, 全国优秀团干部) and of “national level may fourth red flag CYL committees” (*quanguo wusi hongqi tuanwei*, 全国五四红旗团委). This last award is named in reference to the movement of May 4th 1919 (interviews with cadre 2 and cadre 7). See also : Central Communist Youth League,

remain punctual events and the CYL officials from various levels cannot really develop personal ties through them. Training programs are, by contrast, more important in terms of network building.

b) Training programs as a networking tool

I developed in Chapter Six the numerous training options CYL leaders have as reserve cadres. These programs mostly take place in the CCP and CYL schools at the various levels. Focusing on the training function of these programs, I did not yet analyze their networking value, which should not be overlooked. Various studies on the Party schools have stressed how strong ties are often developed among officials who spend several months of training together.¹³⁶¹ They underlined that during the training programs, the students live together in the dormitories of the Party schools and can only go back home during weekends. They also spend most of their daytime with one another, either in class or in team building activities.¹³⁶² These studies also stressed how important is this networking aspect of the training from the cadres' own perspective.¹³⁶³ Citing one of her interviewees, Emilie Tran suggested that the secret wish of any official when going to the Party school was to be in the same cohort with cadres that it might be useful to know in the future.¹³⁶⁴

This networking aspect is also important in the case of CYL school trainings, which bring CYL officials together.¹³⁶⁵ This is in particular true for CYL leaders, who benefit the most from these trainings. We have seen in the previous chapter that, starting in the 1990s, quantitative targets have been set for the training of CYL leaders from the various administrative levels. While programs for the local CYL leaders already existed,¹³⁶⁶ they were more clearly formalized at the time, and especially by the Central CYL School. A program of

Yearbook of the Chinese Communist Youth League 2012 (Zhongguo Gongqingtuan nianjian 2012, 中国共青团年鉴 2012), 246–248.

¹³⁶¹ Shambaugh, “Training China’s Political Elite: The Party School System,” 827–844.

¹³⁶² Emilie Tran, “From Senior Official to Top Civil Servant: An Enquiry into the Shanghai Party School,” *China Perspectives*, no. 46 (2003): 27–40.

¹³⁶³ See in particular : *Ibid.*; Shambaugh, “Training China’s Political Elite: The Party School System”; Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today’s China*.

¹³⁶⁴ Tran, “École du parti et formation des élites dirigeantes en Chine [Party school and ruling elite formation in China],” 137.

¹³⁶⁵ By opposition to the Central Party School’s “young cadre training course” for instance which brings together CYL leaders but also cadres from numerous Party-State administrations.

¹³⁶⁶ Training programs for county level CYL leaders existed in the 1950s and 1960s at the Central Party School for instance. See : Compilation Committee for local records of Jiangsu Province (*Jiangsu sheng difangzhi pianzuan weiyuanhui*, 江苏省地方志篇纂委员会), *Local Records of Jiangsu Province - Records on Social Groups - Volume on Youth Organizations (Jiangsu sheng zhi - shetuanzhi - qingnian tuanti pian*, 江苏省志—社团志—青年团体篇), 125.

one to two months was set up by the school for county level CYL leaders and other CYL cadres of similar rank, such as CYL leaders from schools and small SOEs. Between 1990 and 1997, 1182 were trained. Another program of similar length was set up for city level CYL leaders, and other CYL cadres of similar rank. Over the same period, 528 were trained. A shorter training program, of ten days, was set up then for provincial level CYL secretaries. It was organized twice over the same seven years.¹³⁶⁷ These different trainings are still regularly organized nowadays.¹³⁶⁸ In 2012 for example, 205 city level CYL leaders came to Beijing for a joint training. In addition to meeting each other, this was the occasion for them to interact with the central level CYL leaders, who chaired the training.¹³⁶⁹

The Central CYL School also organizes training programs for lower level cadres on specific issues, or targeted at distinct groups. It has for instance trainings for ethnic minority CYL cadres, coming generally from Tibet or Xinjiang.¹³⁷⁰ But overall the lower level CYL cadres are trained in provincial or city level CYL schools rather than in the central one.¹³⁷¹

Several interviewees repeated how these various trainings were key in creating personal relationships among CYL officials from various levels and locales. They underlined how it made them feel that they belonged to a common organization, which does not always transpire in their daily work. During generally a month or two, they spend so much time together that

¹³⁶⁷ Central Communist Youth League School, *Records of the Central CYL School 1948-1998 (Gongqingtuan zhongyang tuanxiao zhi, 共青团中央团校志 1948-1998)*, 129.

¹³⁶⁸ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41.

¹³⁶⁹ See: “The Training Class for Newly Appointed City CYL Secretaries is Held (*xin renzhi dishi ji tuanwei shuji peixunban juban, 新任职地市级团委书记培训班举办*),” *China Youth Daily*, September 4, 2012.

¹³⁷⁰ The school also organizes special trainings for young cadres from different SOEs or social organizations. In that case, the structure asks for the training, participates in its design, and pays the school for it. Finally, the school organizes short trainings for youth organizations representatives from other countries, in particular from South East Asia. Interviews with academic 6, cadre 9, academic 19, and cadre 42. On the minority cadres trainings, see also: “The Central CYL School Holds a Training Class for Xinjiang CYL Cadres (*tuan zhongyang juban Xinjiang tuan ganbu peixunban, 团中央举办新疆团干部培训班*),” *China Youth Daily*, July 30, 2015; Central Communist Youth League School, *Records of the Central CYL School 1948-1998 (Gongqingtuan zhongyang tuanxiao zhi, 共青团中央团校志 1948-1998)*, 129.

¹³⁷¹ Due to lack of financial means, a lot of provinces and cities cannot keep a separate school for CYL cadres and the CYL schools are absorbed by the local CCP schools, which then organizes the trainings for CYL officials. This was the case of the Nanjing CYL School for instance (Nanjing CYL Committee, ed., *A Youth without Regrets (qingchun wuhui, 青春无悔)* (Beijing: Chinese Communist Party History Press, 2009), 421). Other schools manage to get more funding from local authorities and to survive. This is the case of the Guizhou CYL School (CYL Committee of Guizhou Province, *History of the Youth Movement in Guizhou (1998-2009) (Guizhou qingnian yundong shi 1998-2009, 贵州青年运动史 1998-2009)*, 251). Finally, others open undergraduate programs, often as vocational schools, which helps them to keep afloat financially. The Beijing CYL School followed this path (Beijing Communist Youth League Committee (*Gongqingtuan Beijing shi weiyuanhui, 共青团北京市委员会*), *Records and Documents of Beijing's Youth Organizations (Beijing Qingnian Zuzhi Zhiwengao, 北京青年组织志文稿)*, 46–49). Sources: interviews with academic 3, academic 6, cadre 9, academic 19, and academic 21. For details on the various local CYL schools which still exist, see: Wu Qing (吴庆), *Guide towards League Spirit 2012 (tuanqing zhinan, 团情指南 2012)*, 274–300.

strong ties are created. The most common framework for these programs is to have classes together every morning, followed by group study or activities in the afternoon. Generally the cadres also share rooms in the schools dormitories and have their meals together.¹³⁷² According to my interviewees, the network is often maintained after they graduate through yearly reunion dinners for the different cohorts.¹³⁷³ Interviewees also noted that internet and social media make it even easier to stay in touch among cadres.¹³⁷⁴

While relatively weak, as they do not meet that often, and generally only limited to small groups within the CYL, the ties developed during meetings and trainings can eventually be useful in the cadres' future career. Granovetter in fact showed that weaker and more distant ties are often key in order to find a job as they are a way to access a more diverse information than the one they would get from their closer social circle.¹³⁷⁵

2) *Principle particularism and multiple patron-client ties*

a) *Every Party leader has his own tuanpai*

The relationships I just described among cadres within the CYL itself are hardly as strong as the ones the CYL officials have to maintain with CCP leaders, who are their actual superiors. As shown in Chapter One, the CCP leaders are the ones managing the appointment and promotion of CYL leaders at the same level. Therefore, as developed in Chapter Six, they mostly have to please the CCP leaders by displaying their obedience and zeal. The promotion system being highly concentrated in their hands, the CCP leaders at every level can appoint to CYL leaderships positions the young officials they like and test their skills and personal loyalty while on the job. They can then facilitate or not their future promotion.

The way in which the promotion system is structured leads *de facto* to a clientelist system, with the CCP secretary at the top. This is what Walder described taking Mao era factories as an example. He showed that at every level of the organizational structure, the supervisors determine who they think show adherence to the regime through their behavior. They hence reward the individuals who, according to them, display such commitment. This system evolves into a personal patron-client relationship. Walder called *principled*

¹³⁷² Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 42, cadre 43. For the full schedule of a one-month Central CYL School training in 1997, see: Central Communist Youth League School, *Records of the Central CYL School 1948-1998* (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang tuanxiao zhi*, 共青团中央团校志 1948-1998), 138.

¹³⁷³ These reunion dinners seem to have been stopped by Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign (interviews with cadre 2, cadre 16 and cadre 42).

¹³⁷⁴ Interviews with cadre 42 and cadre 43.

¹³⁷⁵ Mark S Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1371.

particularism this “clientelist system in which public loyalty to the party and its ideology is mingled with personal loyalties between party branch officials and their clients.”¹³⁷⁶ The concrete compliance of the worker to the superior’s orders is rewarded, instead of the conformity to ideals.¹³⁷⁷

CYL leaders have a specific position in the middle of this institutionalized clientelist system as these positions are particularly valuable for the cadres’ future career. As we have seen throughout the dissertation, the CCP leaders who appoint specific individuals as CYL leaders actually make them reserve cadres for leadership positions, and more broadly give them a clear career advantage compared to their colleagues. They are on average younger than other cadres of similar rank.

The CCP leaders would therefore grant this position to cadres they have already noticed and who are linked to them, or with whom they want to build a closer relationship.¹³⁷⁸ This is particularly true as the CYL leaders have strong ties to the CCP leadership, they can seat at the CCP committee and Standing Committee meetings at the same level¹³⁷⁹ and they report to them on a regular basis. They meet regularly, making it easy for the CCP leaders to test their *protégés*.¹³⁸⁰ Zheng Changzhong calls “systematic trust” (*zhidu xing xinren*, 制度性信任) this unique relationship between the CCP and CYL leaders.¹³⁸¹

As a result, at every level, a CCP leader can use the CYL to promote his affiliates and develop his network within the Party-State, especially as they might rise to relatively high positions in the future. In that sense we can say that all Party leaders can build their own “Youth League faction” or *tuanpai* (团派).¹³⁸² In that respect, the situation of CYL officials is close to the ones of personal secretaries (*mishu*, 秘书) of CCP leaders, who are often trusted individuals

¹³⁷⁶ Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, 124.

¹³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹³⁷⁸ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 16, cadre 42, and cadre 43. See also : Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), “Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角),” 163.

¹³⁷⁹ “Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan zhangcheng*, 中国共产主义青年团章程),” Congress of the CYL, 20 June 2013.

¹³⁸⁰ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 16, cadre 42, cadre 43, and cadre 44.

¹³⁸¹ Zheng Changzhong (郑长忠), “Organizational Capital and Political Party Survival – Analytical Perspective on the Political Function of the Chinese Communist Youth League (*zuzhi ziben yu zhengdang yanxu - Zhongguo Gongqingtuan zhengzhi gongneng de yige kaocha shijiao*, 组织资本与政党延续 - 中国共青团政治功能的一个考察视角),” 156.

¹³⁸² See Chapter Two on the issue of the Youth League faction.

strongly linked to a specific leader and who can often use their position, and the personal they can develop on the job, for further promotion.¹³⁸³

This goes against the idea that the CYL is used to promote only individuals who are member of an overall faction and who have common interests. In this configuration Party leaders in general also have little reason to question the specific status the CYL enjoys in the Chinese political system, as they all can use it as a fast track to promote young officials they trust. If sometimes specific CYL affiliates are targeted by local or central leaders because they are perceived as too close to their predecessors, as we have illustrated in Chapter Two with the case of Ling Jihua, it does not mean that the whole organization, and its role as a promotion channel, is in danger.

b) The multiplicity of clientelist ties

While the ties between CYL and CCP leaders at each administrative level are strong, the influence of one specific personal relationship on a cadres' career should not be overestimated. As described throughout the dissertation, the young officials develop a multiplicity of clientelist ties through the first steps of their career, and beyond. As student cadres they build strong links with friends, other students, or the university administration. They also find mentors among the older student leaders and the CYL officials on campus. By staying in the university as CYL officials after graduation they can further cultivate their ties with university officials, but also with CYL cadres outside campus. It becomes an even more complex picture when young officials are appointed as local CYL leaders, and eventually later on as local CCP leaders. They interact and build relationships with very diverse actors, from within the Party-State administration, but not only. As shown in Chapter Six, local CYL is a particularly good platform to interact with very different organizations.

These various personal ties are key in the cadres' careers as they can be useful for potential promotions at various stages of their career. Their career is highly dependent on them, and as Howard Becker described in the case of jazz musicians, "security comes from the number and quality of relationships so established."¹³⁸⁴ Becker stressed how it was key for jazz musicians to be part of various networks and cliques in Show Business. The members of these

¹³⁸³ For more details on the position of personal secretary and how it can be used for further promotion, see : Li and Pye, "The Ubiquitous Role of the Mishu in Chinese Politics"; Lollar and Hamilton, "Patronage or Prebendalism? The Mishu/shouzhong Relationship and Corruption in Chinese Politics"; Tsai and Dean, "Lifting the Veil of the CCP's Mishu System: Unrestricted Informal Politics within an Authoritarian Regime."

¹³⁸⁴ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 105.

networks are bound together by ties of mutual obligations as they sponsor each other for jobs.¹³⁸⁵ The individuals are therefore strengthened not by being part of one clear group but by the multiplicity of networks they are included in.

This multiplicity of links has to be taken into account in order to fully grasp the complexity of young cadres' careers. In addition, knowing someone does not mean that the relationship is positive and will be useful in the cadre's career. These statements appear as completely obvious but are often forgotten in the literature focusing on *informal* politics in the Chinese context. As argued in the Introduction, the tendency to attach the individuals to the groups they are supposedly part of, based on their family background or the province they come from, overshadows this complexity.¹³⁸⁶ Which leads us to a broader criticism of explanations purely based on group identity in order to understand political choices. An approach in terms of interest group politics was formulated by Skilling and Griffiths regarding the Soviet Union and later influenced numerous scholars, such as the ones focusing on the Youth League faction that we mentioned in Chapter Two. For Skilling and Griffiths, the core of Soviet politics was made of groups based on shared attributes, which had common identities and interests that they defended through the Party-State institutions.¹³⁸⁷ As we have seen, this approach hardly fits the CYL case, which leads us to think along with Andrew Walder that such preexisting groups are not the only base for political struggle in communist regimes.¹³⁸⁸ Political competition can take place among various types of networks, developed through the individuals' experiences and shaped by the institutions, which may include parts of these preexisting groups but not necessarily.

Against this approach based on group identity, I followed the complex trajectories and constant transfers of young officials to stress the multiplicity of personal links they develop. Along these lines, Pieke underlined that promotions and job rotations at the beginning of the cadres' career transform their identities and local ties, it "translates and co-opts their loyalties and attachments to more encompassing areas and larger communities of cadre-peers."¹³⁸⁹ Beyond local identities, this is also true of familial, school or corporate ties.

¹³⁸⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹³⁸⁶ On this debate, see : Walder, *Fractured Rebellion the Beijing Red Guard Movement*.

¹³⁸⁷ Harold Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, eds., *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971).

¹³⁸⁸ Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, 5.

¹³⁸⁹ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 160.

Coming back to the question of the *tuanpai* (Youth League Faction), the diversity and complexity of the CYL officials' careers make it impossible to identify clear shared goals they would have or a clear common identity. The multiplicity of ties the cadres develop goes against the development of overarching cliques or factions with clearly defined common interests. CYL cadres in the different locales have various interests depending on the local CCP leaders' ones, they might also have a previous experience as student cadre giving them a specific identity, and they might after the CYL be transferred to a local CCP leadership position, further transforming their personal tactics. It is therefore very hard, as we have shown in Chapter Two, to see the CYL officials as a group of "like-minded" officials.¹³⁹⁰

It is also very questionable to systematically oppose officials with a CYL background to the so-called princelings, the sons and daughters of former revolutionary leaders. The two identities are far from contradictory, as shown by the case of Liu Yandong - daughter of Liu Ruilong a high level cadre of the Mao era - who was a central level CYL secretary in the 1980s. More broadly, my interviewees highlighted that children of officials are increasingly numerous among CYL leaders, both at the central and local levels.¹³⁹¹ This contrast with the image often given in the media that CYL officials come from an underprivileged social background.¹³⁹²

Rather than an overall faction with shared goals, the relationships among former CYL leaders, from the central and local levels, can be better understood as a network close to what Suleiman described regarding the *grands corps de l'Etat* in France, which largely date from Napoléon's regime. The *grand corps* are elite structures within the French administration, which recruit only graduates from very specific schools, and in particular the *École nationale d'administration* or ENA (the National School of Administration) which was established in 1945 as a common training and recruitment channel from the *grand corps*. Within each cohort, the ENA graduates with the best grades generally choose to enter these *corps*, the three most prestigious ones being the *Inspection Generale des Finances* (General Inspectorate of Finances), the *Conseil d'Etat* (Council of State), and the *Cour des Comptes* (Court of Auditors).¹³⁹³

¹³⁹⁰ This factional approach was in particular developed by : Bo, *China's Elite Politics Political Transition and Power Balancing*; Li, "New Provincial Chiefs: Hu's Groundwork for the 17th Party Congress"; Li, "The New Bipartisanship within the Chinese Communist Party"; Li, "The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites."

¹³⁹¹ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 16, and cadre 42.

¹³⁹² This article is a good example of how the media propagate this image: "CYL Officials Focus their Appointment on Key Government Positions (*Gongqingtuan ganbu jizhong churen zhengfu yaozhi*, 共青团干部集中出任政府要职)."

¹³⁹³ Suleiman, *Elites in French Society: The Politics of Survival*, 98–99.

By being recruited within a *corps*, and beyond the important role played by these administrations in the French State, graduates enter a very specific network. They remain part of this network even though they do not work in the given administration anymore, such as the General Inspectorate of Finances, but transfer to another high level civil servant position or even to the private sector, as it is very common.¹³⁹⁴ As Suleiman put it, the *corps* function as “placement bureaus.”¹³⁹⁵ The member of a given *corps* can have very diverse careers and personal goals, as well as political opinions, however they have a common interest in the *corps*’ reputation. In order to maintain it, the *corps* monitors what positions the member of the corps get to. Even though he has no administrative power over them, the *corps*’ head can even try to convince members not to accept positions that are seen as lessening and damaging to the *corps*’ reputation.¹³⁹⁶

The CYL officials do not constitute a network as organized and hierarchically structured as the French *grand corps*, and in particular I have no evidence that the central CYL meticulously monitors where the former CYL officials transfer to. However, an interesting parallel can be drawn: I noticed in my interviews that most CYL officials know where the organization’s leaders went to. It is for them a sign of the CYL experience’s current reputation, and they have a shared interest in trying to improve or maintain this reputation.¹³⁹⁷ In addition, the interpersonal relationships built within the CYL are close to what has been observed in the French “corps”. Like in the CYL, members of one cohort of the General Inspectorate of Finances do not necessarily know members of other cohorts but they develop at least a mutual awareness. Then in the name of their common identity they can help each other at different stages of their career, having the network’s reputation in mind. In both case, these specific personal ties are also particularly important as they have been developed at an early age and remain accessible for most of their career and life.¹³⁹⁸

¹³⁹⁴ Ibid., 101–125.

¹³⁹⁵ Ibid., 176.

¹³⁹⁶ Ibid., 176–197.

¹³⁹⁷ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 9, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, cadre 41, cadre 42 and cadre 44.

¹³⁹⁸ Hooghe, Stolle, and Stouthuysen, “Head Start in Politics: The Recruitment Function of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Belgium (Flanders).”

In the Third Part of the dissertation I have stressed the specific function played by the CYL as a training ground for future leaders. I have also shown the diversity of trajectories which can be found within the CYL and how the CYL leaders stand out and can use a range of organizational shortcuts, as well as personal ties, to their advantage.

Focusing on the personal ties developed by CYL officials, we have seen how diverse they are, going far beyond the organization itself. If the CYL officials develop specific relationships among themselves, it does not lead to common policy interests or even common goals, given the diversity of personal trajectories. In each personal case, it cohabits with others groups and networks which could influence individuals in a variety of way. I have throughout the dissertation underlined the numerous personal ties developed by young officials, from friendship and mentorship ties in universities to the personal subordination to local CCP leaders. From the perspective of young cadres, their personal network might help them to get further promoted and to guarantee job security. As the other side of a coin, it also reinforces their commitment to a political career, and therefore to the survival and stability of the overall system.

Personal networks bring together actors from the various parts of the Party-State and its related structures, such as SOEs and universities. The connected individuals have in common to be committed to their career within the system and have accepted the rules of the game in order to get to the position they are at. While they might have competing personal goals, they have a shared interest in the overall survival of the current political system as it is what guarantees their position. Far from unique to the Chinese Party-State, this is in line with Offerlé's definition of a political party, as an arena made of politicians who compete for their personal ambitions but who also have a shared interest in the survival of the organization.¹³⁹⁹

¹³⁹⁹ Michel Offerlé, *Les partis politiques [Political Parties]* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012), 15.

Conclusion

A - An ideal-typical trajectory?

Throughout this dissertation, I have developed the progressive rise to power of young individuals through the Party's youth organizations. One chapter after another, I have drawn what could be understood as an ideal-type sequence of the perfect "Youth League products," from being recruited as student cadres in college to obtaining leading positions in the CYL.

The career of Yang Yue, Jiangsu Province Vice-Governor since July 2016, is a perfect recapitulation of this sequence. Yang became a student at Tsinghua University in 1986 and was elected as student union chairman during his fourth year of college. Yang Yue was in parallel appointed as the All-China Student Federation Chairman in 1990, an ideal networking platform for a politically ambitious young man. Yang had to spend most of his time in various meetings, activities and trainings with student cadres and university officials, which eventually transformed his social circle. In parallel, he became recognized on campus as a young man equipped to realize his ambitions, as a political leader in the making. His position as student leader gave Yang the possibility to stay on campus after graduation and become a student counsellor. At the same time, he pursued his studies and obtained a PhD from Tsinghua University. Thanks to the close ties he developed in the university's administration, including the mentorship relationship he established with Chen Xi who had been appointed in 1993 as the university's CCP deputy secretary, Yang climbed the university hierarchy and became in 1997 Tsinghua University CYL Secretary. He was not thirty and had already reached the same rank as a county leader. He later used his age advantage, and the personal relationships he had built within Tsinghua University, but also in the CYL through his experience at the All-China Student Federation, to rotate from one leadership position to another. He became a county level leader through an open selection process, and without taking a civil servant exam. He then got transferred to central level CYL Secretary. He was then appointed as a provincial Party-State leader while not being 40 years old yet.¹⁴⁰⁰

Yang Yue's career is close to ideal-typical: while in university he became an official, and as a central CYL secretary he transformed himself into a political leader. However, this linear trajectory does not exhaust the possibilities the CCP's youth organizations offer to young and ambitious individuals. At every step of their career, they are presented with various options,

¹⁴⁰⁰ Yang Yue's resume can be found here: http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Yang_Yue/career (consulted on 16 September 2016).

which can influence their future trajectories. Some officials, albeit few of them, simply do not go to college and start working in local level Party-State administration after high school. They then use the CYL as a career accelerator, as well as a training ground to catch up their education deficit. Some others go through an experience in an SOE or a trainee program after college graduation. Moreover, some simply see their political career shortened, due to a personal decision, an external event, or because they were not able to prove their commitment to their superiors. The sequenced nature of the career and the decentralized structure of the polity lead to a multiplicity of potential trajectories, complex tomes of experiences.

While highly diverse, the trajectories I described have in common the major role played by the CCP's youth organizations in terms of political commitment building, but also training ground and promotion channels. Rather than a unique and isolated phenomenon, CYL leaders' trajectories are illustrative of the overall functioning of the Chinese Party-State, inherited from the reforms of the 1980s, which gives a key importance to age in the cadre management system. Analyzed through the multi-level perspective of my study, what do these individual careers tell us more generally about political elite renewal and cohesion in post-Mao China? To what extent does it confirm my initial hypotheses?

B - From the Youth League to the Party

1) Sponsored mobility and the reward of commitment

I show in the dissertation that the Chinese Party-State political elite is recruited through a sponsored mobility system which strengthen their commitment to their political career and to the system. Comparison with other post-revolutionary regimes, and the USSR in particular, allowed to highlight the Chinese specificity in that matter. It showed in particular that the role played by political youth organizations highly varies depending on the political configuration and the leadership's strategy. I stress that the development of this system was possible because the interests of the leader at the specific point in time was aligned with the regime's requirements in terms of elite renewal in a post-crisis situation (i.e. after the Cultural Revolution). By developing the circumstances which led to the development of this sponsored mobility system, I contribute to the literature on the diversity and flexibility of post-revolutionary regimes, but also on the literature more broadly on political parties and the role played by youth organizations in leadership renewal.

a) The political origins of an age-based cadre management system

The importance of the Party's youth organizations in political mobility originates from post-Cultural Revolution politics. Deng Xiaoping and his allies had to cultivate a support base of young officials to counter the rise of young activists promoted under Mao. After ten years of Cultural Revolution, during which intellectuals were targeted and persecuted, he could not rely on the cooptation of educated professionals and specialists, like Khrushchev had done in the post-Stalin years. Deng therefore launched an overall rejuvenation policy to promote young officials who would support him. Age-based rules were established for the recruitment and promotion of officials at every echelons of the Party-State. The PRC became the only Leninist regime to develop a strict system of age rules for its officials. The institutionalization of these rules made permanent the rejuvenation impetus started by Deng, even after the political need for young supporters was satisfied. The institutionalization of an age-based cadre management system established a sponsored mobility system and led, over the years, to an overall renewal of the Party-State elite. It prevented the CCP to become a gerontocracy.

Under this new configuration, the CYL took an unprecedented role as a career accelerator for young officials. This is true in comparison to the Mao era, but also to the Soviet situation. While activism or lower level positions in the Komsomol, the Soviet CYL, were often formative experience in the soviet cadres' careers, it never played such a key role as a promotion channel to leadership positions.¹⁴⁰¹ It was never a major tool in the rejuvenation of the Party-State top echelon. The number of Party leaders with an experience in the Komsomol even drastically decreased in the post-Stalin era.¹⁴⁰²

b) Commitment and career building

Beyond elite renewal itself, the sponsored mobility system established by the CCP facilitates elite cohesion by cultivating individual recruits' political commitment. At every step of their career in the CYL, individuals are transformed by the organization. Their social circles are increasingly narrowed down to the organization's insiders. In line with the concept of *cathectic-cohesion commitment* developed in the Introduction, personal attachment to the members of the group leads individuals to remain in the organization, even though its actions or values change overtime. The actors I focus on also cultivate a specific social role, first as

¹⁴⁰¹ According to Solnick: "Top leaders often derived their only experiences in street-level bureaucracy from their days in the Young Communist League" (Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*, 43. See also: Jeffrey Klugman, *The New Soviet Elite: How They Think & What They Want* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 22.

¹⁴⁰² Gehlen, "The Soviet Apparatchiki," 143.

officials-to-be while in college, and later as future political leaders. Their behavior increasingly reflects their status and political affiliation: they learn to speak and behave as leading officials. This phenomenon echoes the concept of *cognitive-continuance commitment* developed by Kanter. The individuals invest so much of their time and energy in the organization that it transforms their behavior. On the long run, they become so attached to their social role that exit becomes unlikely.¹⁴⁰³

While these two forms of commitment account for one's decision to remain part of an organization, they only partially explain behavioral conformity within it. To the extent that it is accepted by the organization, or unknown by other members, and that it does not endanger his membership, the individual might slightly bend or challenge the rules. This is very different from an ideology-based commitment, which would lead the indoctrinated members to follow, at all costs, the direction given by the organization and its leaders. In the case of the Chinese Party-State and the cadres I follow, this type of commitment linked to one's investment in a role and attachment to the group, explain that they remain officials on the long run, but also that they sometimes indulge in corruption or nepotism for example. Through the first steps of the sponsored mobility process the young cadres prove their commitment to the Party, rather than to an overarching ideology.

c) The political elite plays by different rules

Individual commitment is rewarded career-wise. The committed young recruits are put on a specific promotion path towards leading positions in the Party-State. This path includes unique training, networking and promotion opportunities. Being considered as leaders in the making, they transfer quickly from one leading position to the next and develop their personal network, but also generalist skills and political role. They use unique organizational shortcuts in order to rotate as quickly as possible. They rarely go through the civil servant exams, and often only partially follow the rules regarding step-by-step promotion and cadre tenure. The Party-State is rather tolerant towards rule-bending with regards to leading cadres. It is all the more important because, as I showed in Chapter Two, it is impossible to follow the rules and get to the top Party-State positions without shortcuts. The Party-State's capacity to bend the rules when useful is in line with the "guerilla policy style" described by Perry and Heilmann.

¹⁴⁰³ On these two types of commitment, see the Introduction. See also: Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities."

The Party-State uses its institutional plasticity in order to better adapt to changing configurations, like in guerilla warfare.¹⁴⁰⁴

The specific situation of these young recruits results in a dual-track system, separating them from ordinary cadres early in their career. It echoes the literature on elite dualism that I discussed in the Introduction. However, this literature separates State positions from Party ones, and the key divide in our case is instead between leading and non-leading cadres. The leading cadres are at every level, or in every unit, the few top officials, holding either Party or State positions. In a county level administration for example, it includes the Party secretary and deputy secretaries, but also the county governor and vice-governors. Political features are important in the selection of all Party-State officials: the ones set on a sponsored path to leading positions go through a particularly long and transformative commitment process which makes them highly reliable from their recruiters' perspective.

It is therefore the process of political commitment building they have been through that separates these elite cadres from the others. The political elements of the recruitment process should not however overshadow the constant competition these officials face at every step of their career. They constitute a pool among which only a handful can, for instance, rise to the Party's Central Committee. While the promotion criteria are very different from an ideal Weberian merit-based bureaucracy, it does not mean that these officials are inapt. They may be less technically trained than other officials, but they have to be skillful in bureaucratic infighting. They have to be able to convince their superiors at every echelon of their commitment but also their efficiency. All in all, they have to develop and showcase abilities that are close to the ones necessary to young politicians in an electoral democracy aspiring to be part of a ministerial cabinet or to rise within a party's hierarchy.¹⁴⁰⁵

The CYL plays a key role in this sponsored mobility framework as it is often the site where cadres develop their commitment to a political career, and because it is widely used as a career accelerator. In that regard, the function played by the CYL can be compared to the position of "midshipman" developed by the British navy in the late 18th century. According to Elias, the navy created this position as a hierarchically neutral ground where young trainees could efficiently learn nautical skills without lowering the status of the young aristocrats. This

¹⁴⁰⁴ Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J Perry, "Embracing Uncertainty: Guerrilla Policy Style and Adaptive Governance in China," in *Mao's Invisible Hand: The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China*, ed. Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J Perry (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2011), 1–29.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, 58.

was possible by playing with etiquette and posting them neither behind nor before the mast but at mid-ship. The navy was ready to bend the rules to meet both the young recruits' interest in terms of status, but also its own objectives in training its officers.¹⁴⁰⁶ The CYL plays a similar role in the Chinese political system: it represents an interesting opportunity from the recruits' perspective as it goes together with advantageous career options, and at the same time it fits the Party-State's needs in terms of cadres' loyalty, nurtured through a long commitment process and the insertion in a dense network of relationships. The CYL therefore attracts young talents and at the same time allows the CCP to cultivate the recruits' commitment over a long time period.

2) It all starts on campus

By analyzing the role played by the Party's youth organizations in college I showed how important higher education institutions are for political recruitment in post-Mao China. This is often overlooked as Chinese students have largely been described as apolitical since 1989.¹⁴⁰⁷ It is in fact in college that the sponsored mobility process for future officials generally starts, and especially the cultivation of their political commitment.

While the political role of universities is far from being a Chinese specificity, its uniqueness resides in the level of structuration displayed by youth political organizations on campus. The CYL and its sub-organizations oversee the recruitment and cultivation of young cadres across the country's universities. Starting from the first year of college and up to a potential first job as an official on campus, the individual trajectories are therefore integrated into a highly managed system of political mobility. This organizational continuity facilitates the constant screening and selection of cadres. The most committed ones are then provided with advantages in terms of recruitment in graduate school or starting a political career.

¹⁴⁰⁶ René Moelker, "Norbert Elias, Maritime Supremacy and the Naval Profession: On Elias' Unpublished Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession," *British Journal of Sociology* *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 3 (2003): 370–90; Norbert Elias, "Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession," *The British Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 4 (December 1, 1950): 291–309.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Yan, "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China," 2.

3) The Party-State's segmentary features

Based on a variety of examples, I have shown, from the university level to central administration, that personal ties to their superiors and colleagues are key to cadres' careers. I have also stressed how diverse these ties are for cadres who rotate regularly from one position to the next. Throughout their professional trajectories, the cadres develop multilayered personal networks. In addition to existing familial, friendship or dorm-based relationships, student cadres develop multiple ties on campus, within student organizations but also with professors and university officials. This can include dyadic mentorships ties between students and officials. A large number of such ties established by one official or a couple of officials, can eventually lead to mentorship chains, influencing several generations of students, or even structured clientelist networks dominating campus politics. Beyond universities, CYL officials develop relationships both inside and outside the organization. For CYL leaders in particular, the ties they build with their colleagues from other echelons of the organization through meetings and training programs are often rather weak. They are based on a diffuse common interest in the reputation of the organization rather than a direct hierarchical relation. As such they have little influence on each other's career. By contrast, the relationships built with CCP leaders at the different levels, which are in fact their superiors, are crucial for further advancement. Overall, the CYL leaders develop complex personal networks with a multitude of current and future CCP leaders.

Throughout their career, the cadres progressively broaden their network, which makes it harder to remain attached to a unique subgroup. Pieke in fact had such an intuition in his work on the Party schools training but did not expend much on it. According to him, "as they move up the hierarchy, cadres continue to be local cadres, rooted in their own native place, but the logic of promotion and job rotation expands, translates and co-opts their loyalties and attachments to more encompassing areas and larger communities of cadre-peers: promotion quite literally expands cadres' horizons of their service to the party."¹⁴⁰⁸ I argue that this is true beyond local identities. The multiple ties developed by cadres during their career imply a diversity of affiliations and attachments. In each personal case, the CYL affiliation cohabits with others groups and networks which could influence individuals in a variety of ways.

The multiplicity of personal allegiances highlights the segmentary features of the Party-State, which ends up being an overall network of personal networks. This is tied to the

¹⁴⁰⁸ Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 160.

decentralized structure of the Chinese polity, and similar to what has been described in the case of other decentralized political parties.¹⁴⁰⁹ As I stressed in the case of the CYL, at every level, the actual superior entity is not the upper level CYL but the local Party leaders, which goes against the creation of an overarching Youth League faction. Instead, it leads to the development of multiple clientelist relationships at the local level. These relationships form the base of the cadres' individual network, which they develop by transferring from one position or one locale, to another.

These various ties and attachments link cadres to one another but also make it harder for them to organize in cohesive groups. The uniqueness of every personal network, an outcome of the cadre's trajectory, contrasts with an organization based on separated and uniform sub-groups, which include a set gathering of actors. While they are imbricated, these personal networks never completely overlap, and cadres always have a diversity of personal allegiances. As a result, the cadres are not integrated in clearly defined primary groups, such as army regiments, which could be used as bases to organize against the broader group or to exit collectively.¹⁴¹⁰ Instead, the connected individuals have in common to be committed to their career within the system. While they might have competing personal goals, they have a common interest in the overall survival of the current political system as it is what guarantees their position. Loyalty to one's network and one's career leads to loyalty to the Party.

While Lieberthal and Oksenberg stressed how the fragmentary features of the Party-State are often inefficient in terms of policy implementation,¹⁴¹¹ I argue that it leads to a variety of imbricated personal networks which contributes to holding the system together. Further studies could inquire in more details the implications of the segmentary features of the post-Mao Chinese system. While studies have underlined the decentralized nature of the Chinese polity,¹⁴¹² none have analyzed the vast implications it has regarding cadre's careers and the system's cohesion, especially in terms of the imbrication between local and central level networks for a cadre rising in the hierarchy.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Sawicki, *Les réseaux du Parti socialiste: sociologie d'un milieu partisan [The Socialist Party's networks]*, 27.

¹⁴¹⁰ See on this issue : Bearman, "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War."

¹⁴¹¹ Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹⁴¹² See in particular : Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*.

C - My approach and its limits

1) Comparisons across time and space

To verify my hypotheses and put them in perspective, I have developed throughout the dissertation a comparative approach, across both time and space. The diachronic comparison encompasses the first years of the CYL, the Mao era and the post-Mao period. While it allows me to highlight continuities overtime, in particular regarding the structure of the CYL and the CCP's control over it, it also stresses transformations. These included changes in the Youth League's activities, in their framing, and therefore in the cadres' work. Comparison in time, more importantly, highlights how the CYL became a key promotion channel after the Cultural Revolution, by opposition to the Mao era. Overall, it shows that the CYL, far from an organizational remnant of the Maoist past, is a reinvented Leninist organizational weapon which becomes extremely important for the Party to attract young people and shape their political commitment in a situation in which it does not have the monopoly over social mobility anymore.

Comparison with other political systems also proved enlightening to my research. The macroscopic comparisons with the post-Stalin Soviet system and the Institutional Revolutionary Party regime in Mexico are particularly useful to highlight the specificity of the Chinese case. The post-Cultural revolution political context led to the development of a sponsored mobility system which contrasts with the elite renewal strategy developed by Khrushchev in the 1950s. In addition, the imbrication of the Party's youth organizations and higher education institutions in terms of political mobility contrasts with the independent recruitment role played by the universities themselves in the Mexican case. Micro level comparisons regarding the commitment-formation processes were also useful to draw parallels between the experience of young Chinese officials and what exists in other political parties, including in electoral democracies such as France. Overall constant comparisons have enabled me to identify the specificities of the Chinese system as a whole but also to question the alleged uniqueness of the elements constituting it, as parallels are often easily found.

2) A State-centered approach

While my study combines three levels of analysis – a *micro* perspective focusing on the agents, a *meso* one taking the youth organization itself as a unit of analysis, and a *macro* approach with regard to the transformations of the Chinese regime, it remains mainly centered on the Party-State, its institutions, and the effect they have on individuals. This is a conscious

decision to limit my enquiry in order to get into the details of the mechanisms at play. Still, as a consequence, I only briefly touch upon a variety of related issues, in particular the instances of socialization and the personal relationships originating from outside the system.

At the individual level, I show that familial background, gender or friendship relationships affect the cadres' career in the Party-State. This is especially true during the first steps of the commitment-formation process. However, this is only a minor part of this study and, in particular, I do not develop in itself the issue of social class. Family background was a complicated topic to raise with my interviewees, who would fear to reveal their familial network and be accused of nepotism, and no overall data is available regarding student cadres or Party-State officials. Focusing on the personal ties and social role they developed through the Party-State institutions, I did not delve into the effect social origins might have in their choice or their ability to pursue a political career. Like in most political systems, privileged class status is largely a precondition to enter the political elite.¹⁴¹³ The literature on CCP recruitment stresses how the Party now largely targets urban middle and upper class individuals.¹⁴¹⁴ Middle and upper class young people have better chances to go to college, where the recruitment and political commitment-building process generally starts. Also their aspirations and lifestyle is overall more aligned with the regime's objectives.¹⁴¹⁵ Conscious that my research only focuses on a specific portion of Chinese youth,¹⁴¹⁶ my goal is not to deny the importance of social class in political recruitment, but I focus rather on the next steps in terms of socialization. Even if the recruitment pool is limited to young people from certain social classes, we still have to understand how their political commitment is cultivated and how a very limited number of them eventually become part of the political elite.

At the level of the Party-State, I focus on the networks of officials which constitute the organization. However, these networks are not limited to institutional boundaries. The network

¹⁴¹³ Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, 22.

¹⁴¹⁴ Gore, *The Chinese Communist Party and China's Capitalist Revolution: The Political Impact of the Market*, 133; Dickson, "Who Wants to Be a Communist? Career Incentives and Mobilized Loyalty in China," 46.

¹⁴¹⁵ On the issue of the aspiration and values of the middle class and private businessmen, see : Tsai, *Capitalism without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China*; Jean-Louis Rocca, *The Making of the Chinese Middle Class. Small Prosperity, Great Expectations* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

¹⁴¹⁶ On the other, and diverse, groups constituting Chinese youth, see in particular: Paul Clark, *Youth Culture in China: From Red Guards to Netizens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Alec Ash, *Wish Lanterns: Young Lives in New China* (London: Picador, 2016). On specific, marginalized, groups see in particular : Camille Salgues, "Ethnographie du fait scolaire chez les migrants ruraux à Shanghai [An ethnography of schooling among rural migrants in Shanghai]," *Politix*, no. 99 (2012): 129–52; Nathanel Amar, "Scream for Life. Usages politiques de la culture en Chine: échanges et résistance au sein de communautés alternatives. Le cas des punks et des cinéastes indépendants. [Political Uses of Culture in China: Exchanges and Resistance in Alternative Communities. The Example of Punks and Independent Filmmakers]" (PhD dissertation, SciencesPo, 2015).

of networks which constitute the Party-State is also what links it to society more broadly. The officials' personal networks I have described go beyond the limits of officialdom to include local family relationships, business ties etc. These networks have been described in the literature focusing on the relationship between State and society in China, either as local corporatism¹⁴¹⁷ or as symbiotic networks tying officials to businessmen.¹⁴¹⁸ The Party-State is therefore “multiplied,” to borrow Chevrier’s word, in the way it deals with society but also in how its agents are connected to each other, highlighting its segmentary features.¹⁴¹⁹ While my study is largely Party-State centered, it therefore echoes and completes what has been described more largely in the literature regarding State-society relations in post-Mao China: the ways in which the Party-State incorporates its recruits in its decentralized structure parallels its hegemonic, yet flexible and fragmented, control over the Chinese society.

D - Epilogue: towards an aging Party under Xi Jinping

Since Xi Jinping took power over the Party-State in 2012, the rules shaping the sponsored mobility system I have described throughout the dissertation have been slightly modified. First, the importance of age as a criterion in cadres' recruitment and promotion is decreasing. The age-based rules for recruitment are less and less implemented at the local level according to my interviewees.¹⁴²⁰ This change is officially endorsed since the last development program regarding leading cadres noted that age limits should not be used too strictly for individual personnel transfers.¹⁴²¹

Second, the procedures allowing the rapid promotion of young officials are increasingly constrained. The revised version of the “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres,” published in 2014, reemphasizes the necessity to have a grassroots working experience as well as step-by-step promotions. It also narrows the scope for “open selections.” As we have seen, this procedure is a common career accelerator

¹⁴¹⁷ Jean C Oi, “Fiscal Reform and Economic Foundations of Local State Corporatism in China,” *World Politics* 451 (1992): 99–126.

¹⁴¹⁸ David L Wank, *Commodifying Communism: Business, Trust, and Politics in a Chinese City* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁴¹⁹ Yves Chevrier, “L’État chinois entre formation et déformation [The Chinese State in-between Formation and Deformation],” *Revue Tiers Monde* 37, no. 147 (1996): 706.

¹⁴²⁰ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 27, cadre 35, and cadre 36.

¹⁴²¹ “Development Program Concerning the Establishment of a National Party and State Leadership for 2014-2018 (2014-2018 nian quanguo dangzheng lingdao banzi jianshe guihua gangyao, 2014-2018 年全国党政领导班子建设规划纲要),” Central Office of the CCP, 25 December 2014.

allowing young cadres to not follow tenure regulations and rapidly climb the hierarchy. It can now only be used when the local Party-State units do not find suitable candidates internally, and it can no longer be mobilized to transfer candidates across provinces.¹⁴²² This evolution highly restricts its use.¹⁴²³ The official objective is to limit the abuses linked to this specific appointment method, as described in Chapter Seven.¹⁴²⁴ However, it has a particularly negative influence on young officials' careers, including CYL cadres, as it curtails the opportunities to accelerate their promotion. This evolution is part of a broader downplaying of inner Party democracy under Xi Jinping.¹⁴²⁵ By limiting the importance of age, but also of policy outcomes evaluations, the two only quantifiable criteria for promotion, Xi Jinping reinforces the personnel selection power of CCP secretaries at every echelon.¹⁴²⁶

Third, the CYL itself is the focus of an overall reform, limiting the weight of its central and provincial structures. It started in the framework of Xi Jinping's anticorruption campaign, as investigation teams were sent to the central CYL at the end of 2015. The CYL was then accused of "becoming more and more bureaucratic, administrative, aristocratic and entertainment-oriented" (*jiguanhua, xingzhenghua, guizuhua, yulehua*, 机关化, 行政化, 贵族化, 娱乐化).¹⁴²⁷ Then in August 2016, a reform project regarding the League was adopted by the CCP Politburo Standing Committee. The "Proposal on the Reform of the Central Youth League" (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang gaige fang'an*, 共青团中央改革方案) emphasizes the Party's control over the League and reforms its leadership organs.¹⁴²⁸ In terms of cadre recruitment and promotion, the main elements of this reform project are: "shrinkage at the top and replenishment below" (*jianshang buxia*, 减上补下), which implies a drastic decrease of the CYL full-time personnel at the central and provincial levels who will be partially replaced by part-time and temporary transferred cadres, and a parallel increase in personnel at the county

¹⁴²² "Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例)," Central CCP, 15 January 2014.

¹⁴²³ Interviews with cadre 2, cadre 11, cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41.

¹⁴²⁴ Interviews with cadre 16, cadre 18, cadre 19, cadre 27, cadre 37, and cadre 41. See also: "The Selection of Young Cadres Becomes More Severe! (*Xuanba nianqing ganbu, yanle !*, 选拔年轻干部, 严了!),"

¹⁴²⁵ On the issue of the decreasing inner-Party democracy under Xi Jinping, see : Alice Miller, "'Core' Leaders, 'Authoritative Persons,' And Reform Pushback," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 50 (2016); Andrew J. Nathan, "Who Is Xi?," *The New York Review of Books* 63, no. 8 (May 2016).

¹⁴²⁶ Lance Gore, "Revamping the Chinese Communist Party," *East Asian Policy. An International Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (2015): 201.

¹⁴²⁷ "The 2nd Central Inspection Team Gives Feedback Regarding the Circumstances of the Special Inspection of the Central Communist Youth League (*zhongyang di'er xunshizu xiang gongqingtuan zhongyang fankui zhuanxiang xunshi qingkuang*, 中央第二巡视组向共青团中央反馈专项巡视情况)."

¹⁴²⁸ "Proposal on the Reform of the Central Youth League (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang gaige fang'an*, 共青团中央改革方案)," Central CYL, 2 August 2016.

level ; an expanded representation of lower level CYL cadres and members in the CYL Central Committee and Standing Committee ; and more weight given to local working experience in the promotion process, with regular compulsory stays of several months at the grassroots for central level CYL officials. Overall this reform limits the power of the upper level CYL organizations and strengthen the CCP's control over it. The reform has already been experimented since 2015 in Shanghai, where it was applied to the CYL but also other mass organizations. A major outcome being the decreasing number of full-time officials at the municipal level, the increasing weight of lower level CYL units, and the slowed down promotion of CYL officials as their selection “should not be based only on age, education, status and rank” (*buwei nianling, buwei xueli, buwei shenfen, buwei zhiji*, 不唯年龄、不唯学历、不唯身份、不唯职级).¹⁴²⁹

This reform of the CYL is largely presented as an attack on the so-called CYL faction supposedly led by Hu Jintao.¹⁴³⁰ However, as developed in the dissertation, the decentralized nature of the Party-State and its control over the CYL does not allow for the creation of an overall CYL faction. Hu Jintao used the organization to cultivate and promote supporters, but one can hardly argue that all CYL officials, even only focusing on the central and provincial levels, are affiliated to him. Moreover, the multiplicity of personal ties relating officials to one another makes the creation of such a cohesive and overarching faction very difficult. To back their factional argument, the pekinologists and journalists listed other decisions allegedly aimed at weakening the central level CYL. They put forward the rumors that the China Youth University for Political Science, the college affiliated to the Central Youth League School, was going to stop enrolling students in 2016. However, this did not happen.¹⁴³¹ In addition, they noted that the budget of the central CYL decreased of around 50% between 2015 and 2016. Yet, instead of reflecting an overall weakening of the organization, it underlines a decentralization of its finances. Most of this decrease is due to the transfer of the financial management from the central to the provincial level of one of the league main projects, the “plan for university graduates voluntary service to the West” described in Chapter Three. In line with the reform of the organization, it is a step towards its decentralization rather than an indication of its overall

¹⁴²⁹ “Highlights of the Shanghai Reform Project of the CYL and Mass Organizations (*Shanghai quntuan gaige fang'an youhe liangdian*, 上海群团改革方案有何亮点),” *Liberation Daily*, November 22, 2015.

¹⁴³⁰ See in particular: Willy Wo-Lap Lam, “The Eclipse of the Communist Youth League and the Rise of the Zhejiang Clique,” *China Brief* 16, no. 8 (2016); Chris Buckley, “China Reins In Communist Youth League, and Its Alumni's Prospects,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 2016.

¹⁴³¹ “The China Youth University for Political Science Will Continue Recruiting College Students this Year (*Zhongqingyuan jinnian benke zhaosheng jiang jixu*, 中青院今年本科招生将继续),” *Caixin*, April 24, 2016. It can be accessed here: <http://china.caixin.com/2016-04-26/100937012.html> (consulted on 14 September 2016).

decline.¹⁴³² The budget decrease is also linked to various cuts, in conformity with the overall streamlining of administrative expenses under Xi Jinping.¹⁴³³

Instead of an all-out war against Hu Jintao's faction, the reform of the CYL is to be understood in the context of Xi Jinping's attempt to reform the Party-State sponsored mobility system. The relaxation of age-based rules, the restriction of "open selections" and the CYL's reform overall limit the turn-over within the Party-State and the promotion of young officials. By contrast with Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang who needed to cultivate young supporters in the 1980s, rising young officials seem to be perceived as a threat by Xi Jinping. As the only post-Mao era leader not pre-selected by Deng Xiaoping, by contrast with his predecessors Jiang Zemin or Hu Jintao, Xi had to build his power base within his own generation of officials in order to rise to power.¹⁴³⁴ His supports, which are not targeted by the anticorruption campaign, take up key positions in the central and local level Party-State administrations.¹⁴³⁵ The reform of the cadre system and of the CYL I have described reinforces the authority of the local CCP leaders, by giving them more power over appointments and by strengthening the local CYL organs, which they directly control. Aiming at empowering his supports and weakening potential competitors, these reforms of the sponsored mobility system appear logical from Xi's perspective, in parallel to his highly political anticorruption campaign. However, it might be negative for the Party-State on the long run. This system has so far prevented the CCP from becoming a gerontocracy, and this could be very well reversed by Xi's actions. Some analysts have wondered if Xi will implement reforms which would make him the Chinese Gorbachev.¹⁴³⁶ It seems on the contrary that he follows the path Brezhnev did, favoring his supports without a long-term strategy.

This short epilogue on current developments highlights how comparing regimes can be insightful, and especially among communist systems which are in many ways similar, but also that it should not mask the specificity of singular and moving political trajectories. I underlined

¹⁴³² "2016 Budget of the Central Communist Youth League (*Gongqingtuan zhongyang 2016 nian bumen yusuan*, 共青团中央2016年部门预算)," Central CYL, 15 April 2016. It can be accessed here: http://www.ccy.org.cn/notice/201604/t20160415_757233.htm (consulted on 14 September 2016).

¹⁴³³ On the decreased administrative expenses in the framework of the mass line campaign, see : Doyon, "The End of the Road for Xi's Mass Line Campaign: An Assessment."

¹⁴³⁴ On the succession issue after Deng Xiaoping, see : Alice Miller, "The Problem of Hu Jintao's Successor," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 19 (2006).

¹⁴³⁵ On Xi's anticorruption campaign and his affiliates, see : Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Members of the Xi Jinping Clique Revealed," *China Brief* 14, no. 3 (February 2014); Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "China's Anti-Graft Campaign in Review," *China Brief* 15, no. 23 (December 2015); Lam, "The Eclipse of the Communist Youth League and the Rise of the Zhejiang Clique."

¹⁴³⁶ See for example : David L Shambaugh, "The Coming Chinese Crackup," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015.

the uniqueness of the Chinese case with regards to the role played by age-rules and the Party's youth organizations in elite renewal. Rather than the result of a rational calculus made by a monolithic and omniscient Party-State, or of an overall ideological framework, the renewal and cohesion overtime of the Chinese political elite has been made possible by the concordance between the top leaders' political interests and the long-term needs of a regime in a Thermidorian configuration.¹⁴³⁷ The *rejuvenation* of the Chinese regime which resulted is unique. It shows that the role played by Leninist youth organizations evolves in time, despite continuity in terms of organizational structure, and that they can become highly relevant for the regime's renewal even beyond the revolutionary struggle or the regime's most orthodox periods. The comparative study of communist regimes therefore stresses that while they share a similar organizational blueprint, they have become overtime increasingly diverse in their ideological and political transformations. It highlightx the flexibility of the Leninist organizational structure.

¹⁴³⁷ The concept of Thermidorian configuration is developed in the Introduction. See also : Bayart, "Le Concept de situation thermidorienne: régimes néo-révolutionnaires et libéralisation économique [The Concept of Thermidorian Situation: Neo-Revolutionary Regimes and Economic Liberalization]."

ANNEX I. List of Anonymized Interviewees

Academics

| Reference | Position | Date of meetings | Gender |
|------------------|---|--|---------------|
| Academic 1 | Professor at Peking University, Beijing | 05/12/2011 12/06/2012 27/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 2 | Professor at Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing | 12/12/2011 15/12/2011 06/06/2013 14/06/2013 16/12/2015 | Female |
| Academic 3 | Professor at the Jiangsu Party School, Nanjing | 12/12/2011 14/12/2011 25/06/2012 06/06/2013 14/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 4 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 17/12/2011 | Male |
| Academic 5 | Professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing | 20/12/2012 | Male |
| Academic 6 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 13/06/2012 14/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 7 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 19/06/2012 | Male |
| Academic 8 | Professor at Nanjing University, Nanjing | 21/06/2012 | Male |
| Academic 9 | Professor at Fudan University, Shanghai | 03/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 10 | Professor at Fudan University, Shanghai | 03/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 11 | Professor at Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing | 13/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 12 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 18/06/2013 | Male |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|--------------------------|--------|
| Academic 13 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 18/06/2013 | Female |
| Academic 14 | Professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing | 20/06/2013 23/10/2014 | Female |
| Academic 15 | Professor at Fudan University, Shanghai | 25/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 16 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 26/06/2013 22/10/2014 | Male |
| Academic 17 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 27/06/2013 | Male |
| Academic 18 | Professor at Beijing Normal University, Beijing | 03/07/2013 | Male |
| Academic 19 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 12/07/2013 30/04/2015 | Male |
| Academic 20 | Independent Scholar, Beijing | 12/07/2013 | Male |
| Academic 21 | Professor at the Central Youth League School, Beijing | 04/11/2014 18/03/2015 | Male |
| Academic 22 | Professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing | 04/03/2015 | Male |
| Academic 23 | Professor at Renmin University, Beijing | 15/03/2015 | Male |
| Academic 24 | Professor at Renmin University, Beijing | 16/03/2015 | Male |

Cadres

| Reference | Position | Date of meetings | Gender |
|------------------|--|--|---------------|
| Cadre 1 | CYL cadre, Jiangsu CYL Committee, Nanjing | 13/12/2011 | Male |
| Cadre 2 | Former CYL cadre, Haidian CYL Committee, Beijing | 16/06/2012 26/06/2013 | Male |
| Cadre 3 | CYL cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 19/06/2012 | Male |
| Cadre 4 | CYL cadre, Jiangsu CYL School, Nanjing | 21/06/2012 | Male |
| Cadre 5 | CYL cadre, high school in Nanjing | 25/06/2012 | Male |
| Cadre 6 | CYL cadre, Nanjing University, Nanjing | 26/06/2012 09/06/2013 05/02/2015 | Female |
| Cadre 7 | CYL cadre, SOE in Nanjing | 27/06/2012 10/06/2013 | Female |
| Cadre 8 | CYL cadre, high school in Nanjing | 27/06/2012 | Female |
| Cadre 9 | CYL cadre, Central Youth League School, Beijing | 02/07/2012 25/06/2013 04/03/2015 27/05/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 10 | CYL cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 03/07/2012 10/07/2013 | Female |
| Cadre 11 | CYL cadre, Jiangsu CYL Committee, Nanjing | 08/06/2013 | Male |
| Cadre 12 | CYL cadre, Nanjing University, Nanjing | 13/06/2013 | Female |
| Cadre 13 | official, Beijing Youth Daily Press, Beijing | 21/06/2013 | Male |
| Cadre 14 | Former CYL cadre, Tsinghua University, Beijing | 27/06/2013 | Male |
| Cadre 15 | CYL cadre, Renmin University, Beijing | 01/07/2013 | Male |
| Cadre 16 | CYL cadre, Huairou District, Beijing | 18/11/2014 14/03/2015 | Male |

| | | | |
|----------|--|--------------------------|--------|
| Cadre 17 | CYL cadre, Tsinghua University, Beijing | 19/11/2014 30/04/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 18 | CYL cadre, Shunyi District, Beijing | 19/11/2014 12/05/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 19 | CYL cadre, Sichuan | 19/11/2014 | Female |
| Cadre 20 | CYL cadre, Chengdu, Sichuan | 06/12/2014 | Male |
| Cadre 21 | CYL cadre, Guizhou CYL Committee | 14/01/2015 | Female |
| Cadre 22 | CYL cadre, Guizhou CYL Committee | 14/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 23 | CYL cadre, Guizhou CYL Committee | 14/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 24 | CYL cadre, Guizhou CYL Committee | 14/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 25 | CYL cadre, SOE, Guizhou | 15/01/2015 | Female |
| Cadre 26 | CYL cadre, SOE, Guizhou | 15/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 27 | CYL cadre, Guizhou CYL Committee | 19/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 28 | CYL cadre, Guiyang CYL Committee, Guizhou | 20/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 29 | CYL cadre, Guiyang CYL Committee, Guizhou | 20/01/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 30 | CYL cadre, Nanjing University | 02/02/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 31 | Former CYL cadre, Tsinghua University, Beijing | 19/11/2014 12/05/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 32 | ACYF delegate, Nanjing | 04/04/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 33 | Former CYL cadre, Jiangsu CYL Committee | 06/02/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 34 | CYL cadre, Nanjing CYL Committee | 07/02/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 35 | CYL cadre, Nanjing Normal University | 08/02/2015 | Male |

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|----------|--|------------|--------|
| Cadre 36 | CYL cadre, SOE, Nanjing | 09/03/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 37 | CYL cadre, Jiangsu CYL Committee | 10/03/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 38 | CYL cadre, Nanjing CYL Committee | 11/03/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 39 | Former CYL cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 06/04/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 40 | Former CYL cadre, Central SOE, Beijing | 28/04/2015 | Female |
| Cadre 41 | CYL cadre, Tsinghua University, Beijing | 26/05/2015 | Male |
| Cadre 42 | Cadre CYL, Hebei CYL Committee | 11/06/2015 | Female |
| Cadre 43 | Cadre CYL, Hebei CYL Committee | 11/06/2015 | Female |
| Cadre 44 | Cadre CYL, Hebei CYL Committee | 11/06/2015 | Female |

Student cadres

| Reference | Position | Date of meetings | Gender |
|------------------|--|--------------------------|---------------|
| Student 1 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 20/12/2011 | Female |
| Student 2 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 12/12/2012 | Female |
| Student 3 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 20/12/2012 | Male |
| Student 4 | Student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 19/06/2012 | Male |
| Student 5 | Former student cadre, Central University of Nationalities, Beijing | 24/06/2012 10/06/2013 | Female |
| Student 6 | Student cadre, Nanjing University | 10/06/2013 | Female |
| Student 7 | Student cadre, Nanjing University | 15/06/2013 | Male |
| Student 8 | Student cadre, Nanjing University | 15/06/2013 | Male |
| Student 9 | Former student cadre, Central Youth League School, Beijing | 08/07/2013 | Male |
| Student 10 | Former student cadre, Central University of Nationalities, Beijing | 11/07/2013 | Female |
| Student 11 | Former student cadre, Sichuan University, Chengdu | 20/05/2014 | Male |
| Student 12 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 10/10/2014 06/11/2014 | Female |
| Student 13 | Former student cadre, Central Party School, Beijing | 27/10/2014 | Male |
| Student 14 | Former student cadre, Renmin University, Beijing | 23/10/2014 | Male |

| | | | |
|------------|--|------------|--------|
| Student 15 | Former student cadre, Renmin University, Beijing | 04/11/2014 | Male |
| Student 16 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 12/11/2014 | Male |
| Student 17 | Student cadre, Sichuan Normal University, Chengdu | 06/12/2014 | Female |
| Student 18 | Student cadre, Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang | 16/01/2015 | Male |
| Student 19 | Student cadre, Guizhou Medical School, Guiyang | 16/01/2015 | Male |
| Student 20 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 18/11/2014 | Male |
| Student 21 | Former student cadre, Tsinghua University, Beijing | 19/11/2014 | Male |
| Student 22 | Former student cadre, Nanjing Normal University | 08/06/2013 | Male |
| Student 23 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 29/04/2015 | Male |
| Student 24 | Former student cadre, Peking University, Beijing | 10/06/2015 | Male |

ANNEX II. Chronological List of Central Youth League Congresses

| Congress | Date | Leadership |
|---|------|---|
| 1 st Socialist Youth League Congress | 1922 | Secretary: Shi Cuntong (施存统) |
| 2 nd Socialist Youth League Congress | 1923 | Secretary: Shi Cuntong (施存统) |
| 3 rd Socialist Youth League Congress | 1925 | General Secretary: Zhang Tailei (张太雷) |
| 4 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1927 | Secretary: Ren Bishi (任弼时) |
| 5 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1928 | Secretary: Guan Xiangying (关向应) |
| 1 st New Democratic Youth League Congress (6 th CYL Congress) | 1949 | Secretary: Feng Wenbin (冯文彬) |
| 2 nd New Democratic Youth League Congress (7 th CYL Congress) | 1953 | Secretaries: Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦), Liao Chengzhi (廖承志), Luo Yi (罗毅), Wang Zonghuai (王宗槐), Rong Gaotang (荣高棠), Qu Tangliang (区棠亮), Zhang Ze (章泽), Hu Keshi (胡克实), Liu Daosheng (刘导生). Liu Daosheng was replaced by Liu Xiyuan (刘西元) in 1955. |
| 3 rd New Democratic Youth League Congress (8 th CYL Congress) | 1957 | First Secretary: Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) |
| 9 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1964 | First Secretary: Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) |
| 10 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1978 | First Secretary: Han Ying (韩英) from 1978 to 1982; Wang Zhaoguo (王兆国) from 1982. |
| 11 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1982 | First Secretary: Wang Zhaoguo (王兆国) from 1982 to 1984; Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) from 1984 to 1985; Song Defu (宋德福) from 1985. |
| 12 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1988 | First Secretary: Song Defu (宋德福) |

| | | |
|--|------|---|
| 13 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1993 | First Secretary: Li Keqiang (李克强) |
| 14 th Communist Youth League Congress | 1998 | First Secretary: Zhou Qiang (周强) |
| 15 th Communist Youth League Congress | 2003 | First Secretary: Zhou Qiang (周强) from 2003 to 2006; Hu Chunhua (胡春华) from 2006 to 2008; Lu Hao (陆昊) from 2008 |
| 16 th Communist Youth League Congress | 2008 | First Secretary: Lu Hao (陆昊) |
| 17 th Communist Youth League Congress | 2013 | First Secretary: Qin Yizhi (秦宜智) |

ANNEX III. Peking University Student Union Election Candidate Posters (year 2014-2015)









Glossary

Assigned graduates (*xuandiaosheng*, 选调生): This trainee program is reserved for new college graduates who are CCP members and have been student cadres. The candidates have to be recommended by their university's CCP organization. Under this program, they are sent to a grassroots position, for instance in a township level administration, for generally two years, before being promoted rather quickly to a low level leadership position. While similar programs have been developed at the local level since the 1980s, the assigned graduates system has been formalized in 2000 by the "Notice regarding the further development of the assignment of university graduates to grassroots positions for training."¹⁴³⁸

Civil service system (*guojia gongwuyuan zhidu*, 国家公务员制度): Following the "Temporary regulation regarding civil servants" of 1993, a civil service system was implemented in China.¹⁴³⁹ The system was further developed by the "Civil servant law of the People's Republic of China" of 2005.¹⁴⁴⁰ It led to the establishment of a decentralized system of civil service examinations.¹⁴⁴¹ Under the civil service system, the status, wages, and ranks of civil servants are clearly defined. The distinction between leading and non-leading cadre takes form within a structured hierarchical system including fourteen ranks. Leading cadres ranks start at the section leadership level (*keji*, 科级), the equivalent of a township leader or a department director in a county level government, and go all the way to the State leadership level (*guoji*, 国级). While the civil service system manages official in Party-State administrations, by opposition to other public sector employees who work in service units (*shiyedanwei*, 事业单位) such as schools or hospitals, some exceptions exist. Following the "Opinion regarding the management of proxy civil servants in the organs of the CYL, ACFTU, Women Federation and other mass organizations" of 2006, cadres in mass organizations, including the CYL, are incorporated within the civil service system. As "proxy civil servants"

¹⁴³⁸ "Notice regarding the further development of the assignment of university graduates to grassroots positions for training (*guanyu jinyibu zuohao xuandiao yingjie youxiu daxue biye sheng dao jiceng peiyang duanlian gongzuo de tongzhi*, 关于进一步做好选调应届优秀大学毕业生到基层培养锻炼工作的通知)," CCP Organization Department, January 2000.

¹⁴³⁹ "Temporary Regulation Regarding Civil Servants (*guojia gongwuyuan zanxing tiaoli*, 国家公务员暂行条例)," State Council, August 1993.

¹⁴⁴⁰ "Civil servant law of the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongwuyuan fa*, 中华人民共和国公务员法)," National People's Congress, 27 April 2005.

¹⁴⁴¹ On the civil service system and exams, see: Burns, "Civil Service Reform in China"; Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, 34.

(*canzhao gongwuyuan*, 参照公务员), they are managed according to the same rules as civil servants.¹⁴⁴²

Open selection (*gongkai xuanba*, 公开选拔): This selection method for leading cadres imply the public announcement of vacant positions, as well as open procedures for candidates to submit job applications and to take the related exams and evaluations. This procedure is a common career accelerator allowing young cadres to not follow tenure regulations and rapidly climb the hierarchy.¹⁴⁴³ The Party-State has started to experiment with this selection procedure for leading cadres in the 1990s and it was formalized by the “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres” of 2002.¹⁴⁴⁴ A revised version of the “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres” dating from 2014 limited the use of “open selections.” It can now only be used when the local Party-State units do not find suitable candidates internally, and it can no longer be mobilized to transfer candidates across provinces.¹⁴⁴⁵

Temporary transferred duty (*guazhi duanlian*, 挂职锻炼): Under this framework, a dispatching administrative unit transfers officials to a receiving unit for a certain period of time, generally a year. The dispatching unit remains responsible of the officials and their salary. The goal is to train the officials in different settings. The practice has been progressively formalized since the 1990s, in particular through two documents issued by the Central CCP Organization Department: the “Note regarding the issues concerning the training of cadres through Temporary transferred duty” of 1994 and the “Program regarding the deepening of the reform of the cadre personnel system” of 2000.¹⁴⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴² “Opinion regarding the management of proxy civil servants in the organs of the CYL, ACFTU, Women Federation and other mass organizations (*gonghui, gongqingtuan, fulian, deng renmin tuanti he qunzhong tuanti jiguan canzhao ‘zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongwuyuan’ guanli de yijian*, 工会, 共青团, 妇联, 等人民团体和群众团体机关参照‘中华人民共和国公务员’管理的意见)”, CCP Organization Department, 2006.

¹⁴⁴³ On this procedure, see : Kou and Tsai, “‘Sprinting with Small Steps’ Towards Promotion: Solutions for the Age Dilemma in the CCP Cadre Appointment System.”

¹⁴⁴⁴ “Work Regulation for the Promotion and Appointment of Leading Party and Government Cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例),” Central CCP, 23 July 2002.

¹⁴⁴⁵ “Work regulation for the promotion and appointment of leading Party and government cadres (*dangzheng lingdao ganbu xuanba renyong gongzuo tiaolie*, 党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例),” Central CCP, 15 January 2014.

¹⁴⁴⁶ “Note regarding the issues concerning the training of cadres through Temporary transferred duty (*guanyu ganbu guazhi duanlian gongzuo youguan wenti de tongzhi*, 关于干部挂职锻炼工作有关问题的通知),” Central CCP Organization Department, 29 September 1994 ; “Program regarding the deepening of the reform of the cadre

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Abstract

How does the Chinese Party-State renew its political elite and maintain its cohesion in the post-Mao era? This is a key question in order to understand the evolution of China's political system and still the explanations one can find in the literature are far from satisfactory. Overall, the literature on transformation of the Chinese political elite focuses on the broad outcomes, the fact that since the 1980s officials tend to be younger and more educated, but it falls short in unveiling the mechanisms at play. It gives a limited answer to the elite renewal issue as it leaves politics aside. By focusing on educational levels and technical skills it forgets about the importance of political commitment.

I approach these questions through a unique account of the role played by the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL) in terms of cadres' recruitment and promotion since the 1980s. Using biographical data and a snowball sample of 92 interviewees I reconstructed the trajectories of CYL cadres. Beyond my focus on the central organization of the CYL in Beijing, I compared the situation of the CYL in the capital cities of two very different provinces and in four universities. Through this mixed methods approach, I was able to assess the evolution of the CYL as a path to power in post-Mao China. My main findings are as follows:

First, due to post-Cultural Revolution politics and the need for leaders at the time to recruit loyal young cadres, a "sponsored mobility" system was developed to renew the Party-State's elite. College students are recruited and trained through the Party's youth organizations. They are put then on a unique promotion path, which includes specific opportunities and trainings, and which leads them to leadership position in the Party-State. This contrasts with what happened in the Soviet case in particular. Under Khrushchev (1953-1964), the Soviet elite was renewed through the cooptation of professionals with technical skills rather than by recruiting young cadres who spent their whole career in the Party-State.

Second, through the various steps of the sponsored mobility process, the young recruits develop a specific social role as future officials and transform their social circles. As a result, they cultivate a political commitment to their career in the Party-State and to the survival of the regime. Third, the decentralized nature of the Party-State and its youth organizations make it difficult for the young recruits to establish cohesive groups which could organize against the Party-State itself.

Comment l'Etat-Parti chinois renouvelle-t-il son élite et maintient-il sa cohésion dans la période post-Maoïste ? Il s'agit d'une question fondamentale pour comprendre l'évolution du système politique chinois. Or, les explications fournies par la littérature sont loin d'être satisfaisantes. Dans l'ensemble, la transformation de l'élite politique chinoise est présentée via des résultats généraux, comme le fait que depuis les années 1980 les cadres soient plus jeunes et plus instruits. Or, les mécanismes en jeu ne sont pas explorés. En se concentrant sur le niveau d'éducation et de compétences techniques des cadres, l'importance de l'engagement politique est oubliée.

J'aborde ces questions à travers une étude unique du rôle joué par la Ligue de la jeunesse communiste dans le recrutement et la promotion des cadres de l'Etat-Parti depuis les années 1980. En utilisant des données biographiques et un échantillon de 92 personnes interrogées, je reconstruis les trajectoires des cadres de la Ligue. Au-delà de mon analyse de l'organisation centrale de la Ligue à Pékin, je compare la situation de la Ligue dans les capitales de deux provinces et dans quatre universités.

Voici les principales conclusions de ma recherche :

Premièrement, du fait de la situation politique de l'après Révolution Culturelle et des besoins en jeunes soutiens de certains dirigeants, un système de « mobilité sponsorisée » s'est développé afin de renouveler l'élite politique chinoise. Des étudiants sont recrutés dès l'université et formés par les organisations de jeunesse du Parti. Ils sont alors placés sur une filière de promotion rapide, avec des opportunités de carrière et de formation uniques. Ce qui les conduit à des postes de dirigeants au sein de l'Etat-Parti. Cela contraste avec ce qui est arrivé dans le cas soviétique : sous Khrouchtchev (1953-1964), l'élite soviétique a été renouvelée via la cooptation de professionnels ayant des compétences techniques plutôt que par le recrutement de jeunes cadres faisant toute leur carrière dans l'Etat-Parti.

Deuxièmement, à travers les différentes étapes du processus de « mobilité sponsorisée », les jeunes recrues développent un rôle spécifique en tant que futurs cadres dirigeants et transforment leurs cercles de sociabilité. En conséquence, ils renforcent leur engagement politique et donc leur intérêt personnel à la survie du régime.

Troisièmement, la nature décentralisée de l'Etat-Parti, et de ses organisations de jeunesse, rend difficile pour les jeunes recrues d'établir des groupes cohésifs qui pourraient s'organiser contre l'Etat-Parti lui-même.

