

What went wrong?: The case of the non-selected alternate members of the Central Committee from 1992 to 2007

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Alternate members of the Chinese Communist Central Committee are often overlooked regarding elite formation or even when assessing Chinese elites in general. This article focuses on the case of alternate members of the Central Committee from 1992 to 2007 in order to understand why some individuals will eventually be promoted and why some will never be. Through extensive quantitative testing, I argue that these non-promoted individuals differ from their counterparts in many ways, most of which can possibly be traced back to the type of formation they received early on. As such, the article concludes that Party School attendance and the age factor, through threshold analysis, are a significant factor helping us understand the difference between promoted and non-promoted houbu.

Keywords: Chinese Elite formation, Central Committee, Alternate members, age factor, Party School.

Alternate members of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee (中央候补委员) are often overlooked by the literature on Elite politics. Most research assesses their presence and some of their basic characteristics (Li and Lynn, 1988; Zang, 1993; Bo, 2009; Kou and Zang, 2014) as second-class Central Committee members or even as part (members) of the Central Committee turnover (Li and Lynn, 2002). That being said, considering that 68.5 per cent of the newly promoted Politburo members since 1992 and 51.3 per cent of all newly appointed Central Committee members since 1997 have all been alternate members, inquiries ought to pay more interest to this group of individuals. More specifically, this article examines the other type of *houbu*, the ones not promoted to full Central Committee membership between 1992 and 2007. As such, newly selected non-military alternate members between 1992 and 2007 compose the total population analyzed by this article [Annex 1] and the promotion status acts as main dependent variable [DV]. That said, the article is structured around a simple inquiry which can be subdivided in two main questions:

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Q₁ Why are some alternate members never selected to full Central Committee membership?

*Q₂ What distinguishes soon-to-be promoted individuals from their non-promoted counterparts when all *houbu* status?*

Of course, the first question does not imply that all *houbu* ought to be promoted to the Central Committee rather than suggest that maybe individuals exhibiting certain characteristics early on, forming a specific profile, could be favored over others.

Therefore, I tentatively posit that non-promoted individuals were simply put at the wrong places (i.e. regional/provincial experience), held less important positions – both in terms of numbers and type, were possibly unable to get promoted fast enough – rendering them simply too old to be promoted, were “educated differently” – in terms of having attended less important schools, as well as exhibited other less desirable traits for Elite formation (e.g. business experience, research center membership, etc.):

*h₁ Non-promoted *houbu* in all likelihood have had less regional experience than their soon-to-be promoted counterparts;*

*h₂ Soon-to-be-promoted and non-promoted *houbu* are likely to have held different types of positions;*

h₃ Non-promoted individuals have likely held positions in regions less conducive to promotions;

h₄ Non-promoted individuals probably exhibit more of the “less desirable traits” for further promotion (i.e. business experience, experience in selected Party departments, and chief-secretary and chief-aid positions);

h₅ Considering the importance of age for promotion in the Party-State apparatus, non-promoted individuals are most likely to be older than their counterparts;

h_{6a} Non-promoted individuals presumably have lower educational levels, have attended less prestigious schools and have “less in-demand” majors;

h_{6b} Non-promoted individuals have attended Party school formation, often required for further promotion, in a lower proportion than their counterparts.

As previously mentioned, these hypotheses are structured around existing assumptions and elements which are sometimes considered “common characteristics” in the field of Chinese Elite politics (e.g. Provincial experience [Bo 2007; 2014; Kou 2010; Lam 2007; 2015] age [Kou and Tsai 2014; Shirk 2015; Zheng 2003], specific types of experiences [Chen, Chen and Chen 2012; Choi 2012; Kou 2010; Kou and Zang 2014; Walder and Li 2001; Zang 2004; 2005; 2006], educational background [Li and White 1988; Li and white 1990;], etc.). These limited examples do not take into account more general studies which cross-reference several variables (e.g. Shih et al. 2012; Zeng 2013; 2014)

To a certain extent, this investigation into the Central Committee’s *houbu* is similar to that of Chen, Chen and Chen (2012) which aimed at predicting – according to several variables – who, amongst alternate members, would be promoted to the Central Committee or eventually to

the Politburo. It, however, differs in terms of variable associations and assessment scope. Furthermore, the emphasized issue in this article goes in the opposite direction: I am not trying to predict who can/will be promoted rather than trying to understand why some failed to be. As such, the contribution of this project is mainly methodological rather than theoretical.

Consequently, this research examines and attempts to shed more light on the alternate members, especially the group that will not become Central Committee members. It assesses in what kind of environment they evolve in to then see if the two sub-*houbu* groups (i.e. soon-to-be Central Committee members and non-promoted) share commonalities and or differences. In turn, these elements could help us understand why some individuals are selected and why some are simply sent on a more “terminable” path.

In addition to examining Elite differentiation (Zang 2004; 2005; 2006; Zhou 2001), this study focuses on formal institutional factors (Chen, Chen and Chen, 2012), such as the ranking structure and organizational processes, rather than informal politics, often emphasized by other studies (Li and Lynn, 1988; 2003). That is not to say that the latter are not relevant to the issue that is Elite formation in China. Factions and networks of influence do and will continue to play an important role in Chinese politics. However, being part of a faction does not guarantee access to key positions and can, under various circumstances (e.g. clash between factions, investigation for corruption of a factional head, etc.) be detrimental to someone’s career.

Limits and Scope

This work, which is exploratory in nature, cannot take into account arrangements already made behind closed doors as to who, from the 2012’s alternate list will or will not be selected in 2017 or even in 2022. The article also proceeds from the *ceteris paribus* rule, which implies that the overall system, considering its recent history (1960-1970), remains unpredictable and slightly chaotic by moment and that the outcomes should hold or at least be applicable if *all things are being held constant*. As such, the conclusions drawn are limited to distinguishing the more promotable Cadres from more terminable ones when both are holding the same position (i.e. the *houbu* position level). In addition, methods used and conclusions are or no way aiming at predicting how Cadres are to be promoted in the future (i.e. predictability). Lastly, I am not able to assess and discuss in detail more than a certain number of variables. For example, economic performance and its possible ties to further promotion or lack thereof are not assessed in this article (Choi 2012; Li and Zhou 2005; Landry 2003).

Research Design

The article adopts a top-down approach (occurrence view) structuring the inquiry by starting from the problem to then identify the causes (i.e. some individuals are promoted and some or not, *ergo* why are the individuals in the second group not promoted?). It thus focuses on trends, shared elements and traits instead of each individual’s experiences, which directly echoes the work of Chen, Chen and Chen on the 1997-2002’s *houbu*. Furthermore, even if the objective of the article is to produce insights (regarding both groups), the usage of statistic remains, for the most part, descriptive as it aims at “finding” association between variables. Lastly, this design

allows us to look at Cadres' selection/demotion from a diametrically opposite angle (i.e. starting from the problem and trying to find the causes) than the ones already existing in the literature.

Data Sets

The datasets – last verified in May 2016 – used in this article were obtained from the Government Leaders Database (CPC News; COD 2004) and Baike Baidu. The latter, also used by scholars such as Bo Zhiyue (2014), had the most up-to-date information regarding alternate Central Committee members.

The article covers the 1992-2007 timeframe and splits the total newly selected non-military alternate population in two sub-groups: 1) individuals who will later become full Central Committee members (Promoted [$n=171$]) and 2) those who did not become Central Committee members (Non-Promoted [$n=200$]) [Annex 1]. Furthermore, one individual has not been included in this analysis, which is Zhang Wenyue (张文岳). The latter constitutes a “special case” as he has been promoted to the Central Committee back in 1997, then went back to being an alternate member in 2002 to finish as full member in 2007.

Annex 1 also shows that on average, between 1992 and 2007, nearly 25 per cent of newly appointed alternate members (non-military) have been promoted to the Central Committee and that on average, out of all newly selected *houbu*, only 32 per cent reached full Central Committee membership. On the other hand, 37.7 per cent have not or have yet to be promoted, especially in the case of the 2007 and 2012 turnover. Our inquiry into alternate Central Committee members focuses on these non-promoted individuals.

Backgrounds of all non-promoted non-military *houbu* ($n=200$) and Central Committee members-to-be ($n=171$), which composes the main data for the testing, were organized according to their previously occupied positions and arranged in accordance with the official ranking structure (领导职务层次分为). Position types, age per level as well as other experiences (e.g. schooling, business, etc.) were counted from the prefecture/bureau level (厅局级正职) up until their selection as alternate members as to compare all individuals on equal footing. Contrary to Li and White (2003: 555), I did not compare alternate members with Central Committee members nor counted them as part of the same group. This comparison would not be fair as full Central Committee members are most likely to have had more promotions and more diverse experiences. In other words, I assess the possible similarities and distinctions between both groups at this precise moment (i.e. the *houbu* “moment”) in order to see if non-promoted individuals already displayed some specific characteristics, setting them apart from their more “promotable” counterparts (i.e. Central Committee members).

Considering that we expect at least 47 *houbu*, of which 43 non-military individuals, are to be promoted to full Central Committee membership between 2017 and 2022, I cannot perform the same type of testing on the 2012 group. That said, all of the significant variables will be tested on the 2012 turnover in order to see if uncovered trends – if any – hold true.

Finally, in all cases, military members are not taken into calculations because they are, in effect, under the authority of the Party and are not governing China. Leaving aside the military is commonly used in Chinese Elite studies (Bo 2007; 2009; Lam 2007; Wang 2006).

Methodology and Variables

Explicative variables and combinations of variables subjected to testing are divided into six categories, all of which are reflected by the previously mentioned hypotheses: (1) provincial experience; (2) Position type; (3) position types in specific regions; (4) other types of positions; (5) the age factor; (6) educational background. A complete list of all the covariates can be found on Annex 2.

Provincial experiences are often described as a crucial element when it comes to Elite formation in contemporary China (e.g. Bo, 2007; 2014; Choi, 2012). However, this criterion is applied mainly to rising Politburo members or when assessing the promotability of certain individuals (e.g. Central Committee members, Provincial-chiefs, etc.). To this effect, regional positions, especially at the provincial level (正省级), are often seen as key for further promotion inside the Party-State apparatus (Bo 2007; 2014).

Therefore, regional/provincial experience is examined on its own (i.e. does having regional experience matter or not?). After, I proceed to test if having had experience in a particular region – instead of just the sheer number of experiences – would also be significant and if so, which region would stand out as statistically significant for each group? To this effect, provincial experiences are compiled and regrouped according to the four economic regions as determined by the Central government (Lien 2012):

1. Region 1: Eastern China (Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan and Shanghai);
2. Region 2: Central China (Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan and Shanxi);
3. Region 3: North-Eastern China (Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning);
4. Region 4: Western China (Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Yunnan, Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang).

Experiences have been counted from the prefecture level and only if an individual held a political position in the latter (i.e. position one to six) [Annex 3]. Occupying two different positions in the same province is counted as one and occupying any of the selected positions in two different provinces - in the same region - is counted as two different experiences.

The reader will note, regional provenance was not included in the analysis simply because, after extensive testing, despite being statistically significant for promoted individuals, it is not associated with nor significant when associated with other variables.

The second category draws upon the previous works of Zang (2004; 2005; 2006) and Zhou (2001) on Elite differentiation and tests 16 different position types [Annex 1] for statistical significance. These positions are then regrouped and tested according their nature (i.e. political vs. administrative positions). These first variables assess if specific positions or certain type of positions are more statistically significant, and if so, which are favored by each of the three groups.

Once categories one and two are examined separately, I proceed to perform variable association between the latter as to see if certain specific positions (i.e. one to six) or groups of positions would become more significant when held in specific location (regions 1 to 4).

The fourth category encompasses mainly (1) business experience; (2) Party position inside either the organization (组织部), propaganda (宣部), united front (统战部) department or the Party school on either one of the county (正处级), prefecture (正厅级), sub-provincial (副部级) and provincial (正部级) level.

The age factor (Zheng 2003) is possibly one of the most important elements to understand promotion inside the Party-State apparatus. Some, like Miller (2013), assess age as being a form of arithmetic, and some like Shirk (2012) as a way to manage intra Party competition. To a certain extent, both views might hold part of the answer which could be labelled as “time management”. This idea of managing time, which in turn affects one’s promotability was developed by both Kou and Tsai with the notion of “sprinting with small steps” (2014). To this effect, this section discusses “time management” by way of threshold assessment and intergroup comparisons.

Groups have firstly been compared in order to see if, by looking at their age averages, some statistical differences do exist (i.e. *t*-tests). Then, the same comparative analysis is performed for every completed hierarchical level (mostly sub-provincial and prefectural levels in this case).

I then turn my attention to the promotion speed by measuring the number of age thresholds reached by each individual. These cut-off values are set by newly selected Politburo members’ age difference per level ($min + max/2$) to which we add the average of all of the level’s standard deviation (levels counted for thresholds are: entry in the Party [0], prefecture [5], sub-provincial [4], provincial [3a], Central Committee [3b], sub-national [2] and national [1]). As such, these values fluctuate every five years and are to be recalculated every time a new individual is promoted to the Politburo.

Lastly, in order to push the analysis one step further, I also test for conditional association (i.e. Bayes’s theorem) between levels in order to see if any group is more predisposed to “speed through” – with “small steps” (Kou and Zang, 2014) – some parts of the ranking structure.

Educational levels, which constitutes the last category, expands on Chen, Chen and Chen’s assessment by taking into account not only the type of diploma earned but also in what type of school the diploma was earned. Attendance at the Party school is also accounted for as a possible important variable.

Therefore, undergraduates (i.e. bachelor, “regular schooling” [普通班], vocational degrees [专科]), masters, doctorates, candidate of science [副博士] and post doctorate, as well as other types of educational certification (i.e. junior middle school [初中], middle school [中学], high school [高中]) were accounted for when it comes to diploma types.

When it comes to types of school, I am referring here to the three major types of universities in China: (1) the 211 “engineering schools” (211工程) – or project 211, which encompasses around 116 key universities across China; (2) the 985 “engineering schools” (985工程), started in May 1998 by Jiang Zemin in order to create high-ranking universities which could compete with international academia, which has 39 institutions; (3) the C9 (九校联盟), similar to that of the United States Ivy league universities, is a regrouping of nine key universities that aims at becoming and serving elite academia in China and abroad.

Considering that projects 211, 985 and C9 started back in the 1990s, when compiling data, I accounted for school/universities’ name change for current day universities (e.g. 大连工学院 would later on become 大连理工大学).

In terms of prestige, C9 would be followed by 985 and finally 211. It is also important to mention that almost all C9 are 985, and that almost all 985 are 211. The opposite, for both cases, is, however, not true.

As for the types of majors studied, in order to count and measure the importance of the latter, I regrouped then under six labels: (1) Humanities and Social Sciences (which encompasses liberal arts, politics, literature, Chinese, political economy, Marxism studies); (2) Law; (3) Economics-Finance/Business-trade; (4) Medical studies (which includes medicine, nursing, etc.); (5) Engineering/Science and technology; (6) languages other than Chinese; and (7) non-listed.

Lastly, the Party School element was measured by way of accounting for: (1) undergraduate level diplomas; (2) graduate diplomas; (3) provincial Party school formation (i.e. not leading to a diploma); and (4) Central Party school formation.

Covariates are first examined by way of a univariate analysis. To this effect, the most of the used data is listed on the tables and available under various disaggregated forms unless the latter are simply statistically non-significant.

In addition, and when relevant, the data is subjected to one-way classification Chi Squares (non-parametric), as an adjustment test, to assess their possible statistical significance prior to further testing. Covariates are then subjected to binary logistic regression analysis (parametric). For the age factor I used student *t*-tests to determine whether or not there is a statistical difference between promoted and non-promoted members, logistic regression in order to find when this distinction – if any – is statistically more significant and Bayes’s theorem to calculate the probability of each group to reach certain levels on time knowing that previous levels were reached.

Lastly, when it comes to logistic regression, considering that in most cases, unless written otherwise, we noticed a mirror effect between both groups (i.e. same significance level [sig.] but

negative slope [b] for any given variable), tables depicting results will only do so for the promoted group and only for statistically significant results. Considering the sheer number of covariates [Annex 2] involved in this study, it would be impractical to insert all the regressions' results as most of them turned out to be statistically non-significant.

Demonstration and results

1) Testing for regional experience: who's been where and how often?

As previously mentioned, regional/provincial experience, especially at the provincial level, is one of the most commonly assessed and emphasized elements found in the elite formation literature (Bo 2007; 2014).

However, my take on this issue is slightly different as only 1.08 per cent of the selected individuals (both promoted and non-promoted) from the 1992-2007 groups ($n=371$), upon becoming *houbu* had held these kinds of positions. *Houbu* groups are usually composed of officials at the prefecture (地市级) or sometimes the sub provincial levels (副省级). As such, this inquiry relates to experience in general and asks: could regional experience be a determinant in explaining or distinguishing between the alternate members who will not be promoted and those who will be?

Table 1: Regional experiences

Groups	<i>n</i>	Total regional experiences	Individuals without experience	Region1	Region2	Region3	Region4
Non promoted 1992	36	28	9	9	7	2	10
Promoted 1992	44	39	14	11	9	9	10
Non promoted 1997	49	20	29	5	5	2	8
Promoted 1997	40	35	10	17	4	2	13
Non promoted 2002	50	30	23	12	5	2	11
Promoted 2002	49	37	15	13	9	1	14
Non promoted 2007	65	47	24	15	10	3	19

Promoted 2007	38	31	13	9	6	3	13
Non promoted	200	125	85	41	27	9	48
Promoted	171	142	52	50	28	15	50

**Author's database*

When using data listed on table 1, we can calculate only but a slight variation between average of experiences and percentages of individuals without regional experiences (i.e. 42.5 per cent for the non-promoted and 30 per cent for the promoted). Both differences favoring the “promoted individuals”.

Table 2: Regional experiences (Logistic regression)

Groups	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [<i>n</i> =171]		
<i>Having regional experience</i>	.526	.017
<i>Having two or more experiences</i>	.978	.014

The results of the logistic regression show that the variation expressed on table 2 is actually statistically significant: regional experience is favorable mainly for individuals who will become full Central Committee members. The same holds for having had two or more experiences. To this effect, it becomes legitimate to wonder if non-promoted *houbu* are simply not playing the “provincial ascension game” (e.g. rotating between provinces to cumulate experiences, etc.) – leading to higher positions – and are thus less likely to be promoted than their counterparts exhibiting this criterion early on. In turn, this corroborates what is currently found in the Chinese elite literature (i.e. provincial/regional experience as a determinant for political ascension and/or Politburo selection) and could be said to be part of this previously mentioned “profile.”

That being said, the second part of this inquiry aimed at assessing the importance of each region independently in contrast to solely “having regional experience” in order to see if any of the groups are associated with specific a specific region(s).

Using data on table 1 to perform a Chi Square – adjustment test – shows that region 3 and region 4 account for respectively 55.7 and 31.6 per cent of the result of the compressed non-promoted *houbu* groups. Soon-to-be promoted individuals’ Chi results are evenly split between region 1 (22.6 per cent) and region 4 (22.6 per cent). This first indicates that for both soon-to-be promoted and non-promoted alike, region 3 (North-East China) is underrepresented in contrast to region 4 (Western China). This also indicates a possible lack of “mobility” amongst non-

promoted *houbu*, unlike a possible pattern of “sponsored mobility” (Walder and Li 2001) for promoted individuals.

Table 3: Individual region significance

Group	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [<i>n</i> =171]		
<i>Experience in region 1</i>	.700	.044

However, the result of the logistic regression [Table 3] offers a different perspective. It shows that out of the four regions, only region 1 is statistically associated with the soon-to-be promoted individuals. On the other hand, non-promoted individuals are not associated with having experience in any specific region. This also confirms the previous finding regarding simply having regional experience to begin with.

The lack of regional experiences, and possibly experience in region 1 – East Coast, could therefore be part of the reason why some of *houbu* are not promoted to full Central Committee membership status. These results do confirm h_1 and some part of h_3 : non-promoted individuals held less regional experience, which is said to be one of the key elements for future promotion/ascension and when they do, they are “stuck” in Western China, far from the Centre.

It’s worth noting that the Central Committee is partly composed of provincial chiefs (e.g. governors, provincial Party secretaries, etc.). In turn, this could explain how few or no regional experience could play against individuals wanting to be promoted from *houbu* to full Central Committee members.

2) Elite differentiation and career pattern: who is doing what?

The second hypothesis regards the type of positions held [Annex 3]. As previously discussed, “position type” draws on this idea of persistent bureaucratic career patterns inside the Party-State apparatus (Zhou 2001). Some trajectories can lead to more “political” promotions and others might simply lead nowhere, or raise a Cadre’s terminability. As such, h_2 ’s objective is to ponder this idea of “career pattern” in order to see if non-promoted individuals can be distinguished from their counterparts according to positions they held or haven’t held.

Therefore, I account for 16 different position types, which are, as Annex 3 suggests, groupings of positions in order to measure two things: (1) are non-promoted *houbu* holding any specific type of positions?; (2) are different positions favored by promoted alternate members?

Table 4: Position types

Groups	Political positions	Administrative positions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Non-promoted 1992	7	18	9	7	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	0
Promoted 1992	6	18	13	17	1	1	3	9	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Non-promoted 1997	8	14	8	10	0	0	5	6	2	2	1	0	3	0	4	1
Promoted 1997	12	19	14	17	0	0	0	7	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
Non-promoted 2002	7	17	4	17	0	0	2	14	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1
Promoted 2002	9	16	14	21	0	0	8	9	4	3	1	0	7	1	4	1
Non-promoted 2007	21	26	12	11	1	0	4	18	2	2	1	0	4	0	0	0
Promoted 2007	11	15	12	15	0	0	10	5	2	4	1	0	7	2	4	2

*Author's database

The first noticeable thing is the low turnout for type 5 positions (e.g. Governor, Autonomous region Chairman, etc.), 6 (e.g. provincial Party secretary, Autonomous region Party secretary, etc.), 12 (i.e. Central bureau director [总局局长]), 14 (i.e. Minister) and 16 (i.e. Commission Chairman). This is explained by the simple fact that these are provincial/ministerial-level positions. Individuals are usually promoted to this level during the Central Committee, or after being promoted as Committee member. That is not to say that non-promoted *houbu* are not able to reach provincial/ministerial-level positions, but the large majority simply will not (out of the 200 non-promoted *houbu* [1992-2007], 124 individuals did not reach – up until May 2016 – provincial/ministerial level positions). As such, these position types are not listed in the comparison considering the level reached by the overall *houbu* population.

On average from 1992-2007, non-promoted individuals held 12.57 political positions for 5 administrative ones in contrast to 14.11 for 5 for future Central Committee members (11 per cent difference). That being said, logistic regression results for both covariates (i.e. 1- having a higher ratio of political positions; 2- having a higher ratio of administrative positions) turned out to be statistically non-significant. This is explained by the fact that lots of individuals – in both groups – had held no political positions, administrative ones, or neither [Table 5].

Table 5: Position type held

Groups	Political positions (average)	Administrative positions (average)	Individuals without Political positions	Individuals without Administrative positions	Neither
Non-promoted 1992	1.14	0.33	9	25	5
Promoted 1992	1.23	0.41	14	31	12
Non-promoted 1997	0.82	0.47	28	33	19
Promoted 1997	1.55	0.25	9	31	6
Non-promoted 2002	0.90	0.38	22	32	13
Promoted 2002	1.29	0.73	15	27	6
Non-promoted 2007	1.08	0.48	24	40	12
Promoted 2007	1.40	0.97	13	19	3
Non-promoted 2012	1.48	0.39	32	67	22
Promoted 2012	1.25	0.25	0	3	0

**Author's database*

On the other hand, table 5 does demonstrate that promoted individuals held, on average, a greater amount of any position types (political/administrative) and do have higher ratios of political positions vs. administrative ones. However, considering that 40.8 per cent of non-promoted individuals did not have any political positions, that 65.6 per cent of them did not hold any administrative positions and that 24.3 per cent had none of the 16 position types, position ratios should not be considered as an explicative indicator. The same holds true for promoted individuals with respectively 29.8 per cent, 63.3 per cent and 15.6 per cent.

Although, as suggested by Zang (2004; 2005; 2006) and Zhou (2001), soon-to-be promoted individuals might later on display a greater accumulation of political positions in contrast to more administrative ones. However, at this stage of their career, both promoted and non-promoted alike have too few positions for this to be a strong differentiating factor.

Therefore, I proceed to logistic regressions between the two groups of *houbu* and the 16 position types [covariates] in order to see if any position might be of interest for our inquiry [Table 6].

Table 6: Individual position type significance

Groups	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [n=171]		
<i>type 3 positions</i>	.848	.001
<i>type 4 positions</i>	.870	.000
<i>type 7 positions</i>	.878	.024
<i>type 13 positions</i>	.923	.022
<i>Sub provincial positions (3 or 4)</i>	.863	.000

As table 6 demonstrates, future Central Committee members are associated with type and 3 and 4 positions (e.g. provincial-level deputy governor, provincial-level deputy Party secretary, etc.) and with type 7 (e.g. bureau-chief, provincial bureau director, etc.) and type 13 positions (i.e. vice-minister). These elements underline the existence of two subgroups – profiles – inside the soon-to-be promoted *houbu* which are both future provincial-chiefs and ministers.

On the other hand, the same position types are negatively associated with the non-promoted *houbu*. As such, these individuals are not set up to become the next ministers nor governors, etc. And since all the other position types [Annex 3] displayed very low significance level and, in most cases, negative slopes (i.e. negative association level) as well, we are left to wonder: what are these individuals actually doing? And where, if anywhere, are they holding positions? To this effect, the answer to h_2 's proposition remains unclear: soon-to-be promoted individuals are holding similar types of position, which can lead us to believe in the “lock-in effect” of career patterns, yet no clear positions are emerging for non-promoted individuals. This absence of a pattern – considering that promotions will often depend on previously held positions – might also explain why these *houbu* fail to become full Central Committee members in the long run.

3) Being at the right place and having the right positions

In order to close the circuit on position types for non-promoted *houbu*, I combined both regional experience and position types. In this case, only position types 1 to 6 can be measured in conjunction with regions 1 to 4 as position types 7 to 16 are not “geographic” in nature rather

than “administrative.” Therefore, this section of our inquiry is driven by the following question: is holding any position type in any of the four region relevant for the alternate member population?

Table 7: Political Positions in Regions

Groups	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [n=171]		
<i>type 2 positions in region 1</i>	.788	.015
<i>type 3 positions in region 1</i>	.700	.044
<i>type 4 positions in region 2</i>	1.523	.003
<i>type 3 positions in region 3</i>	1.581	.047
<i>sub provincial positions (3 or 4) in region 1</i>	.555	.041
<i>sub provincial positions (3 or 4) in region 2</i>	1.089	.008
<i>prefecture positions (1 or 2) in region 1</i>	.875	.004
<i>prefecture (1 or 2) and Sub provincial (3 or 4) in region 1</i>	1.079	.004

Results in table 7 again support the idea that maybe non-promoted individuals, considering their lack of positive association with any of the selected positions in all four regions, are in evolving in environments less conducive to political promotions than their counterparts.

Furthermore, out of all these permutations (e.g. each position types [1 to 6] in all four regions, sub provincial positions in all four regions, prefecture-level positions in all four regions, etc.), which sums up to 32 covariates testing, only seven, or less than 22 per cent, had a positive slope [b] – association – when tested with non-promoted individuals (i.e. position types 1 and 2 in region 2, types 1 and 2 in region 4, prefecture-level positions in region 2, prefecture-level positions in region 4 and having had both prefecture and sub provincial level positions in region 4). However, none of these were statistically significant thus reinforcing this idea of a possible “patternless” regrouping filling up positions wherever needed.

That said, one could argue that a part of the non-promoted *houbu* population is actually spread across prefecture-level positions in parts of Central and Western China, where the soon-to-be promoted individuals are not. Considering the low number of positions, we would also have to deduce that another part of these non-promoted individuals is most likely holding positions outside the established and already very inclusive Annex 3. Furthermore, this overall non-association with any of the variables could also be the result of what table 6 previously

expressed: non-promoted individuals have, on average, held less of these positions than their counterparts. Yet, missing these needed political promotions directly impacts their promotability thus rendering them less likely to become full members of the Central Committee.

This leaves us with three main sub-conclusions regarding these non-promoted individuals: (1) there are not associated with having had regional experience of any kind; (2) nor with positions falling within the 1-16 range; (3) and neither with having held any of the relevant political positions (i.e. 1 to 6) in either one of the four regions.

4) “Less desirable traits”: widening the scope of the inquiry through business experience and selected Party departments.

In an attempt to find out where and what these non-promoted individuals are doing, and possibly find occupations expressing positive associations with them, I expanded the range of tested covariates to business experience and Party department positions.

Business experience, whatever the position occupied inside a company, was accounted for both promoted and non-promoted individuals. Originally, the covariate was supposed to be counted from deputy general manager and up [副总经理]. However, considering the low number of individuals who did reach this rank, I decided to include the widest possible range of “business experience” in order to test for statistical significance.

Only 62 individuals [1992-2007] held business experience (16.7 per cent). Surprisingly, it was positively associated [B .123] with the non-promoted *houbu*, while being statistically non-significant.

In the case of the Party departments, except the provincial-level Party school director position [省党校校长], which was significant for promoted individuals [Sig .022], none came out positively associated nor statistically significant with either group. That being said, 288 out of 371 individuals did not hold any of these positions (77.6 per cent). Even when compressing the 16 possibilities [Annex 2], the result of the logistic regressions remains statistically non-significant for both promoted and non-promoted alike.

Perhaps, then, some of the attributes exhibited by soon-to-be promoted individuals and more than often negatively associated with non-promoted *houbu* – are simply symptomatic of something else or the result of other elements, such as age or even educational background.

5) Slow sprint and time management: the age factor revisited

For the current discussion on age, I do not include provincial/ministerial-level positions because between 1992 and 2007, only 7.28 per cent of all the *houbu* managed to reach it before becoming alternate members. Therefore, the age factor is assessed from entry into the Party up until the sub-provincial level.

Table 8: Age – general information [Age factor]

Groups	Age average upon becoming <i>houbu</i>	Average upon entry in the Party	Average when reaching prefecture-level		Average when reaching sub provincial level	
			Average	Did not reach	Average	Did not reach
Non-promoted 1992	52.94	25.28	44.24	11	48.86	13
Non-promoted 1997	53.84	27.55	44.90	9	49.18	15
Non-promoted 2002	51.66	24.96	43.43	3	48.07	9
Non-promoted 2007	50.82	24.07	41.72	4	46.79	18
Average	52.31	25.46	43.57	6.75	48.23	13.75
Promoted 1992	50.20	26.09	43.76	2	47.31	8
Promoted 1997	49.75	25.93	40.94	6	44.64	7
Promoted 2002	51.12	24.04	41.00	3	45.37	3
Promoted 2007	52.32	23.03	40.94	3	46.00	2
Average	50.85	24.77	41.66	3.5	45.83	5

Author's database

To begin with, table 8 shows that most of the variation is located at the sub-provincial level, both in terms of average and of individuals not reaching the latter before becoming an alternate member. These missing values account for a very high percentage of the non-promoted *houbu*'s total, thus making the comparison more complicated. This is especially true for sub-provincial level as the percentage of individuals who failed to be promoted to this level reached 28.1 for the non-promoted *houbu*. This number is in sharp contrast to the 11.77 per cent average of the future Central Committee member groups.

Nonetheless student *t*-tests were used in order to see if some of the differences listed on table 8 are statistically significant. The sole statistically significant results are the 1997 level 4 [$t_{a/2}(87)4.6381 P.0001$] and level 5 [$t_{a/2}(87)3.8563 P.0002$], as well as 2002's level 4 [$t_{a/2}(97)2.9 P.0046$] and 5 [$t_{a/2}(97)2.4388 P.0166$]. No other levels or years were significant. This discrepancy could be explained by the implementation of the rejuvenation program during

the 15 and 16th Party Congress. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant differences between both soon-to-be promoted and non-promoted individuals upon entry in the Party (i.e. everyone enters the Party more or less at the same time).

In turn, this points toward two possible conclusions: (1) there are minor differences in terms of age between the two groups of individuals, thus other variables might be more relevant in explaining this difference (promoted vs. non-promoted) or (2) the age or even time difference is to be found somewhere else (e.g. speed between levels [Table 9], threshold completion [Table 10], etc.).

Table 9: Speed between Levels

Groups	Average (years) between entry and prefecture-level	Average (years) between prefecture and provincial-level	Total
Non-promoted 1992	17.96	5.25	23.21
Non-promoted 1997	17.65	4.27	21.92
Non-promoted 2002	18.72	4.90	23.62
Non-promoted 2007	17.32	5.63	22.95
Total	17.91	5.01	22.93
Promoted 1992	17.36	3.59	20.95
Promoted 1997	16.67	4.23	20.90
Promoted 2002	16.93	4.88	21.81
Promoted 2007	18.00	4.94	22.94
Total	17.24	4.41	21.65

Author's database

As table 10 demonstrates, the difference between both groups reflects the *t*-tests' findings and expresses a difference of eight months when reaching the prefecture/office level and seven months for the sub-provincial level, for a total average of 1.28 years difference when reaching the *houbu* position.

This might not sound like a lot and despite appearing statistically non-significant, could be of crucial importance when assessing promotion guidelines: individuals of vice-ministerial

rank (副部级) wanting to be appointed to the Central Committee must be under 57 years old (Kou 2010: 156-157); prefecture-level cities ranked Officials and sub-provincial-level Cadres must retire at 60 if not promoted; bureau-chiefs (司长) must leave their forefront positions – if not promoted - at 58 years old (Zheng 2003). These are only a few of the age restrictions applied inside the Party-State apparatus.

As such, 1.28 years can make the difference between being deemed “promotable” or “terminable”. As Kou and Tsai (2014) or even Zeng (2013) explained, it is all about managing time (i.e. how to save time) in order to remain promotable as long as possible during the “step-by-step” promotion process. That being said, this idea that either eight or seven months can be significant is better demonstrated when using the threshold completion indicator [Table 10].

Table 10: The Threshold effect [Completion]

Groups	Level 0	Level 5	Level 4	Average threshold completion
Non-promoted 1992	24	21	20	1.81
Promoted 1992	27	33	33	2.11
1992 Thresholds	25.82	47.82	53.32	
Non-promoted 1997	9	23	10	0.86
Promoted 1997	5	29	27	1.53
1997 Thresholds	20.50	47.00	48.00	
Non-promoted 2002	27	20	3	1
Promoted 2002	33	26	17	1.55
2002 thresholds	25.82	42.82	43.82	

Non-promoted 2007	55	56	40	2.32
Promoted 2007	34	34	34	2.68
2007 thresholds	33.82	47.82	51.82	

Author's database

Threshold completion, insofar as it relies on a binary logic (i.e. being above or below the threshold point) can offer us a different perspective on this “step-by-step” process and make more explicit what 1.28 years can mean in terms of “time management” and how significant it can actually be for promotability.

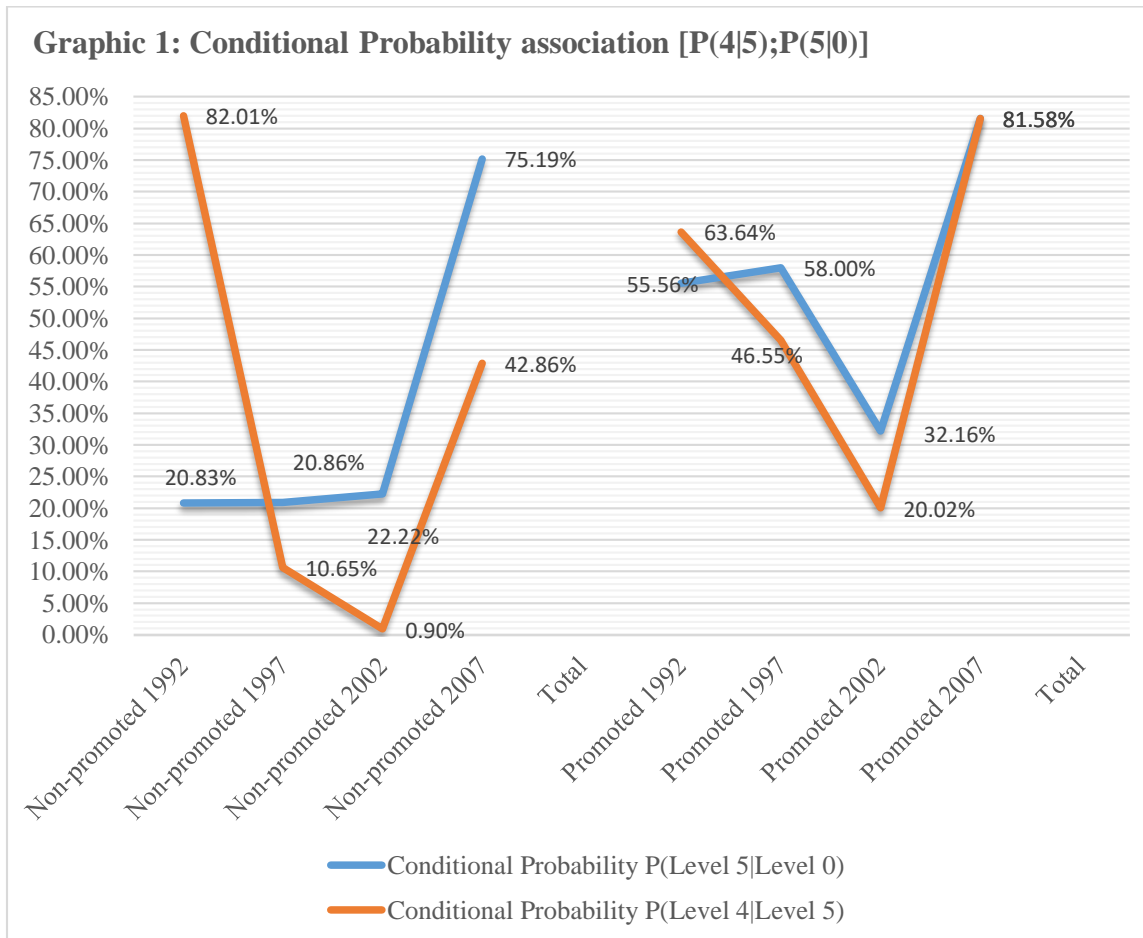
On average, promoted and non-promoted individuals only display around half of a threshold difference out of three. However, as the logistic demonstrates, this half of a threshold might be more significant than it seems [Table 11].

Table 11: Threshold completion (Logistic)

Groups	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [<i>n</i> =171]		
<i>Level 4 (Sub-provincial threshold)</i>	1.126	.000
<i>Level 5 (Prefecture threshold)</i>	.507	.023
<i>Threshold completion: 2 or more</i>	.633	.004
<i>Threshold completion: all three</i>	.619	.008
<i>Threshold completion: Levels 5 and 4</i>	.931	.000
Non-promoted (1992-2007) [<i>n</i> =200]		
<i>Having completed no thresholds</i>	.784	.008

This threshold completion implies, considering how it is computed, that promoted individuals, by way of their 1.28 years difference, are actually “keeping the pace” set by mid-range Politburo members. On the other hand, it also means that this 1.28 years can end up making a difference in terms of relative promotion speed (i.e. “sprinting with small steps” [Kou and Tsai 2014]) and thus must be seen as statistically significant.

This variation can also be expressed by way of conditional probability (i.e. Bayes’s theorem) [Graphic 1].



Graphic 1 clearly shows higher probability of reaching every level knowing that the previous one has been reached for promoted individuals. Even when the P(4|5) – probability of reaching level 4 [sub-provincial] knowing that level 5 [prefecture] has been reached on time – goes down to 20 per cent in 2002, it remains more than twenty times higher than the non-promoted individuals’ probability having completed the same task.

On average, future Central Committee members are between 18 and 22 per cent more likely to have reached any of the levels while having completed the previous one than their non-promoted counterparts. To this effect, considering that there are no statistical differences between groups upon entry into the Party, nor upon reaching the *houbu* status – which turned out to be non-significant during the logistic testing – raises one question: how can one group keep up the “slow sprint” pace while the other is always falling half a step behind?

6a) 211, 985, C9, majors and the Party School: measuring educational level and types of formation

Considering the high degree of both association and significance levels of several elements with promoted individuals – in contrast to non-promoted individuals – I turn the inquiry in the direction of one of the possible causes of this unequal attribution and, as previously demonstrated, more significant promotion speed: education.

To this effect, I first measure association between school types and both promoted and non-promoted individuals through various permutations (i.e. any of the top schools, each type separated, Party School attendance, top schools and Party school attendance and Non-attendance to top schools). That being said, all diploma and educational experiences – including Party school – were accounted for until each individual reached the *houbu* level. Hence, table 12 does not take into account their post-*houbu* graduate or even post-graduate studies, if any.

Table 12: Type of Schools and Diploma level

Groups	Undergrad	MA	PhD and Postdoc	Others	Absent	211	985	C9
Non-promoted 1992	31	1	1	0	3	4	5	4
Non-promoted 1997	37	6	3	3	1	10	12	4
Non-promoted 2002	17	27	6	0	0	3	18	6
Non-promoted 2007	10	40	14	0	0	6	24	1
Total	95	74	24	3	4	23	59	15
Promoted 1992	34	10	0	0	0	10	14	5
Promoted 1997	20	16	4	0	0	8	10	6
Promoted 2002	14	23	11	1	0	9	14	8
Promoted 2007	6	24	7	1	0	11	8	5
Total	74	73	22	2	0	38	46	24

Author's database

Table 12 shows that diploma levels, when compressed, are very similar for both promoted and non-promoted individuals. In turn, they are not shown in the logistic regression tables simply because none of them were statistically significant for neither of the groups. More differences are, however, noticeable when looking at school types: on average 48.5 per cent of the non-

promoted individuals attended any of the 211-985-C9 school while 63.2 per cent of their counterparts did.

Table 13: Type of Schools

Groups	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [<i>n</i> =171]		
<i>Attendance to 211/985/C9 (any)</i>	.604	.005
<i>Attendance to C9 Institutions</i>	.700	.044
<i>Attendance to 211 Institutions</i>	.719	.013
Non-Promoted (1992-2007) [<i>n</i> =200]		
<i>Attendance to none of the top school types</i>	.475	.024

Logistic regressions [Table 13] show that this variation is actually quite significant and could possibly be of importance in explaining why some *houbu* did not get access to key positions – assuming that education is of relevance for promotion – or to some of the other previously listed elements. Furthermore, by simply reversing the inquiry, we find that in fact non-promoted individuals are significantly associated with non-attendance to higher level universities.

Table 14 demonstrates the consolidation of “technocratic Elites” back in the 1990s, a point made by Li and White (1990; 2003) amongst others, for obvious reasons: lack of both university and major diversification and emphasis on heavy industry’s requirements. Furthermore, back then, the need for “engineers” was much higher and associated with better life opportunities.

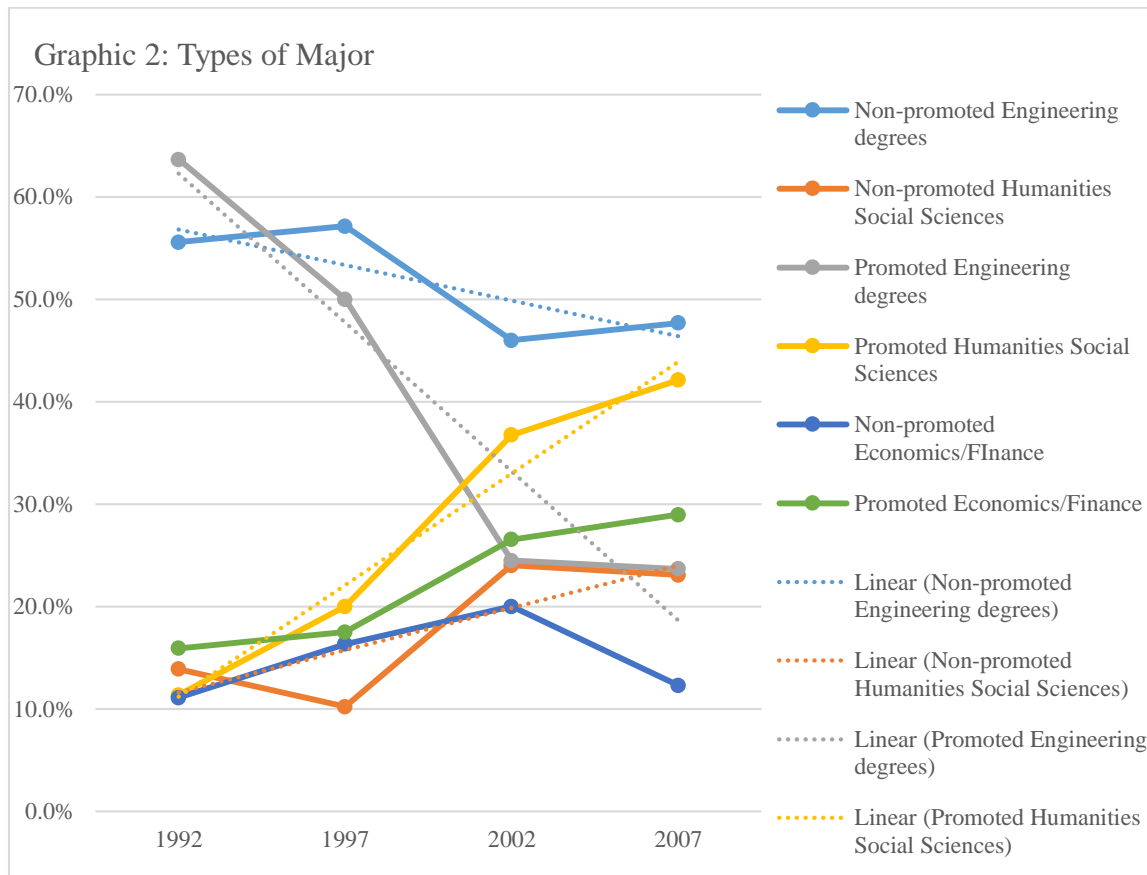
Table 14: Types of Major

Groups	Humanities/Social Sciences	Law	Economics- Finance/Business-trade	Medical	Engineering/ Science and technology	Other languages	Non-listed
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Non-promoted 1992	5	0	4	0	20	1	6
Non-Promoted 1997	5	1	8	1	28	1	5
Non-promoted 2002	12	2	10	0	23	1	2
Non-promoted 2007	15	2	8	0	31	1	8
Promoted 1992	5	1	7	0	28	1	2
Promoted 1997	8	0	7	0	20	1	4
Promoted 2002	18	3	13	0	12	0	3
Promoted 2007	16	1	11	0	9	0	1

Author's database

However, the trend has, since early 2002, gone the other way. That being said, there are numerous reasons that could explain this reversal (from engineering to social sciences and economy): (1) higher access to “normal universities” (师范大学), often in charge of social sciences programs; (2) changes in domestic structure of production (e.g. heavy industries vs. education and services); (3) adjustments to reflect the diversification of Chinese society. As such, table 14 clearly shows a constant rise of social sciences and economics majors at the expense of the engineering major over the last decades. These trends are better depicted by Graphic 2.



If everything remains the same – *ceteris paribus*, when looking at both linear trend lines, non-promoted individuals’ engineering ($y = -0.0347x + 0.6028$ $r^2=0.6486$) and social sciences majors ($y = 0.0414x + 0.0745$ $r^2=0.6141$) are to cross in 2022, 20 years after their counterparts’ reversal. Trend lines for both major types are effectively going in the same direction, promoted individuals changed and adapted faster ($y = -0.1454x + 0.7679$ $r^2=0.9072$ and $y = 0.109x + 0.0031$ $r^2=0.9649$ respectively). These results are confirmed by the logistic regression [Table 15].

Table 15: Types of Major (Logistic)

Groups	B	Sig.
Promoted (1992-2007) [n=171]		
<i>Engineering/ Science and technology</i>	-.431	.041
<i>Humanities/Social Sciences</i>	.513	.040

This trend could also further explain why some *houbu* are not promoted: they have remained focused on previously important skills or know-how. This change in recruitment patterns also shows the will of the Party to adapt and to include previously left aside disciplines such as economics and other forms of liberal arts (e.g. political science, administrative science, etc.). It also indicates that the rise of the “social science majors” generation, which can be traced back from the mid-1990s and only recently started to reach the highest levels of the Party-State apparatus (2002-2012).

Going back to the original assumption regarding education, it becomes clear that in general, soon-to-be promoted individuals did attend better schools and did – knowingly or not – follow the trend of ever-changing Party needs. That said, in terms of educational levels, both groups have proven to be very similar. Therefore, the diploma itself matters less than where it was obtained.

To a certain extent, from this angle, non-promoted individuals either exemplify a “failure to adapt” case or had no intention of doing so, thus playing the role of “Party fillers” relegated to secondary positions [第二级].

6b) The Party School: a possible key explaining variable in promotion/non-promotion?

Despite being an obvious choice for some (Shambaugh 2008), Party school attendance seems to be of importance when trying to explain why some alternate members failed to become Central Committee members, thus influencing the rest of their careers inside the Party-State.

On average, 45.5 per cent of non-promoted individuals and 60.2 per cent of the soon-to-become Central Committee members have had some form of Party school attendance. In both cases, more than 70 per cent of them had formation at the Central Party School and more than 50 per cent of both groups have had some form of Party diploma [Table 16].

Table 16: Party School

Groups	Party School Attendance	Diploma		Provincial	Central
		Undergrad	Graduate	Formation	Formation
Non-promoted 1992	7	2	0	3	4
Non-promoted 1997	14	2	1	2	11
Non-promoted 2002	33	5	12	5	24
Non-promoted 2007	37	8	19	12	29
Total	91	17	32	22	68

Promoted 1992	18	2	4	3	14
Promoted 1997	25	4	9	1	19
Promoted 2002	35	6	11	3	28
Promoted 2007	25	5	15	3	15
Total	103	17	39	10	76

Author's database

Taken as an all-encompassing variable, “having attended some form of Party schooling” is strongly associated with the promoted individuals [Sig .018], while being negatively associated with non-promoted individuals. The same goes for Central formation, which seems to be a key element inside the “Party school” variable [Sig .040], as diplomas and provincial formations were all statistically non-significant. What is also interesting is the fact that having both educational background is only highly associated with promoted individuals [Sig .000].

Table 17: Party School Central formation associated variables (Logistic)

Variables	B	Sig.
<i>Regional experience</i>	.823	.000
<i>Region 4</i>	.729	.003
<i>Higher ratio of Political positions vs. Administrative positions</i>	.691	.002
<i>Higher ratio of Party positions vs. Political Positions</i>	.519	.021
<i>Prefecture-level positions</i>	.468	.029
<i>Level 5 - prefecture - threshold</i>	.789	.001
<i>Completed 2 or more thresholds</i>	.686	.002
<i>Completed 3 thresholds</i>	.461	.047
<i>Thresholds 4 and 5</i>	.485	.024
<i>Prefecture-level positions in region 4</i>	.626	.030
<i>Sub provincial-level positions in region 1</i>	.562	.038

<i>Business experience</i>	-0.710	.023
<i>Major type: Social Science</i>	.784	.002

Table 17 demonstrates a strong pattern of association between this central formation and several of the characteristics displayed by promoted individuals. In this case, the covariate was “Party School Central Formation” [Yes/No] and the listed elements are all dependent variables (i.e. does getting/reaching these characteristics related to/depending on Central Party School formation).

However, we are not talking about causation rather than correlation. To this effect, this element could possibly be one of the key variable explaining why some of the *houbu* will never become full Central Committee members. Furthermore, despite not being statistically significant for either group, graduate diplomas from the Party school are significant and positively associated with: having regional experience [.000], experience in region 1 [.004], experience in region 4 [.018], having a higher ratio of political positions vs. administrative ones [.013], having held sub-provincial level positions [.035], having held type 4 positions on the East coast [.042], having held sub-provincial level positions in the same region [.043], having held both prefecture and sub-provincial level positions in region 1 [.026], having completed two thresholds or more [.000], three thresholds [.014] and the social science major [.000].

These results come out as even more significant if we take into account that “regional experience” is not associated with any region in particular, just like having held prefecture-level positions is not statistically relevant when put with these positions in region 4, having completed two or more or even three thresholds is not associated with having completed both levels 4 and 5 thresholds, and that having a social science major is negatively associated with undergraduate studies, while engineering degrees are. Yet, all these elements are statistically significant when associated with Central Party school formation.

Table 17 also underlines an important point regarding the link between Party School attendance and the age factor (i.e. promotion speed). Central formation is linked with both prefecture-level positions in region 4 and sub provincial-level positions in region 1; this movement is also known as “sponsored mobility” (Walder and Li, 2001; Zang, 2006). In this case, Cadres are promised higher positions upon return from holding one or two tenures in Western China. However, it remains unsure to what extent Central formation is actually causing this movement rather than simply enabling it.

The results also show that going to a good university is statistically significant, yet negatively associated with some of the important characteristics and not significant when tested with all of the other variables [Table 18].

Table 18: 211-985-C9 universities association tests (Logistic)

Variables	B	Sig.
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<i>Regional experience</i>	-0.600	.007
<i>Higher ratio of Political vs. Administrative positions</i>	-0.547	.010
<i>Prefecture-level positions</i>	-0.617	.004
<i>Major type: Engineering and Science</i>	.833	.000

When it comes to individual school types, the results are all statistically non-significant, with lots of the variables showing negative slopes (association). This seems contrary to the idea that better schools should lead to better positions or even faster promotions. Again, top universities' diplomas are not statistically significant nor associated with promotion speed – measured in threshold completion – for any level, nor for any combination of levels.

When combined with Party school attendance, results are dramatically better. However, considering that when separated none of the three university types are associated with the “favored” elements (e.g. regional experience, etc.), the Party school seems to be the driving force for the correlation and the significance levels. Going one step further by combining top universities and Central formation leads basically nowhere in terms of association and significance levels.

When it comes to h_{6b} , the results of the testing point in one direction: non-promoted *houbu* do attend in a lower proportion Central Party school formation. In turn, this seems to affect their promotability as such formations are sometimes needed in order to move upward. Therefore not attending could possibly hinder promotion.

The 2012 *houbu*: following the trend?

In the light of the demonstration, we are left to wonder if the same elements are of significance when applied to the 2012 *houbu* population [Annex 1]. Considering the very low n of the promoted subgroup, I have decided to take the same criteria (i.e. Party School Central formation [covariate]) and run logistic regressions with all the other variables in order to see if the latter would still remain associated with the same elements [Table 19].

Table 19: 2012 Party School Central formation associated variables (Logistic)

Variables	B	Sig.
<i>Regional experience</i>	1.211	.018
<i>Region 4</i>	1.085	.013
<i>Higher ratio of Political positions vs. Administrative positions</i>	1.166	.013

<i>Prefecture-level positions</i>	1.043	.017
<i>Sub-provincial level positions</i>	1.044	.014
<i>Level 5 - prefecture - threshold</i>	1.014	.026
<i>Completed 2 or more thresholds</i>	1.088	.026
<i>Prefecture-level positions in region 4</i>	1.113	.019
<i>Sub provincial-level positions in region 4</i>	1.233	.013
<i>Type 3 positions</i>	.927	.031
<i>Type 4 positions</i>	.909	.048

As table 19 illustrates, the Party school variable remains closely associated with most of the same elements (except four), yet is more closely tied to sub-provincial positions. This continuity of more than 60 per cent of the variables can be seen as very significant yet also indicates that maybe new variables might be on rise.

Concluding: creating profiles and preparing Cadres

This demonstration leaves us, however, with the same questions driving our inquiry: who are these non-promoted *houbu*? And what really differentiates them from their soon-to-be promoted counterparts? The article, in so far as it compares both soon-to-be promoted and non-promoted alternate members, was able to define the contour, according to extensive variable testing, of what and who the latter are not.

As the results showed, these two subgroups can be distinguished by way of: (1) regional experience; (2) types of positions held; (3) level of positions held; (4) types of positions held in certain regions; (5) relative promotion speed; (6) type of school attended and (7) type of major studied. Therefore, it can be argued that these non-promoted *houbu* are holding the wrong types of positions at the wrong places and for too long, thus dramatically influencing their promotability and further mobility inside the Party-State apparatus.

However, as demonstrated, these differences may be the result rather than the explanation as most of the listed elements seem to be linked to the Central Party school formation received early on in some of the Cadres' careers. Therefore, the conclusions drawn here are somewhat in agreement and at odds with the original set of hypotheses.

Even if we are able to highlight this variation as being significant, it remains hard to actually say who these non-promoted *houbu* are, especially in terms of position held, etc., why they had less access to Central Party school formation, and if this formation is actually the sole

defining factor or one amongst many. To this effect, we were unable to define a clear profile for these individuals nor identify “strong” career patterns.

Furthermore, the demonstration highlighted that most of the Chinese Elite literature’ recurring elements were strongly early on associated with some individuals (i.e. the soon-to-be promoted), thus creating the contour of a more sought after profile. In turn, and if since these trends are being reinforced since the 1980s, this could signal the slow unfolding of a more “Chinese” personnel management system, which would stand in sharp contrast to Western democratic countries.

The rise of certain “profiles” (composed of specific characteristics) inside the Party-State apparatus will allow to circumvent “simple factionalism” (i.e. being solely promoted on the basis of patronage) and diminish uncertainty as to what kind of individual is being promoted. This would explain why soon-to-be promoted individuals are already on a “path” leading to higher political positions in contrasts to those who are on the “exit lane.” In turn, these profiles may come to consolidate the ongoing institutionalization of Cadres’ recruitment and selection mechanisms.

For the time being, the answer to “who are these non-promoted *houbu*” can be found in the age component section: non-promoted *houbu* do sometimes hold very similar positions to that of the soon-to-be promoted individuals, yet they might be just a bit too old and thus considered less promotable. In turn, this was depicted by the seemingly inconsequential 1.28 years difference existing between the two sub-groups.

Otherwise, as demonstrated earlier, even if not statistically significant, it seems that these non-promoted *houbu* are partly found in the business sector, spread across prefecture-level positions in parts of Central and Western China and in other various “non-favorable” sectors (e.g. researchers, media, etc.).

What is obvious at this point is that non-promoted *houbu* significantly differ from their counterparts. Even if, on average, non-promoted individuals do spend more time in the Party from their entry up until the prefecture-level, this seniority does not seem to help them later on to reach key sub-provincial positions or even provincial level ones.

In addition, as said in the limits and scope section, faction, patronage and informal networks have been left aside for the time being. That said, when looking at the easiest “factional variable” to quantify, the *tuanpai* [共青团], there are statistically significant associations that can be found between lots of the items listed on the tables 17 and 19. As such, holding some of the key *tuanpai* positions (e.g. provincial secretary, secretary of the Central secretariat, first secretary of the Central secretariat, etc.) can lead to better and faster promotion inside the Party-State apparatus. However, according to Breslin (2008), including the provincial level positions would already be stretching the original of the “*tuanpai* faction” way too far. That said, the *tuanpai* effect could account for no more than 9 to 10 per cent of the promotion from *houbu* to full Central membership status. It is also worth noting that there is also more or less 10 per cent of individuals holding the same *tuanpai* positions in the non-promoted group. That is not to say that the *tuanpai* structure does not play a vital role in terms of Elite recruitment or political promotions later on. Yet at this stage of a Cadre’s career, it might actually not be a determinant.

In this article, I tested around 116 variables and different combinations of variables (i.e. aggregated and disaggregated) [Annex 2], most of which were not significant or simply negatively associated with both groups. However, the previously listed items (e.g. regional experience, etc.) were significant for promoted individuals, even when considering that we are examining them at such an early stage of their career. To this effect, although we are unsure as to who these non-promoted *houbu* are, we are much clearer when it comes to who and what they are not.

As mentioned in the introduction, these “leftover” Cadres, eclectic in their composition to say the least, are simply not at the right place and not holding the right type of positions. What went wrong then? It remains hard to say. Basically, they evolved in environments less conducive to political promotions. However, maybe rising up through the ranks all the way to the Central Committee or even the Politburo is not their prerogative to begin with.

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