Training China's Political Elite: The Party School System

David Shambaugh

ABSTRACT One of the most important, but under-researched and least well understood, instruments of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the extensive national network of Party schools (approximately 2,700). They serve as the key institution of mid-career training and indoctrination for all Party cadres, many government cadres, some military officers and selected businessmen. In addition to its training and indoctrination functions, the Party school system (particularly the Central Party School in Beijing) is also an important generator of policy initiatives. Not all Party schools are stalwart institutions, with some being involved in corruption scandals, but on the whole they have come to play an increasingly important role in the CCP's rebuilding efforts in recent years.

Recent scholarship in the field of Chinese politics has begun to re-focus on the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), its mechanisms of rule, its "reinstitutionalization," its durability and potential longevity of rule.[1] The CCP's own recent campaigns to strengthen its "ruling capacity" (*zhizheng nengli* 执政能力), its "progressive nature" (*xianjianxing* 先见性) and the emphasis placed on "Party building" (党 建) at the 17th Party Congress in October 2007 have all reflected the CCP's determination to stay in power – indeed to strengthen its grip on power – through implementing a series of new organizational measures.

One key element of the Party (re)building process has been a stepped-up emphasis on mid-career training for Party and state cadres (and some military

1 See David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy & Adaptation* (Washington, DC and Berkeley, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and University of California Press, 2008); Cheng Li (ed.), *China's Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008); Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Zheng Yongnian (eds.), *The Chinese Communist Party in Reform* (London: Routledge, 2006; Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Zheng Yongnian (eds.), *Bringing the Party Back In: How China Is Governed* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004); Zheng Yongnian, *Will China Become Democratic? Elite, Class and Regime Transition* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004); Andrew Nathan, "China's resilient authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2003); Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Bruce Dickson, "The future of the Chinese Communist Party: strategies for survival and prospects for change," in Jae Ho Chung (ed.), *Charting China's Future: Political, Social, and International Dimensions* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2006); Andrew G. Walder, "The Party elite and China's trajectory of change," *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2004), pp. 189–209; Bruce Dickson, *Integrating Wealth and Power in China: The Communist Party's Embrace of the Private Sector* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Xiaobo Lü, *Cadres and Corruption: The Organizational Involution of the Chinese Communist Party* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). Also see Alice Miller's and Joseph Fewsmith's contributions to China Leadership Monitor (http://www.hoover.org/publications/clm/).

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officers and businessmen) in the Party school system (*dangxiao xitong* 党校系统). It is a critically important mechanism for maintaining control over the 6,932,000 Party cadres and many of the 33,578,000 cadres in the state system.[2] These cadres are the backbone of the CCP and are central to the Party's Leninist character and its ability to maintain political authority and control throughout China. The Party school system offers a variety of mid-career training programmes: in Marxist-Leninist ideology and the latest Party policy documents; in mechanisms and methods of Party organizational control; in administration, management and leadership science; and in broader fields of basic education such as economics, accounting, history, international relations and philosophy.

In addition to its training and indoctrination functions, the Party school system – and particularly the Central Party School (*Zhongyang dangxiao* 中央党校) (CPS) in Beijing – plays the important role of think tank and incubator of reform ideas and policies. Many key ideas have germinated in the CPS over the years. Provincial and sub-provincial level Party schools have also generated reform ideas customized to more local conditions, while serving as conduits to test prototype reforms developed at the central level.

Important as it is, the Party school system is supplemented by two other similar national training structures. China's National School of Administration (*Guojia xingzheng xueyuan* 国家行政学院), or CNSA, is situated on a sprawling modern campus on the outskirts of Beijing and, together with its 2,000+ affiliated provincial administrative academies, trains senior and middle ranking officials from the State Council, provincial and municipal governments.[3] There is some overlap in the cadres/students trained in the CNSA and the CPS, but there is a substantial difference in the curriculum between the two. The CPS has a much more political and ideological content, whereas the CNSA is focused almost exclusively on economics and applied skills. The CCP United Front Work Department also maintains a nationwide system of approximately 1,000 "colleges of socialism" (*shehuizhuyi xueyuan* 社会主义学院) that train ethnic minorities and other classes targeted for "united front" work.[4]

While the importance of the CPS is widely recognized, little research has been done on it,[5] and surprisingly no work has been done on the broader national system of Party schools. This article tries to fill the gap by examining the history

2 Party cadres (*dang ganbu*) are (of course) Party members, but they work in a CCP organ, i.e. either a central or provincial-level Party organ or a Party committee within a state or non-Party organ. State cadres (*guojia ganbu*) are not necessarily CCP members (although many are), and work in non-Party government organs at any level of government, e.g. the State Council at the central level or provincial, municipal, county or village government. So, the distinction between Party and state cadres is where they work. The numbers of cadres in the Party and state systems is given in General Office of the Central Organization Department (ed.), *Shisanju sizhong quanhui yilai de zuzhi gongzuo chengjiu gaishu* (*Narrative of the Party's Organizational Work Achievements Since the Fourth Plenum of the Thirteenth Party Congress*) (Beijing: Dangjian duwu chubanshe, 2002), p. 98.

3 The China National School of Administration's website is http://www.nsa.cn/.

4 Interview at the United Front Department, 30 June 2007.

5 The only published work I am aware of is Ignatius Wibowo and Lye Liang Fook, "China's Central Party School: a unique institution adapting to changes," in Brødsgaard and Zheng, *The Chinese Communist Party in Reform*.

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and current organization of the system, and recent reforms, before focusing on the most important institution in the system: the Central Party School in Beijing.

Brief History of the Central Party School System

The Party school system traces its origins to the pre-1949 period when the Chinese communists were fighting to gain power.[6] During their time in the Ruijin (瑞金) mountain base area in the Jiangxi province, Mao and his colleagues began to realize the importance of systematic ideological indoctrination of their fledgling corps of communist cadres, and they established a School of Marxist Communism (*Makesi gongchanzhuyi xuexiao* 马克思共产主义学校) in March 1933. A year later, in October 1934, it changed its name to the Central [Committee] Party School (*Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao* 中共中央党校). But the CCP was soon forced out of its base area by Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces, following five "annihilation" campaigns, and embarked on the Long March.

When the remnants of the CCP reached their sanctuary in Yan'an in 1937, they reconstituted the CPS as the Anti-Japanese University (euphemistically known as "Resistance University" or *Kang Da* 抗大).[7] From this time throughout the war against Japan, the CPS exposed large numbers of those who migrated to Yan'an to join the communist cause to lectures on Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology and the Party's programme. In July 1948, as the CCP Red Army was sweeping through much of east and central China en route to victory in the civil war, it was decided to rename the CPS the "Marxist-Leninist Academy" and to relocate it to Anhui province. Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇) was appointed president of the Academy.

In August 1955, after having been in power for almost six years, the CCP Central Committee decided to relocate and rename the school again – moving it to Beijing and naming it the Central [Committee] Higher Party School (*Zhonggong zhongyang gaoji dangxiao* 中共中央高级党校). It was located in a compound just to the east of the Summer Palace on the north-west outskirts of Beijing (it subsequently moved during the 1970s to its current sprawling compound north of the Summer Palace). Until 1966, the school offered a strictly ideological curriculum in Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought. In August of that year it "stopped functioning" (*ting ban* 停办), and did not reopen until March 1977, when its name was shortened to the Central Party School.

Like many other institutions in China, the CPS tried to recover from the trauma of the Cultural Revolution decade during Hua Guofeng's (华国锋) reign (Hua was, in fact, simultaneously Party Chairman and CPS president from

6 The following description is based on Editorial Committee, *Dangwu gongzuo shiyong shouce* (*Practical Handbook on Party Work*) (Beijing: Jingji guanli chubanshe, 1989), pp. 128–29; and Wang Fuyi (ed.), *Zhongguo gongchandang jianshe da cidian* (*Encyclopedia on Chinese Communist Party Construction*) (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 2001), pp. 291–93.

7 See Jane L. Price, *Cadres, Commanders and Commissars: The Training of the Chinese Communist Leadership, 1920–1945* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976).

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March 1977 to April 1982, when he was replaced in both positions by Hu Yaobang [胡耀邦]). Important theoretical experimentation occurred there during this period, such as the "practice is the sole criterion of truth" debates. In May 1983 the Central Committee adopted the "Decision on regularizing the Central Party School curriculum," which set the institution on a path of redefinition, reform and expansion. Following the 15th Party Congress in 1997 the Central Committee adopted another important decision concerning the CPS, the "Decision on accelerating the reformation of Party School work towards the 21st century."

Since that time the CPS has substantially expanded its curriculum beyond ideological indoctrination (although this remains a core function) to a considerably wider field of instruction. It has trained increasingly large numbers of Party and state cadres, military officers, intellectuals and even businessmen (after 2001). It has dramatically expanded its staff size and its campus, including many new modern buildings. It has opened its doors to large numbers of foreign visitors to give lectures and exchange views, and has engaged in collaboration with foreign institutions, although it remains largely closed to foreign China specialists who seek to study the CPS per se.[8] It has significantly strengthened its research capacity, serves as a "brain trust" for the Party, and oversees the nationwide network of Party schools at lower levels.

From its reopening in March 1977 to September 2000, the entire Party school system allegedly trained more than 4 million personnel, including 2.3 million high and middle-level cadres, 4,500 "young reserve cadres," 3,000 national minority cadres and 7,300 propaganda cadres,[9] while since 1978 the CPS claims to have trained 50,000 "medium and high-ranking officials."[10] From 1981 to 2006 the CPS graduated 266 PhD and 1,126 MA students.[11] During the 2007–08 academic year the CPS had 1,300 students on campus.[12] Another CPS source indicates that there are 70,000 Party cadres at the central (*zhongyang* 中央) level, and since the CPS can only train 5,000 per year, it will take 14 years to matriculate each one through the Central Party School – but that is the goal.[13]

Organization and Reform of the Party School System[14]

Mid-career training has been a key method of improving the competence of the cadre corps in the Party, government and military sectors in recent years. As

8 The CPS sends approximately 30 delegations abroad every year, receives approximately 100 visiting foreign delegations or individuals every year, and has about 30 co-operation agreements in place with foreign institutions and multinational corporations (e.g. Intel Technologies). Interview with vice-president Li Junru, 8 June 2008, Beijing.

9 Wang Fuyi, *Encyclopedia on Chinese Communist Party Construction*, p. 292.

10 Xia Xiaopeng, "Central Party School trains 50,000 officials in 30 years," Xinhua News Agency, 2 October 2007, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/02/content_6822822.htm.

11 "Zhongyang dangxiao jieshao" ("Introduction to the Central Party School"), available at http://www.ccps.gov.cn/dxjj/index.jsp.

12 Xia Xiaopeng, "CPS trains 50,000 officials in 30 years."

13 Yang Chungui, *Dangxiao jiaoxue lun* (*Theory of Party School Teaching*) (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2002), p. 299.

14 Parts of this section previously appeared in my book *China's Communist Party: Atrophy & Adaptation*, ch. 7.

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CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao stated in 2000 (when he was president of the CPS): "The Central Committee of the Party has made it very clear that Party school education is the main channel of regular and rotational training for Party cadres at various levels."[15] According to a 2006 CCP Directive, all cadres must have a minimum of three months training every five years.[16] The CCP Central Directive No. 10 of 2000, "Central Committee Decision on comprehensively accelerating and advancing Party school work in the 21st century and the 2001–05 national cadre training programme plan," lists nine categories of cadres to be targeted for Party school training[17]: leading cadres of the Party and government; experienced cadres; government civil servants (*guojia gongwuyuan* 国家公务员) and working-level cadres in Party organs; managers of state-owned enterprises; specialized technicians (*zhuanye jishu renyuan* 专业技术人员); court personnel, procuracy personnel, police personnel and other political-legal work cadres; local-level cadres; national minority cadres and female cadres; and cadres from western areas.

The CCP maintains (at great expense) an enormous network of Party schools nationwide, totalling between 2,600 and 2,700.[18] While still extremely large, this number is a considerable reduction from the more than 11,000 that existed in 1985.[19] There is a range in number per province. For example, in 1996 Hebei had 165 Party schools, Sichuan 160, Jiangsu and Jiangxi 100 each, Shandong 126 and Xinjiang 46, while Hainan only had five.[20] Most have, on average, 70 to 80. At the provincial and sub-provincial level Party schools are often co-located on a joint campus with the provincial school of administration (*xingzheng xueyuan* 行政学院), which ostensibly trains non-Party cadres, and frequently also with the colleges of socialism run by the CCP United Front Department. The vast majority of mid-career cadre training takes place in the vast network of provincial and sub-provincial Party schools throughout the nation.

In recent years, the CCP has also experimented with sending its cadres overseas for public administration and executive management training. Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge University and the Copenhagen Business School are among the overseas institutions involved. From 1999 to 2002 some 400 mid-level officials from Beijing received such

15 "Hu Jintao zai quanguo dangxiao gongzuo huiyi shang qiangdiao wuli ba dangxiao jiaoyu shiye tigao dao Xin Shuiping" ("At National Party School work conference, Hu Jintao stresses need to take Party school education to a new level"), in Li Xintiao, *Xin shiqi dangxiao gongzuo lun* (*Theory of Party School Work in the New Era*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2002), p. 8.

16 Interview with CCP Organization Department personnel, 22 September 2006, Shanghai.

17 "2001–2005 Nian quanguo ganbu jiaoyu peixun guilu," in Editors (ed.), *Zhongguo sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo nianjian* (*Yearbook on National Ideological Political Work*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2002), pp. 52–53.

18 Each of the 2,600 Party schools is listed in Editorial Committee, *Quanguo dangxiao gaikuang* (*Survey of National Party Schools*) (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1996). The figure 2,700 is given in Wang Yang, *Xin shiqi dang de ganbu zhidu jianshe* (*Development of the Party Cadre System in the New Period*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi chubanshe, 2006), p. 310.

19 Wang Yang, *Development of the Party Cadre System in the New Period*, p. 316.

20 These are all listed in the *Quanguo dangxiao galilan* (*Survey of National Party Schools*) (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1996).

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overseas training, 300 officials from Guangdong were trained abroad from 1999 to 2003, and 330 from Guangxi were trained abroad during 2001–07.[21]

Provincial Party schools

By the end of 2001, of the 6,932,000 Party cadres nationwide (as distinct from the total of 40,510,000 Party and state cadres nationwide), roughly half (3,078,000) had received one or more of these forms of mid-career cadre training.[22] Of these, 989,000 cadres had been trained in Party schools, 195,000 at administrative schools, 225,000 in cadre training academies and 1,669,000 in other vocational training programmes.[23]

The vast majority of these matriculated through the provincial Party school system. The Central Party School trains central-level cadres from CCP and State Council organs at the rank of minister or vice-minister, as well as provincial level (*sheng bu ji* 省部级) cadres, some PLA officers, and selected individuals from the private entrepreneurial sector, intelligentsia and so on. Provincial-level Party schools mainly train provincial and municipal department level (*shi ting ji* 市厅级) cadres, although some go to the CPS. Sub-provincial level Party schools train county and municipal department (*xian chu ji* 县初级) and township department level (*ke ji* 科级) cadres. Sub-provincial Party schools exist at the municipality (*shi* 市), county (*xian* 县) and township (*xiang* 乡) levels.[24] Provincial Party schools are administratively directly under the provincial Party committee (*sheng dangwei* 省党委), while the provincial schools of administration are under the provincial government (*sheng zhengfu* 省政府), but they are frequently co-located.

There are basically three types of training courses in these provincial Party schools: principal classes (*zhutiban* 主体班), of which there are two sub-types – advanced training class (*yanjiuban* 研究班) and regular training class (*peixunban* 培训班); correspondence courses (*hanshou jiaoyu* 函授教育); and degree (MA or PhD) education. A survey of textbooks used in these schools reveals an emphasis on the "three basics" (*san jiben* 三基本) and "five contemporaries" (*wu ge dangdai* 五个当代). The "three basics" are Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory. The "five contemporaries" are the contemporary world economy, world science and technology, world legal system, world military and China's national defence, and world ideational (*shijie sichao* 世界思潮) trends. The provincial and sub-provincial Party schools' curriculum generally mirrors that of the Central Party School in Beijing, but

21 Xia Xiaopeng, "China's CPS trains 50,000 officials in 30 years." Middlesex Business School in the UK runs a special training programme for Guangxi officials.

22 General Office of the Central Organization Department, *The Party's Organizational Work Achievements*, pp. 98–104.

23 *Ibid.*

24 For a description of Party schools at these sub-provincial levels see Liu Jiaqi, Tie Jin and Shen Huiqing, *Dangxiao Jiaoyu Yuanli Gailun* (*Survey of Basic Principles of Party School Education*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1989), pp. 114–24.

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they exercise considerable autonomy in structuring their own courses based on local needs and conditions.[25]

While provincial Party schools train large numbers of local-level cadres, and have revamped and professionalized their curricula in recent years, the overall quality of their training remains uneven. There has been a problem in some schools of forged attendance data and fraudulent degrees. To some extent, this malfeasance was driven by the need for revenue, although these schools are heavily subsidized by Party and government organs. Some now charge tuition fees, which is a kind of in-kind lateral transfer scheme from one Party or state organ (employers) to another (Party schools). In one reported case, the Hainan Party School was found to be running a diploma-for-fee scheme. The school charged 7,000 yuan tuition and additional fees of about 1,000 yuan per 500 students enrolled per year ($487,804). An investigation found that, in 2001, school administrators pocketed at least 1.7 million yuan ($207,317) from the BA programme alone, that truancy was high (only a 20 per cent attendance rate) and that nearly 70 per cent of the degree recipients had not completed the required coursework.[26]

Another indication that all is not on the straight-and-narrow in China's Party schools comes from a Hebei province Party school in Baoding (保定), where the vice-president, Geng Sude (耿苏德), was fired and stripped of her Party membership for organizing Bible study sessions in the school's tenth-floor auditorium. Police raided and broke up one meeting on New Year's Day 2007 and detained for questioning 500 Christian attendees, including lawyers, professors, writers, journalists and artists. When interviewed by Reuters, Mrs Geng said that, "it never occurred to me that the authorities would regard this seriously," adding that she decided to host the event in the Party school auditorium because it was rarely used. "The Bible study session was aimed at helping to build a harmonious society [as the Party seeks], the Party should ease, not create contradictions. Class struggle is no longer the Party culture – the Party should be more forgiving and tolerant," said the third-generation Christian.[27]

Despite such occasional instances of malfeasance, the Party school system is often the first post-secondary education many local cadres receive. It thus provides some basic training in key administrative skills, as well as ideological indoctrination and adherence to Party directives. A review of the administrative structures of a number of provincial Party schools reveals considerable uniformity, although there does appear to be wide variance in the content of the curricula. Although it is one of the larger ones, the administrative structure

25 Interview with Central Party School vice-president, 8 June 2008, Beijing.

26 Huang Yong, "Shengdangxiao weigui fa wenping, hainan chachu wenping pifa da'an" ("Provincial Party school confers diplomas illegally, Hainan investigates diploma sales case"), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (*China Youth Daily*), 16 June 2004.

27 Benjamin Kang Lim, "China vice-principal demoted for bible study session," Reuters, 1 March 2007.

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of the Guangdong Party School is illustrative of many others around the country.

The Guangdong Party School[28]

Administrative and logistics departments: general office; Party affairs office; personnel (and retired cadres affairs) office; research affairs office; liaison office (with Party school in cities, counties and other provinces); security office; financial office; logistics office; information and network centre.

Training management departments: office of teaching affairs; office of advanced training; office of training; office of civil servant training; graduate programme office; correspondence education college; administrative professional college.

Academic and research departments: department of philosophy; department of economics; department of management; department of public administration; department of law; department of scientific socialism; department of CCP Party history and Party building; department of foreign languages; department of general education; department of office management; Deng Xiaoping Theory and modernization strategy research institute; Guangdong Party school journal editorial department; library.

Thus, despite the attention usually paid to the Central Party School, one must be aware of this much more extensive provincial Party school system. Without it, local cadres would have little contact with the central Communist Party organization, ideology, recent policies and so on. But, equally important, Party schools at this level provide real training in concrete practical skills that local cadres can use in their jobs – thus improving the efficiency and skill sets so critical to functional and responsive governance in any society, but particularly important in a society as large and complex as China's.

New Cadre Training Academies

Another key set of institutions in the Party school system are the three new "cadre academies" in Pudong (浦东), Jinggangshan (井冈山) and Yan'an (延安). These were established in 2005 as an outgrowth of the CCP's campaign to improve the "Party's governing capacity" (*dang de zhizheng nengli* 党的执政能力), which unfolded in the wake of the 16th Party Congress. Technically, these three high-level academies are under the direct management of the CCP Organization Department, but technically so is the Party school system.[29]

The creation of all three academies was the brainchild of former Politburo member Zeng Qinghong (曾庆红), then China's vice-president and president of the Central Party School, who frequently made inspection tours of the three

28 Accessed online at http://www.gddx.gov.cn/jgsz/xzhq.htm; http://www.gddx.gov.cn/jgsz/jxgl.htm; http://www.gddx.gov.cn/jgsz/jxky.htm.

29 Interview with vice-president of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 16 March 2007.

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campuses. In establishing the academies, Zeng's intent was to create a "cadre production line."[30] The choice of these three locations was because of CCP revolutionary history (Jinggangshan and Yan'an), its reform and opening to the world (Shanghai/Pudong), as well as representing three different economic development regions. Preparations for the academies began in 2003, with personnel directly transferred from the CCP's Organization Department and CPS.[31] Work at the Jinggangshan and Yan'an Academies emphasizes the history of the revolution, "national conditions" and the interior of the country, while the Pudong Academy emphasizes innovation in system reform (*xitong chuangxin* 系统创新), human resource management and leadership methods.[32] By the end of 2006, more than 4,000 cadres had graduated from the Pudong Academy's training programmes, while the Jinggangshan and Yan'an Academies had graduated over 2,000 each.[33] Another source claimed that "more than 20,000 leading cadres" had been trained in these three academies between 2005 and mid-2007.[34]

The Pudong Cadre Academy

The China Pudong Cadre Academy (*Zhongguo Pudong ganbu xueyuan* 中国浦东干部学院) – or the China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong (CELAP) as it is known in English – opened on 18 March 2005, with CCP General Secretary and PRC President Hu Jintao presiding over the ceremony.[35] Situated on an extremely modern campus of 41.2 acres in Pudong, CELAP offers graduate degrees in public administration (MPA) and business administration (MBA). The campus itself is architecturally extraordinary, with a futuristic main building in the shape of a giant girder, with reflecting pools, beautiful landscaping and dormitory (exclusive apartments) housing (see Figure 1).[36]

The Pudong Academy enrols 800–1,200 "students" at any time. There are 160 full-time faculty and staff. CCP Central Committee Organization Department Director Li Yuanchao (李源潮) is the president, although really only in name. Training courses are offered for different durations for "leading cadres" (*lingdao ganbu* 领导干部) from the central and provincial level Party and state organs, with a few managers of the largest 165 state-owned enterprises, and some representatives of civil society. Most are above the bureau level (*ju yishang* 局以上). The Central Organization Department selects the cadres to be trained, while the General Political Department selects the few military officers that attend.

30 Huang Haixia *et al.*, "Probing the secrets of China's three cadre academies," *Liaowang xinwen zhoukan*, 7 November 2005.
31 *Ibid.*
32 Interview at the Pudong Academy, 22 September 2006.
33 *Ibid.*
34 Xiao Jie, "CPC's training institutes play key role in building qualified cadre contingent."
35 See Jason Leow, "Leadership training college opens in Shanghai," *Straits Times*, 24 March 2005.
36 This account is based primarily on a visit and interviews with administrators at CELAP on 22 September 2006, 11 September 2008.

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Figure 1: **The China Pudong Cadre Academy**



The majority of courses are three or four weeks in duration, although there is also a three-month module.

CELAP's faculty and coursework are divided into four main divisions: economics; public administration and management; leadership studies; and civil law. CELAP officials claim that:

> In contrast to the Party school's emphasis on political theory, CELAP's courses are less theoretical and more practical, focusing more on the economy and associated issues. The central government really wants us to take advantage of our location and resources, so we emphasize on-site visits, case studies and scenario modelling, and practical lectures (one-third each). Frequently, leading cadres go through a three-stage sequence of training first at the CPS, then come to CELAP, and finally to either Jinggangshan or Yan'an."[37]

Finally, CELAP is developing extensive ties with counterparts abroad and hosts distinguished foreign lecturers.

The Central Party School

At the national level, the Central Party School in Beijing remains the most important and prestigious institution in the system, although the three cadre academies run by the CCP Organization Department described in the previous section have compromised the CPS's former monopoly position.

Structure and functions of the CPS

The CPS runs a variety of courses throughout the year.[38] These are for five types of cadres: ministerial and provincial leaders (either short specialized courses of 7–10 days or 3–6 months or one-year terms); mayors of large cities and prefectures (four-and-a-half months); select county Party secretaries (four-and-a-half months)[39]; cadres involved in ethnic work (six months, one year or two years); and young cadres at the central level prior to promotion to vice-ministerial or equivalent level (various periods).

37 *Ibid.*

38 Data in this paragraph derive primarily from an interview with CPS vice-president Wang Weiguang and other staff, 21 October 2003, Beijing, but also from other published sources and the CPS website http://www.ccps.gov.cn. For another overview of the CPS, see Wibowo and Lye, "China's CPS: a unique institution adapting to changes."

39 The vast majority of country-level Party secretaries are trained in provincial-level Party schools.

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In addition, there are specialized training classes for cadres from the central and western provinces; state-owned-enterprise cadres; united front work cadres; and cadres involved in theoretical work. Every semester there are on average 1,600 cadres (students) in residence enrolled in these various training courses.

The CPS administration has 1,360 staff members, including 600 faculty members (168 full and 159 associate professors); 70 members of the faculty are qualified to supervise PhD students. The CPS now has state-certified six PhD and 14 MA degree programmes. Since 1981, 266 PhDs and 1,126 MAs have been conferred. CPS faculty are recruited from universities throughout China, from among graduating classes, and from Party and state research institutions. One drawback to teaching at the CPS, though, is that there are few opportunities for outside consulting or travel abroad.

The CPS is headed by a leading member of the Politburo Standing Committee. Hu Jintao was head (*xiaozhang* 校长) from 1992 to 2002 and Zeng Qinghong from 2002 to 2007. Hu's successor-in-waiting Xi Jinping (习近平) is the current head. It is organized into three main divisions, seven main teaching divisions (*jiaoxue bu* 教学部), a general office and research office, and two research institutes.

The divisions are: first, the advanced training division (*gaoji jinxiubu* 高级进修部), which is responsible for rotational training courses for ministerial and provincial-level Party cadres, and municipal and some county-level Party secretaries; second, the regular training division (*jinxiubu* 进修部), which is responsible for training cadres from Xinjiang, Tibet and other autonomous regions; and finally the graduate school (*yanjiushengyuan* 研究生院), which is responsible for training masters-level and PhD students. The seven teaching departments are: philosophy; economy; scientific socialism; CCP history; Party building; politics and law; and CCP literature history.

As in all Party organs, the general office (*bangongting* 办公厅) is the nerve centre of administration, while the research office is under the general office and has three sub-departments: the editorial office of *Zhongyang dangxiao neican* (中央党校内参, *Internal Reference Materials of the Central Party School*); the investigation office (*diaoyanchu* 调研处) to undertake on-site investigations of localities, enterprises and Party/government organs; and the documents office (*wengaochu* 文告处).[40]

The two research institutes at the CPS are the International Strategic Studies Institute and the Marxism Institute. The latter dates back some time, but the former was established in 2001 as a "twin" institute. That is, what the Chinese refer to as "one organ, two signs" (*yige jigou, liangkuai paizi* 一个机构,两块牌子).[41] The combined institutes have nine research sections: research offices on Marxist strategic theory, international politics, the world economy, Chinese foreign policy,

40 "Zhongyang dangxiao chengli yanjiushi" ("Central Party School establishes research office"), *2001 Dangxiao Nianjian* (*2001 Party School Yearbook*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2003), p. 503.

41 Information in this paragraph derives from "Zhongyang dangxiao chengwei zhanlue yanjiusuo" ("Central Party School establishes strategic studies institute"), *2001 Party School Yearbook*.

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Taiwan–Hong Kong–Macau affairs, and Mao Zedong Thought; and teaching and research offices on human rights, political and legal history, and ideological political work.[42]

In addition to teaching courses in each of these subject areas and conducting their own research, the CPS faculty has long performed the important role as a think tank (*zhineng ku* 智能库) for the Central Committee and high Party organs (see below). Since the 1950s, many ideological and theoretical initiatives have originated in the CPS.

The CPS has a large and distinguished publishing house, which publishes hundreds of important political and theoretical books every year, as well as the non-circulating teaching texts (*jiaocai* 教材), which are normally classified and for limited circulation (*neibu kanwu* 内部刊物) or internal usage (*neibu shiyong* 内部使用). These textbooks are discussed below. In addition, the CPS currently publishes seven periodicals: *Study Times* (*Xuexi shibao* 学习时报), *Theoretical Trends* (*Lilun dongtai* 理论动态), *Cutting-Edge Theory* (*Lilun qianyan* 理论前沿), *Central Party School Journal* (*Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao* 中共中央党校学报), *Forum for China's Party and Government Cadres* (*Zhongguo zhengdang ganbu luntan* 中国政党干部轮运), and *Internal Reference of Ideology and Theory* (*Sixiang lilun neican* 思想理论内参).

Being a Central Party School student

One individual who was in a year-long class reflected on their experience at the CPS. This individual is an institute director in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) – thus among a carefully selected class of 30 at the vice-ministerial level (*er ji bu* 二级部) from across the central government ministries and Central Committee departments (which are treated as ministries, as is CASS). According to this individual, each ministry is asked by the Organization Department (OD) of the CCP to put forward a shortlist of nominated candidates for this course, and then the OD makes the final selections and creates the class of 30 or so. According to my interviewee, there is one higher-level year-long class of ministerial and CCP department heads (*yi ji bu* 一级部), and a variety of shorter courses for provincial and sub-provincial level cadres, those from the entrepreneurial sector, the banking community and the PLA.

Each class (*ban* 班) has an OD "monitor" (my interviewee's term) living with the class throughout the year, who is responsible for writing assessments of each member. All class members must live in a dormitory on the CPS campus and can only return home at weekends, even if they live in Beijing. The class takes four courses in sequence, each lasting about six weeks: Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought–Deng Xiaoping Theory–Three Represents; political economy; social change; and international affairs. Exams and marks are given for each module. During the year the class took two week-long field trips, one domestic

42 *Ibid.*

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(Zhejiang province) and one abroad (Japan). Every Monday there is a required guest lecture by a central government or Party ministerial-level official.

After graduation, my interviewee noted the importance of professional ties (*guanxi* 关系) made with classmates. They organize quarterly meetings in Beijing; attendance is not required, but "it is good for networking." My interviewee also noted the ability, through ex-classmates, to "have a direct line" to the Central Committee general office (*Zhong ban* 中办) and policy research office (*zhengce yanjiushi* 政策研究室).

In general, it is considered an honour and prestigious to be selected for a training course at the CPS. This is particularly the case for the year-long course for vice-ministerial cadres, as it is a sure sign of they are in line for promotion. For all who attend the CPS, it is considered a professional net plus, rather than a bureaucratic burden, although some complain about having to live on campus five days per week, away from their families.

Since Jiang Zemin's July 2001 "Three Represents" speech, which put the official imprimatur on inducting entrepreneurs and businessmen into the Party, the CPS has hosted week-long seminars and three-week non-degree courses for Party members in this sector.[43] These courses are allegedly very popular, attracting 80 entrepreneurs per session, with a claimed total of 10,000 having participated since 2001.[44] CPS "students" from the business sector are charged around RMB 6,800 ($1,000) for the course and a diploma, and many consider it a good deal. Said one: "For less than 7,000 yuan – including airfare and accommodation – you can get a diploma from the Party's premier training academy and the chance to meet former senior officials."[45] Attendance at the CPS and connections with the Party are a form of political protection for the business elite – just as they are a method of political co-optation by the CCP.[46]

The Party School curriculum

The Central Party School consists of required courses that students take in sequence during their training periods, but it also offers a number of elective courses. The CPS describes several "newly designed courses" to include: basic issues of Marxism-Leninism; basic issues of Mao Zedong Thought; basic issues of Deng Xiaoping Theory; basic issues of "Three Represents" thought; contemporary world economy; contemporary world science and technology; contemporary world legal systems; contemporary world militaries and China's national defence; contemporary ethnicity and religion in the world and China;

43 See, for example, Li Weiping, "Shanghai private entrepreneurs participate in study program at Central Party School in Beijing," *Wen wei po*, 10 January 2003.

44 He Huifeng, "Taking care of business at Central Party School," *South China Morning Post*, 24 April 2006.

45 *Ibid.*

46 See Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

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and contemporary world thought.[47] MA and PhD students follow a somewhat different curriculum from the cadre training classes.

Party school textbooks offer another good illustration of what cadres are taught. There are basically three types of CPS texts published annually by the CPS Press. First is the six-volume series *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao jianggaoxuan* (中共中央党校讲稿选, *Selected Lecture Notes from the Central Party School*). These volumes are openly available for purchase, not restricted in circulation. The six texts are in the following subject areas: basic problems in Marxism-Leninism[48]; specialized research and knowledge[49]; research on basic issues in Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the "Three Represents" (2 vols.)[50]; great issues in the contemporary world[51]; and research on great theoretical issues and hot and sensitive topics.[52]

The second type of text is specialized subject and class texts (*jiaocai* 教材). These are published in very restricted circulation channels and are usually stamped *neibu shiyong, zhengqiu yijian* (内部使用, 征求意见 internal edition, opinions solicited). I was able to obtain three of these volumes: *Research on Selected Problems in Building a Ruling Party*,[53] *Edited Selected Lectures on the "Five Contemporaries,"* and *Research on the Important Thought of the "Three Represents."*[54] The third type is textbooks derived *from* the CPS cadre classes. That is, the CPS compiles texts based on practical input from cadres on the key questions that they face in their work. These are published for internal use (*neibu shiyong*), and offer fascinating insights into local conditions.

Each of these volumes contains numerous (20–25) individual chapters, many written by CPS personnel. Thus, if one wishes to know what cadres are taught at the CPS, reading these volumes is the best way to find out.

The Party School as think tank

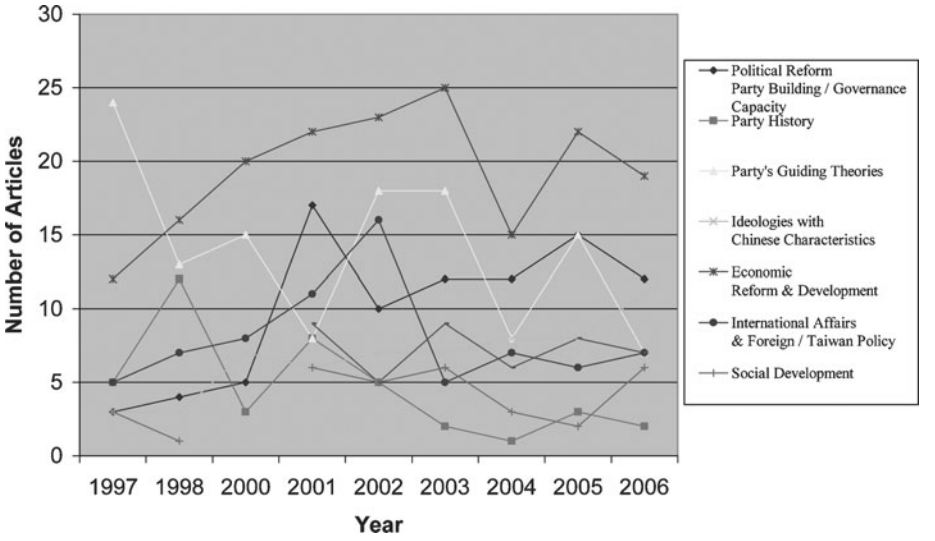
In addition to training cadres, another key role played by the CPS is as a think tank for Party reform policies.[55] CPS faculty write about a wide variety of subjects. A survey of the article topics in the main CPS journal, *Zhongyang dangxiao xuebao*, offers a good indication of the CPS role as a think tank. They divide into eight general subject categories, as shown in Figure 2.

The distribution of articles indicates that traditional Marxist-Leninist ideological topics have been dropping over time, while articles on ideological

47 "Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao jieshao" ("Introduction to the Central Party School"), available at http://www.ccps.gov.cn/dxjj/index.jsp.
48 CPS Press (2002).
49 CPS Press (2006).
50 CPS Press (2006).
51 CPS Press (2002, 2003).
52 CPS Press (2006).
53 CPS Press (2004).
54 CPS Press (2003, 2004).
55 See Charles Hutzler, "China's new generation of leaders keep a low profile as they push for reforms," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 January 2002.

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Figure 2: ***Central Party School Journal*** **Contents, 1997–2006**



aspects of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (that is, Sinified Marxism) have grown consistently. Articles on CCP history (*dang shi* 党史) have also shown a decline, commensurate with the general decline of the subject in scholarly circles nationwide. With the exception of 2002, articles on aspects of political reform, Party building and the CCP's governance have grown significantly. These peaked in the year leading up to the 16th Party Congress and following Jiang Zemin's 2001 "Three Represents" initiative, which was launched at the CPS. Articles on international affairs showed a similar peak in 2001–02, although there had been a steady increase over the five previous years following the establishment of the Strategic Studies Institute at the CPS. These spikes in publications on political reform and international affairs is significant and reflects the role played by the CPS in floating and vetting new reformist ideas in advance of the Congress. Articles on economic development topics have maintained a consistently high level (between ten and 25 per year), while the rule of law and social developments have had fewer than ten per year. Interestingly, there were no articles on the rule of law published before 2000, suggesting an increased seriousness about the issue after that time.

Taken together, the contents of the journal are illustrative of the key role played by the CPS as the Party's primary think tank for generating new ideas and policies concerning political and ideological reform. The third most represented topic area in the journal, which has grown over time, is international affairs. The least represented areas are social developments and CCP history.

Over the years, the CPS has played a key role in formulating important Party documents and policies. "*All* the preparation work for the 14th, 15th and 16th Party Congresses, and the General Secretary's speeches to the Congresses were

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prepared here," claimed CPS vice-president Wang Weiguang (王伟光) in an interview with the author in 2003.[56]

The CPS was deeply involved in the preparation of Hun Jintao's report to the 17th Party Congress in 2007.[57] Former CPS vice-president Li Zhongjie (李忠杰) (currently vice-director of the Central Committee Party History Research Office) was one of the key drafters of the report and was in charge of co-ordinating input from various other institutions.[58] The ad hoc leading group drafting the report worked for a year and met ten times to update drafts. Hu Jintao was the official head of the drafting group and personally held twelve half-day meetings with the group to receive updates on the drafting progress. The Politburo Standing Committee held six meetings and the full Politburo held two meetings to review drafts. The drafting group received extensive input from various sectors, with no fewer than 1,323 meetings with different constituencies to receive feedback and input on the report.

Initially, the Central Committee assigned more than 20 topics to be assessed for possible inclusion in the report, and 36 ministries and commissions were assigned to provide input on these topics (in the end, the report included 12 sections). On this basis, 62 separate sub-drafts were submitted to the central drafting group. Finally, just four months before the 17th Congress, on the morning of 25 June 2007, Hu Jintao delivered an important speech at the CPS forming a trial run of the final draft report, and spent the part of the afternoon at the CPS meeting the drafting group to discuss further revisions (the rest of the time was devoted to vetting the name list of Central Committee and Politburo members). On this basis, a near-final version was prepared over the summer and submitted to the Seventh Plenum of the 16th Congress in September for consideration. The plenary session provided 239 "opinions" and the drafting group subsequently undertook 21 further revisions before finalizing the draft that Hu delivered at the Congress in October.

The CPS has also been a prominent location for the CCP General Secretaries to launch new initiatives. Jiang Zemin launched his theory of "Three Represents" there on 1 July 2001,[59] and Hu Jintao launched his theory of the "socialist harmonious society" there in February 2005.

In many cases, major theoretical, ideological or policy initiatives *originate* in the CPS, but usually CPS theoreticians play the role of explicating such initiatives. Several major ideological/policy initiatives of recent years have been the brainchild of CPS-affiliated staff members.

56 Interview, 21 October 2003.

57 Hu Jintao, "Hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics and strive for new victories in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects," 24 October 2007, Xinhua, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749.htm.

58 Interview with Li Zhongjie, 23 January 2008, Washington, DC. The following information is based on Li's account of the drafting process.

59 Jiang Zemin, "Zai qingzhu Zhongguo gongchandang chengwei bashizhounian dahui shang de jianghua" ("Jiang Zemin's speech celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the CCP") in Editors, *Zhongguo sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo nianjian 2001* (*2001 Yearbook on China's Ideological Political Work*) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2002), pp. 7–17.

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Now-retired CPS theorist Yu Yunyao (虞云耀) was a major contributor to Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" theory and allegedly was the originator of Wen Jiabao's "taking people as the centre" concept, as well as Hu Jintao's "scientific development concept."[60] Pang Yuanzheng (庞元正), Dong Deguang (东德光), Wang Huanchao (王环朝) and other CPS theorists have further elaborated the "scientific development concept." Zheng Bijian (郑必坚), former CPS executive vice-president and founding chairman of the China Reform Forum (which is closely affiliated with the CPS) was the originator and father of "China's peaceful rise" theory.[61]

Concerning political reform, CPS vice-president Li Junru (李君如) is a leading theorist who masterminded the currently popular "consultative democracy" (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) concept, and contributed to the "Three Represents" theory. Li and others, such as Cheng Shu, have contributed much to the post-16th Party Congress campaign to improve "intra-Party democracy" (*dangnei minzhu* 党内民主). Zhuang Congsheng (庄从生) has also been a significant contributor to the "consultative democracy" concept (this concept was central to Hu Jintao's 17th Party Congress report). CPS scholars Zhou Tianyong (周天勇), Shi Taifeng (石泰峰) and Li Liangdong (李良栋) have also been consistent advocates of political system reform (*zhengzhi tizhi gaige* 政治体制改革). For example, Zhou Tianyong's 2004 book on this subject was the result of a major CPS study that fed into the important Fourth Plenum of the 16th Central Committee which adopted the key "Decision on improving the Party's ruling capacity."[62] Hou Shaowen (侯少文) has written a lot about strengthening the People's Congress system. Xie Chuntao's (谢春涛) area of expertise is the relationship between the Party and the government. Wang Changjiang (王长江) has pioneered the idea of "issue politics" (*wenti zhengzhi* 问题政治) and has written about the "control of cadres in a scientific manner" (*dangguan ganbu de kexue fangfa* 党管干部的科学方法), that is, meritocratic personnel evaluation. Several CPS theoreticians have contributed to the campaign to "improve the Party's governing capacity" since it was launched in 2004.

Former CPS president Zeng Qinghong is said to have been the mastermind behind the "Party's advanced nature" (*dang de xianjianxing* 党的先见性) campaign begun in December 2004. CPS theorists such as Zhu Fu'en (祝福恩) and Zhang Xixian (张希贤) fleshed out the concept in a series of publications. Former CPS vice-president Wang Weiguang (王伟光), now vice-president of CASS, has contributed much to Hu Jintao's "socialist harmonious society" concept, particularly regarding social equity issues, while various CPS theorists

60 Yu elaborates these concepts in "The scientific development concept is a world outlook and methodology for seeking faster and better development," *Jingji ribao*, 31 October 2005, trans. Open Source Center.

61 See *China's Peaceful Rise: Speeches of Zheng Bijian, 1997–2005* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press). A more extended collection of Zheng's speeches have been published by the CPS-affiliated China Reform Forum (2 vols.), of which he was chairman.

62 Zhou Tianyong, *Zhongguo zhengzhi tizhi gaige* (*China's Political System Reform*) (Beijing: Zhongguo shuili chubanshe, 2004).

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(Yan Shuhan [严书翰], Wu Zhongmin [吴忠民], Xie Zhiqiang [谢志强] and others) have all contributed to explicating the policy. Finally, CPS staff members played a major role in the heated and protracted internal debates over the causes of collapse of the former Soviet Union.[63]

Conclusion

This article has been an exploratory effort to explain the purpose, nature and scope of the Party school system in China. It has described the importance of this system both as a training mechanism to improve the expertise and competence of Party and state cadres in China, and as an important institutional agent for conveying ideology and policy reforms to cadres. In addition, the Central Party School in Beijing plays a key additional role as a think tank, generating a large number of important policy initiatives and theoretical justifications over the years.

The Party school system in China is getting more rather than less significant. It is therefore important for any analyst of Chinese politics to understand and appreciate the roles that this system plays in the Party and government. To date there has been virtually no scholarly research on this subject. Much more work needs to be done, particularly involving access to the CPS and provincial Party schools. There need to be interviews of cadres who have matriculated through the system, a content analysis of textbooks used in the Party school system, and closer evaluation of the role of the CPS as a think tank for generating and justifying policy initiatives. While these are important areas ripe for further research, the Party school system in China is, unfortunately, not easily accessed by foreign scholars. Yet it is central to the organizational capabilities and functioning of the entire Party apparatus, as both the people and ideas that will lead China in the years ahead germinate in these institutions. As such, the Central Party School, the three new cadre training academies and the entire training system nationwide need to be better understood by scholars and analysts of the Chinese political system.

63 See Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy & Adaptation*, ch. 3.

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