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Transitional Justice

**China's Fifth Generation Leaders and the Roadmap of
Future Democracy.**

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China Fifth Generalization Leaders And The Roadmap of Future Democracy

Abstract

Since its establishment in 1949, People's Republic of China (PRC) has had four generation core leaders, including: Mao Zedong (毛澤東), Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平), Jiang Zemin (江澤民), and Hu Jintao (胡錦濤). Xi Jinping (習近平) and Le Keqing (李克強) were the two eyes catching stars among other new members in the Politburo during the Seventeenth Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress Conference in 2007, and other important meetings. These political élites were born in the 1950s, known as the “fifth generation leaders,” and will be taking the important positions in the party and government at the Eighteenth CCP Congress Conference in 2012.

As China's economy continues to grow, its interactions with other countries have become more intertwined. However, China is still one of the few remaining Communist countries, and its human rights records have been severely criticized. In face of the rising calls on moving toward democracy from home and aboard, Beijing authorities have advocated the Intra-Party Democracy in response, particularly some of the fifth generation leaders. Since these leaders are going to move up to China's top hierarchy and because of their educational background, working experience, and perception of democracy, they will have profound influence on China future democracy.

Thus, this paper intends to answer the following research questions: 1) Will the emergence of the fifth generalization leaders contribute to the democratization process in China? If so, in what degree of democracy can China achieve? 2) Do the educational background and the “Reform and Opening” policy affect the mindset of these leaders in pushing for China's democracy or to the contrary? 3) What is the current status for the Chinese government in implementing the Intra-Party Democracy? Will it pave the way for China future democracy? In answering these questions, the outline of this paper is designed to: 1) recapitulate the outcome of personnel arrangement in the Seventeenth CCP Congress; 2) dissect the educational background, and working experience of the fifth generation leaders; 3) illustrate the current status of Chinese Intra-Party Democracy; and 4) analyze the possible roadmap of China future democracy.

Key Words: Fifth generation leaders, political succession, democracy

I. Introduction

Since its establishment in 1949, People's Republic of China (PRC) has had four generation core leaders, including: Mao Zedong (毛澤東), Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平), Jiang Zemin (江澤民), and Hu Jintao (胡錦濤). Xi Jinping (習近平) and Le Keqing (李克強) were the two eyes catching stars among other new members in the Politburo during the Seventeenth Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress Conference in 2007, and other important meetings. These political élites were born in the 1950s, known as the “fifth generation leaders,” and will be taking the important positions in the party and government at the Eighteenth CCP Congress Conference in 2012.

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II. The Personnel Arrangement in the Seventeenth CCP Congress

The CCP Congress Conference, convened in every five years, is the most authoritative public event in Chinese politics.¹ The Seventeen CCP Congress

¹ Alice Miller, “Beijing Prepares to Convene the 17th Party Congress,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No.

Conference was held in October, 2007, when the new members of Political Standing Committee, Politburo, and Central Committee were unveiled.² The following sections mainly assess the outcome, and trend of the personnel reshuffle in electing the members.

1. Political Standing Committee

The Political Standing Committee is the group of elite party members that wields most political power in China. The decision-making of the Political Standing Committee is made by consensus. There are 9 members, including 5 returning members (Hu Jintao 胡錦濤, Wu Bangguo 吳邦國, Wen Jiabao 溫家寶, Jia Qinglin 賈慶林, and Li Changchun 李長春) and 4 new members (Xi Jinping 習近平, Li Keqiang 李克強, He Guoqiang 賀國強, and Zhou Yongkan 周永康). The former member Zeng Qinghong (曾慶紅), Jiang's protégé, left the post at the age of 68. Zeng follows the pattern of the former Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Li Ruihuan (李瑞環), who also left the position at the same age in the Sixteenth CCP Congress Conference in 2002. The pattern of age limit has shown that the CCP has reached a consensus of 68 as the maximum age in staying in the Political Standing Committee. If this restriction of staying in office stands, only Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang (born in the 1950s) can remain in the China's highest decision making organ at the Eighteenth CCP Congress Conference in 2012. The others will probably have to leave, due to the age limit.

Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang have been chosen as the frontrunners to be Hu's successor as the General Secretary. Li Keqiang, a protégé of Hu Jintao, started working at the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) in 1982, while Hu Jintao served as Secretary of the CCYL. When Hu became the CCP General Secretary in 2002, Li was promoted to Party Secretary of Henan. He also had a long time career in serving as the Governor and Party Secretary of Hunan and Liaoning.³ Based on the observation, it seems that having the experience as the head of a province is an important stepping stone for party cadres to enter the highest decision-making circle. After Li Keqiang became Vice Premier, he has actively involved in domestic economic and social affairs. His posture to succeed premiership has become increasingly evident.⁴

22, p.1.

² David Shambaugh, "China's 17th Party Congress: Maintaining Delicate Balances," *Foreign Policy*, Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/11_china_shambaugh.

³ Cheng Li, "China's Two Li's: Frontrunners in the Race to Succeed Hu Jintao," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 22, <http://media.hoover.org/documents/CLM22CL.pdf>.

⁴ Zheng Yongnian & Chen Gang, "A Political Gold Medal for Xi Jinping: The Successful Beijing

Xi Jinping, the son of Xi Zhongxun (習仲勳) (former Vice Premier of the State Council), has been regarded as the heir apparent to Hu Jintao. Xi has followed the footsteps of Hu Jintao in his march toward the paramount leader. After becoming No. 6 leader in the Political Standing Committee in 2007, he became the President of the Central Party School and Vice President.⁵ Xi, with rich experience in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces, and enjoying a higher ranking than Li on the Standing Committee, has a slightly better position in being promoted to the CCP General Secretary. The Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice-Chairman is a key position for the final confirmation of the heir-apparent position. Xi's failure to take this position in 2009, however, doesn't seem to have affected his "crown prince" status. Xi has been in charge of important tasks since he assumed as Vice President. He has been credited for his leadership in a successful Olympic Game of 2008. However, the delay of Xi's appointment in the CMC might have invited his competitors (Li Keqiang and Bo Xilai) to join the race, putting pressure on the heir apparent.⁶ Although there is no imminent danger of losing his candidacy, Xi would have to double his efforts to secure his position in the next few years.⁷

2. Politburo

The Seventeen CCP Congress Conference selected a 25-member Politburo including 9 new members (Xi Jinping 習近平, Li Keqiang 李克強, Li Yuanchao 李源潮, Xu Caihou 徐才厚, Wang Qishan 王岐山, Liu Yandong 劉延東-the only female member, Wang Yang 汪洋, Zhang Gaoli 張高麗, and Bo Xilai 薄熙來). As aforementioned, and with only one female member (Liu Yandong), the incumbent Politburo continued the Chinese tradition of male-dominated decision-making bodies. Li Yuanchao was the head of CCP Organization Department. Wang Jisan was appointed as Vice Premier. Wang Yang and Bo Xilai were the Party Secretaries of the Guangdong and Chongqing, respectively.

These fifth generation leaders were in their 50s and would likely be entering the Political Standing Committee in the upcoming Eighteenth CCP Congress Conference. Most of them have solid education background, and are alumni of prestigious universities in China, such as Beijing University, Tsinghua University, and Fudan University.⁸ The new leaders were usually trained in Social Sciences, such as: Li

Olympics," *EAI Background Brief*, No. 407, October 5, 2008, p. 6.
<http://www.eai.nus.edu.sg/BB407.pdf>.

⁵ Bo Zhiyue, "The Fourth Party Plenum and Political Succession in China, *EAI Background Brief*, No. 480, September 23, 2009, p.6. <http://www.eai.nus.edu.sg/BB480.pdf>.

⁶ John Garnaut, "Chinese puzzle: Who is Hu's heir?" *The Age*, September 21, 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/world/chinese-puzzle-who-is-hus-heir-20090920-fwq7.html>.

⁷ Bo Zhiyue, *Op.cit.*

⁸ Li Yuanchao went to Fudan University, and Bo Xilai went to Beijing University.

Yuancho in law, Wang Jisan in history, Wang Yang in management, and Bo Xilai in journalism. The majority of these elites have primarily concentrated the focus of the studies on the field of social sciences, which were different from the previous leaders who mainly studied on technology science.⁹ When they were studying for their bachelor degree in the 1980s, it was one of the most liberal periods in China. These college graduates have absorbed a variety of Western ideas and the concept of democratic thinking. This idealistic learning might offer the fifth generation leaders new thinking and different perspectives to rule the future China.

3. The Central Committee

The current CCP Central Committee included 204 full members and 167 alternate members.¹⁰ The current Central Committee who had the foreign studies experience increased to 20 members compared to the previous one. These political élites included the Secretary of Central Secretariat of the CCP and the Director of Policy Research Office Wang Huning 王滬寧 (a visiting scholar in Michigan University, and U.C. Berkeley), the Minister of Education Zhou Ji 周濟 (Ph.D from SUNY Albany), the President of Jiao Tong University Jiang Jie 張傑 (studied in Germany and Britain), and Min Weifang 閔維方 (Ph.D from Stanford). The political élites who held overseas diplomas have contributed to their promotion. The Provincial Party Secretaries or Governors who have studied in overseas also increased from 32 percent in the Fourteenth Party Congress Central Committee and 59 percent in the Fifteenth Central Committee, to about 67 percent on the Sixteenth, and to now it's up 76 percent in the Seventeen Central Committee.¹¹ With such higher education, the leaders would be expected to become more realistic and practical.

Furthermore, there is an increased representation of entrepreneurs in the Seventeen Central Committee who are the CEOs of state-run enterprises, and even some private companies. This includes Zhu Yanfeng 竺延風 (the CEO of China First Auto), Xu Lezhang 徐樂江 (the CEO of Shanghai Baoshan), and Wang Xiaochu 王曉初 (the CEO of China Telecom).¹² The increased number of entrepreneurs in the Central Community would help Chinese government emphasize more on interests than political ideologies. The rise of the Chinese middle class and entrepreneurs that have resulted from economic reforms will spur future political reforms and

⁹ Cheng Li, *China's 17th Party Congress: Looking Ahead to Hu Jintao's 2nd Term* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2007), p.16.

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/events/2007/1030china/1030china.pdf>

¹⁰ "Members of the newly elected CCP Central Committee," <http://www.chinaelections.net/newsinfo.asp?newsid=12069>.

¹¹ Cheng Li, *op.cit*, p.18.

¹² *Ibid.* p.19.

democratization in China.¹³ The presence of these growing élites, who are gaining wealth and power, will influence CCP officials to introduce democratic reforms in the interest of maintaining long-term stability.¹⁴

By looking at the personnel arrangement in the Seventeenth CCP Congress Conference, there was a sign of the increased institutionalization, such as age limit, basic education requirement, and experience in the local & central government. Princelings and officials with CCYL working experience have become the dominant force in the ruling party. After the Eighteenth CCP Congress Conference, the Standing Committee will be shared by princelings and CCYL cadres. The two groups have no ideological differences and are supportive of reform.¹⁵ Although power is concentrated at the top in China, the political game has been transformed from the winner-takes-all to the power sharing. With the gradual improvement of “intra-party democracy,” the CCP is expected to fully institutionalize its power succession process.¹⁶

III. The Characters of the Fifth Generation Leaders

The emerging fifth generation leaders are the political élites with diverse class background, political association, educational credentials, and career paths. They went through the time when Chinese society was facing with daunting problems, such as growing economic disparities, and frequent social unrest.¹⁷ These rising stars (especially Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, and Wang Yang) would be in line for succession to the top posts in the party and government in 2012 and 2013. The following paragraphs provide an assessment of the collective characters and diversities of these leaders.

1. Democratic Thinking

The similar youth background the fifth generation all share is the Cultural Revolution, during which educational system was paralyzed with students engaging in political campaigns. Deprived of the opportunity for schooling, these leaders suffered hardships during adolescence, as many were forced to work in the countryside as farmers. This included Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, and Li Yuanchao. Xi Jinping worked as a farmer and as a branch party secretary in a village in Yanchuan (延川) County of

¹³ Dave Ursillo, “Will China Ever Become a Democracy?,” December 16, 2009, <http://www.daveursillo.com/blog/essays/will-china-ever-become-a-democracy/>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Zheng Yongnian & Chen Gang, *op.cit.* p.9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ They include: Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang in the Political Standing Committee; Li Yuanchao and Wang Yang, who are Politburo members; and Ling Jihua and Wang Huning, who serve as director of the CCP General Office and director of the CCP Central Policy Research Center respectively.

Shaanxi Province from 1969 to 1975. The hardships experiences forced them to cultivate certain unique traits such as endurance, and adaptability. Hence, they would differ from the future sixth generation leaders, because the latter move from high school to college without having to face the obstacles encountered by the former generation.¹⁸

In 1977, China resumed the college entrance exams. The admission rate was less than 3 percent. The admission process was no longer based on political loyalty and ideological purity. During the post-Cultural Revolution years, China constituted a period marked by the enthusiasm among Chinese youth for absorbing Western liberal ideas. This was the beginning of democracy influence from the west. Taking Li Keqiang as an example, he enrolled in the Department of Law at Beijing University. Li actively participated in various public lectures and studied under Professor Gong Xiangrui, a well-known British-educated scholar on Western political and administrative systems.¹⁹ Li was particularly interested in the subjects of foreign constitutional law and comparative governments. He had published articles on legal development, scientific management, rural economic reform, and poverty alleviation. In the early 1980s Li and his classmates were actively engaged in school elections. Li Keqiang was elected as a head of the Executive Committee of the Student Assembly supervising the work of the Student Union. The fair election was a central theme at Beijing University in the early 1980s. Although conservative leaders at the time intended to crack down on campus elections, Li was supportive of open elections.²⁰ If Li became the paramount leader, his support for free elections might contribute to the democratic process in China.

2. Pursuing Higher Education

There are more than 70 percent of the fifth generational leaders who have received postgraduate degrees, and among them 21 percent received PhD degrees. These PhD holders include some of the prominent figures. Besides Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, and Li Yuanchao, they also includes: Yuan Chunqing (袁纯清), Shaanxi governor; Wang Min (王珉), Party Secretary of Jilin; Yu Youjun (于幼军), Vice Minister of Culture; and Liu Jiayi (劉家義), Auditor General. A majority of leaders who held postgraduate degrees earned their degrees through part-time or

¹⁸ Cheng Li, "China's Fifth Generation: Is Diversity a Source of Strength or Weakness?" *Asia policy*, No. 6 (July 2008), pp. 66-67.

¹⁹ Leng Gun, "The Meaning of Li Keqiang's Transfer to Liaoning," March 27, 2005, <http://news.boxun.com/news/gb/pubvp/2005/03/200503272355.shtml>. Cheng Li, "China's Fifth Generation: Is Diversity a Source of Strength or Weakness?" *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁰ Zhao Lei, "Graduates of the First Class of the Huangpu Academy: The Students of the First Post-Cultural Revolution Class at the Law Department of Beijing University," *Nanfang zhoumo*, June 7, 2007. Cheng Li, *ibid.*, p.70.

correspondence programs. Among those with a PhD degree, 53 percent pursued advanced degrees on a part-time basis. There are 87 percent of the master degree holders obtained academic titles through part-time programs. Not surprisingly the public criticizes part-time and correspondence programs served only as a tool for political officials to get promoted in higher positions rather than providing substantial academic training. However, pursuing higher education at least can help officials pay more attention on professional skill than connection.

The fifth generation leaders pursued a wide range of academic disciplines. A comparison of academic fields between the fourth and fifth generations shows more leaders trained in economics, social sciences, and law in the fifth generation than the fourth generation. Many prominent leaders in the fifth generation majored in law as undergraduate or graduate students, including Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Wang Huning, Wu Aiyong, Zhou Qiang, and Yuan Chunqing. Over the past decade a law degree has become a valuable credential for aspiring political leaders. The future impact of the rapidly growing number of leaders trained in law and politics in the Chinese political system deserves great attention.²¹ This might be the reason why the Chinese government in recent years has actively promoted the compliance of law and fought against corruption to justify the legitimacy and to win the support from people.

3. Growing Number of Foreign-Educated Returnees

Although the number of foreign-educated returnees has remained small in the fifth generation leaders, these returnees have contributed to the growing diversity of the Chinese political elite. A total of 82 leaders of the fifth generation leaders—accounting for 15 percent—are reported as having studied abroad. Among them, 23 leaders (28%) obtained academic degrees from foreign universities, 52 leaders (63%) studied or worked overseas as visiting scholars for a year or longer, and 7 leaders (9%) participated in month-long study abroad programs. A majority of the 23 leaders who studied in degree programs were enrolled in postgraduate programs, and 16 of these leaders (70%) received PhD degrees. The leaders with studying-abroad experience attended schools in Western countries—43 percent studied in the United States, 15 percent in England, and 11 percent in Germany. Li Yuanchao and Wang Huning, who are in charge of personnel and propaganda work respectively, both studied in the United States as visiting scholars. When Li Yuanchao was in Jiangsu, he was sent by the Organization Department to study at Harvard University in an international training program designed for political leaders. Wang was a visiting scholar in political science at the University of Iowa and the University

²¹ Cheng Li, *ibid.*, p.74.

of California–Berkeley.²²

Wang Huning and Cao Jianming (曹建明) assisted the former President Jiang Zemin on issues covering the issues on ideological evolution, China’s accession to the WTO, and tensions across the Taiwan Strait. Wang in particular was believed to have been a principal drafter of Jiang’s “three represents” theory. The two full ministers in the State Council who were not CCP members—Wan Gang, the Minister of Science and Technology, and Chen Zhu, the Minister of Health—both spent a long period of time in the western countries. Wan received his PhD in physics in Germany in 1991 and worked there over a decade. Chen obtained his PhD degree in medicine in France in 1989, and was one of the world’s leading hematology experts.²³

The growing number of Western-educated elites in the Chinese political system can be an important indicator to observe the openness and political transformation of China. It remains to be seen whether those returnees who hold public offices in both the government and the party will help propagate international norms and values as a result of their foreign experiences.

4. Policy Differences between Populist and Elitist

The Chinese political system is generally ruled by two major groups—a populist coalition and an elitist coalition. The populist coalition has advanced political careers primarily through the CCYL. The other coalition is the elitist coalition. Princelings are the core group of the elitist coalition. The two coalitions may take turns in directing future Chinese politics. In the Politburo, there are eight members in their 50s. Four leaders (Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Wang Yang, and Ling Jihua 令計劃) are in the populist camp. The other four leaders (Xi Jinping, Wang Qishan, Bo Xilai, and Wang Huning) belong to the elitist camp. Most populist members possess leadership experience in rural work, party organization, and propaganda affairs rather than in economic administration. The majority of the members of the elitists were born at a time when their parents’ generation assumed power in the Chinese politics. With advantageous background, some princelings had special connections to career advancement. For example, Xi Jinping served as secretary to Geng Biao (耿飆, then the Defense Minister), and Lou Jiwei (樓繼偉), served as the secretary to Zhu Rongji (朱鎔基, then the Shanghai Mayor). However, leaders with princeling backgrounds did not fare well in elections. Princelings’ rapid promotions have received criticism. Xi Jinping, Bo Xilai, and Chen Yuan (陳元) were on the ballot for membership on the Fourteenth Central Committee, but none were elected. Likewise, in the election for

²² Robert Lawrence Kuhn, “Building Intra-Party Democracy in China,” February 20, 2008, http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/feb2008/gb20080220_570563.htm.

²³ Cheng Li, *op.cit.* p.76.

the alternate members of the Fifteenth Central Committee, Xi Jinping received the fewest votes. Wang Qishan and Liu Yandong were also among the bottom ten of votes received.²⁴

The policy differences between the elitist coalition and the populist coalition were their perceptions on social and political issues. For example, Xi and Li had different policy priorities. Xi's enthusiasm for continuing private sector development and market liberalization was known to the Chinese public. Not surprisingly his primary policy concerns has included promoting economic efficiency, attaining a high rate of GDP growth, and integrating China further into the global economy. Xi favored continuing rapid growth of the coastal provinces as the means to resolving the remaining development challenges.²⁵ Li was noted for his concern for the unemployed, his efforts to improve the housing availability, and his desire to develop a social safety net, beginning with the provision of basic health care. Li's emphasis on employment has been recognized by general public since his tenure as party secretary in Liaoning. In 2007 Li promised that "if all the members of a family were jobless, the government would offer them employment within twenty days."²⁶ For Li, reducing economic disparities is a more urgent policy priority than enhancing economic efficiency.

In sum, with higher education and unique experiences of the Cultural Revolution, the fifth generation leaders were inclined to be more open to the democratic thinking, and welcome fair elections. The characteristics of these leaders as discussed above have shown a positive sign in pushing China towards democracy.

IV. Chinese Intra-Party Democracy

In response to the wave of global economic interdependence and political democratization, the CCP has attempted to increase its ruling capability by developing Intra-Party Democracy, which is the institutional dimension of party building.²⁷ In addition, the growing diversification of party membership and Chinese society calls for interest coordination within the CCP. The party elites are searching for

²⁴ Cheng Li, *Ibid.*, p.84. Xiao Chong, *The Fourth Generation of Leaders of the Chinese Communist Party* (Hong Kong: Xiafeier Guoji Chubangongsi, 1998), p. 337.

²⁵ J. Patrick Boyd, L. Gordon Flake, Cheng Li, Kenneth B. Pyle, Shelley Rigger, and Richard J. Samuels, *Emerging leaders in East Asia: The Next Generation of Political Leadership in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan* (Seattle, Washington: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), p.48.

²⁶ "Li Keqiang Promises That if All the Members of a Family Were Jobless, the Government Would Offer Them Employment within Twenty Days," http://www.lnxxw.gov.cn/document_show.asp?show_id=3188.

²⁷ Gang Lin, "Intra-Party Democracy: Institutional Innovations and Constraints," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, March/April 2004, pp.266-274.

institutional innovations without overhauling the existing one-party system.²⁸ When President Hu Jintao assumed presidency, he gradually carried out political reforms by improving governance and promoting Intra-Party Democracy.²⁹

In my opinion, multi-party competition and direct election is the foundation for political democracy. Yet, the Chinese leaders have shown no desire of moving in that direction. Instead, they have actively promoted the Intra-Party Democracy with Chinese characteristics. The Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Central Committee in 2009 has produced a wide-range plan for improvements to the CCP governing. The party has called for political reforms in three major areas, and they were as follows: first of all was the multi-candidate in an intra-party election. The essence of Intra-Party Democracy focused on the expansion of elections. The party intended to improve electoral methods by introducing more candidates, and gradually expanding the scope of direct elections. The cadres in Beijing have adopted a method of multi-candidate election known as a “more candidates than seats election” for the Central Committee. Second was “decision by votes.” Major decisions of the party should be determined by party committee vote. A candidate for an appointment must receive at least two-thirds of the votes to be confirmed. Third area was the institutional regulations. These included limits of a five-year term, and no more than two terms for top posts in the party and government. Moreover, leaders could not exceed a set age limit, and each province-level administration has two full membership seats on the Central Committee.³⁰

In China, important decisions are made by the Politburo, particularly the Standing Committee, headed by the core leader. Similarly, standing committee members of party committees at the local level, especially party secretaries, are the real decision-makers in their domains. In view of the political corruption resulting from power concentration in only a few hands, the CCP has chosen some local party committees as test sites for improvement of policymaking mechanisms.³¹ The official corruption has been severely criticized by general public and damaged CCP’s reputation in recent years. Thus, establishing a supervision system has become a top priority for the leaders.³² In general, the recent efforts advocated by CCP in enhancing the supervision system include the following components: 1) The Central Committee should send inspection teams to monitor anti-corruption work. 2) The

²⁸ Jeremy Page, “China Opens up Political Debate to Strengthen Party,” *Reuters News*, July 20, 2002.

²⁹ “CPC Issues New Rules to Promote Party’s Internal Democracy,” *People’s Daily*, July 17, 2008, see <http://english.people.com.cn>.

³⁰ Lianjiang Li, “The Two-Ballot System in Shanxi Province: Subjecting Village Party Secretaries to a Public Vote,” *China Quarterly*, no. 42, 1999, p. 107.

³¹ Gang Lin, *op.cit.*

³² Building of Political Democracy in China, <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/bjzl/t225536.htm>.

high-ranking leaders would be required to report the income and business activities. 3) Intra-Party Democracy aimed to enhance the rights of ordinary party members, including the right to access information, to participate in decision-making, to take part in elections, and to supervise the party.³³ Despite the CCP's efforts to make Intra-Party Democracy more than just rhetoric, there are obstacles. For example, the most powerful positions in the party and government were still decided by a few top leaders through give and take. The absence of a free press and an independent judiciary system also undermined the credibility of supervision.

Several fifth generation leaders were enthusiastic about Intra-Party Democracy. In 2006, an article entitled "Democracy is a Good Thing" in *People Daily*, Yu Keping presented new thinking of democracy that was close to Western interpretations. Yu emphasized that Democracy is not only a means to solve people's livelihood issues, but it is a goal of human development. The essence of democracy is that people rule. However, Yu indicated that China's democratization would have to be a slow process with Chinese characteristics.³⁴ Li Yuanchao and Wang Yang are the leading figures in promoting Intra-Party Democracy. Jiangsu and Guangdong was an experimental area for multi-candidate elections under their leadership. While serving as Party Secretary in Nanjing and Jiangsu from 2001 to 2007, Li implemented intra-party elections. When Wang became Guangdong Party secretary in 2007, he proclaimed that Guangdong should lead a new wave of "thought emancipation" with an emphasis on political reforms and the election of local leaders.³⁵ Robert Lawrence Kuhn is a longtime China watcher. He had a private interview with Li Yuanchao, who is the head of the CCP's Organization Department, has appointed senior officials in central and provincial governments and is likely to head National People's Congress after 2012. Li explained how Chinese government regards Intra-Party Democracy as the cornerstone of political reform because it achieves multiple objectives: it empowers party members, increases transparency, prevents arbitrary decision-making, and expands direct elections at local levels. Li is convinced that on political reform there is now a major shift in how Chinese leaders think. It starts to build democracy in the party, and then to expand it into the general populace.³⁶

The CCP thought that the multi-party competition and direct election was the western countries' definition of democracy, which was not suitable to the Chinese

³³ Cheng Li, "Intra-Party Democracy in China: Should We Take It Seriously?" *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 30 (Fall 2009), p.10.

<http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM30CL.pdf>

³⁴ Yu Keping, "Democracy is a Good Thing," *People Daily*, October 28, 2006, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/49150/49152/5224247.html>.

³⁵ Cheng Li, "Intra-Party Democracy in China: Should We Take It Seriously?" *op.cit.*, p.5.

³⁶ Robert Lawrence Kuhn, *op.cit.*

situation. Instead, the Beijing leadership believed that the Chinese-style Intra-Party democracy could offer good governance to respond the demands at home and abroad. Thus, they have ushered in multi-candidate election, decision by votes, institutional regulations, and a supervision system to elevate the party credibility. As China has carried on its practices of the Intra-Party Democracy, the people would request government to accelerate the process of democratic reform. What is more, some of the fifth generation leaders are strong supporters of this mechanism. The Chinese government would be likely to move up the level of elections, and increase the transparency of decision-making process. Although the aim of Intra-Party Democracy is to strengthen the one-party system instead of promoting Western-style multi-party democracy, an unintended consequence of Intra-Party Democracy may be to cause ordinary people to question the political legitimacy of the one-party rule.³⁷ This mechanism may save the one-party system for some time in China, but political competition and elections will offer Chinese people more political rights, freedom of speech, and participation, 38 which might serve a positive sign for China's future democratization.

V. The Prospect of Future Chinese Democracy

China has taken the experiences of other countries in building democracy. However it has repeatedly stated that China's democratic development should cater to its own conditions by advocating democracy with Chinese characteristics, based on its own history and culture.³⁹ Village elections, township elections, and intra-party democracy are the early stages for China's future democratic transition. The success of village elections has proven that ordinary Chinese desire individual freedom and political participation.⁴⁰ The Chinese government has also started township elections in some areas in the late 1990s. Spreading elections from the rural area to cities would be the important step for successful democratization in China. If the linkage between village elections and township elections indicates a bottom-up political reform, then intra-party democracy shows a top-down transformation of moving democracy.⁴¹ Despite these optimistic assessments, it should be noted that China's democratic transition still faces uncertainties and challenges in the future. It is unlikely that the CCP will start a democratic transition through either a multi-party system or a full

³⁷ "Law Aims to Ensure Fair Elections," *People's Daily*, August 4, 2008, <http://english.people.com.cn>.

³⁸ Kai He and Huiyun Feng, "A Path to Democracy: In Search of China's Democratization Model," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2008, pp. 160-166.

³⁹ Robert Lawrence Kuhn, *Op.cit.*

⁴⁰ Jie Chen, "Popular Support for Village Self-Government in China: Intensity and Sources," *Asian Survey*, vol. 45, No. 6 (2006), pp. 865-885.

⁴¹ Kai He and Huiyun Feng, *op.cit.*

range, competitive, intra-party mechanism in the near future.⁴² However, if democracy is a good thing for China, it may come when the time is right.

The fifth generation leaders are diversified in their views on political democracy. Generally speaking, leaders of the populist coalition are more interested than the elitist coalition in promoting multiple-candidate competitions. Populists are more effective in addressing issues such as social fairness and distributive justice. For the multiple-candidate contest, populists are less scared than princelings by the prospect of low-level elections. Li Yuanchao and Wang Yang, strong advocates of the populist coalition, have called for faster democratic reforms. Both leaders have addressed the importance of political democracy, fighting corruption, and government accountability. For instance, Li Yuanchao asked the public to evaluate officials and pioneered the implementation of intra-party elections. He criticized the mentality of some leaders who were obsessed with stability and refused to try new political experiments. Li claimed that the problem was not that Chinese leaders lack wisdom but rather that these leaders need more courage to pursue bolder reforms.⁴³ Wang Yang once said that the principal objective for Guangdong was no longer economic growth but rather political development. With the fifth generation leaders gradually coming into power, China has entered a new era characterized by growing pluralism in the society and a collective leadership based on factional checks and balances of power. Since CCP cadres perceived that introducing the western style of the democracy may cause the change of the regime. The promotion of Intra-Party Democracy may be a necessary approach to enhance the CCP leadership and to secure its power.

In 2007, Henry Rowen published the article “When Will the Chinese People Be Free?”, in which he predicted that by 2015 China would have become at least ‘partly free’ (by the Freedom House ratings) – a more pluralistic political system. China will be expanding levels of education and growing societal pluralism, which will likely press the state to grant more political freedom and competition in order to maintain legitimacy. By 2025, the majority of Chinese will have entered the middle class. Having enjoyed a better life, they will seek for more justice and freedom.⁴⁴ To meet the expectations of rising middle class, Chinese leaders will allow much greater freedom to replace leaders at levels of governance above the level of the village. There are also other means of international influence. Millions of Chinese are visiting

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Xinhua News Agency, August 11, 2005, <http://www.xinhuanet.com>. Cheng Li, ed., *China's Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

⁴⁴ Henry S. Rowen, ‘When Will the Chinese People Be Free?’ *Journal of Democracy* 18 (July 2007).

democratic countries and studying abroad.⁴⁵ Moreover, a freer media is more inclined to report sensitive cases as well as to play an active role in overseeing the local governments. What is more, the Internet, and cell phones is enabling them to connect with one another and to keep in touch across a wide range of activities. For all these reasons, the national civic networking necessary for a mass democratic movement is slowly taking place, and may have a surprising capacity to shake the system when the time is right.⁴⁶

It is true that Intra-Party Democracy is different from the multi-party democracy advocated by the West. However, there are reasons to believe that this system is a positive sign for China's future democratization. The continuous promotion of this mechanism will inevitably encourage people to pursue more political freedom and individual liberty at the national level. Although the initial intention of Intra-Party Democracy was to strengthen the one-party system, the consequence of practice may cause people to challenge the legitimacy of the one-party system. In the future, the Chinese democracy will slowly and gradually take shape.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Andrew Nathan, 'China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience,' *Journal of Democracy* 14 (January 2003): 6-17.

⁴⁶ Larry Diamond, "Can China become a democracy?"
http://www.india-seminar.com/2007/576/576_larry_diamond.htm.

⁴⁷ Kai He and Huiyun Feng, *op.cit.*

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