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In Search of China's Development Model

Beyond the Beijing Consensus

**Edited by S. Philip Hsu, Yu-Shan Wu
and Suisheng Zhao**

*Under the auspices of
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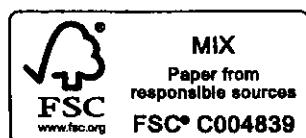
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9 Elite recruitment and the duality of the Chinese party-state

The mobility of Western-educated returnee elites in China, 1978–2008

Chien-wen Kou

According to China's official statistics, from 1978 to 2007 a total of 1,211,700 Chinese students and scholars studied abroad—most in Western countries—and about one-quarter of this group returned to China after completing their period of overseas study or research.¹ Many of these returnees work in universities and research institutes, state-owned companies, and private enterprises. Some even became part of the ruling elite group.² With the rapid expansion of the returnee group, the role of Western-educated returnees in China's modernization process merits attention.

During the past three decades, scholars have discussed many issues relating to overseas and returned Chinese students. With the progress of economic and political development in the reform era, new themes have gradually appeared in the literature. The first issue is the brain drain occurring from China to Western countries due to the fact that most Chinese students have not returned after finishing their studies abroad. Factors affecting students' decisions to return or not return—for example, political stability, individual freedom, family backgrounds, career development, salary, and research facilities³—have been examined in various studies.

The literature also discusses reverse brain drain, a process that occurs when the number of returnees increases continuously, as resulted from China's rapid economic growth after the 1990s and from the 1992 adoption of the “come and go freely” (*lai qu ziyou*) policy toward returnees. This literature explores China's strategies to encourage the return of overseas Chinese professionals, tactics such as providing preferential financial support to returnees and easing the restrictions on returning. The literature also investigates the status and mobility of returnees in China's higher education.⁴

Transnational human capital has become a new focus in the literature in the past several years, particularly after China's 2001 appeal to overseas Chinese professionals that they could serve their homeland without returning to China permanently. This particular literature has examined returned scholars' research and teaching performance, as well as their ability to bring benefits to their universities, and has analyzed the activities in which overseas Chinese professionals are encouraged to engage, such as lecturing and establishing businesses in China.⁵

With few exceptions, little attention is currently being directed to those Western-educated returnees serving in public offices.⁶ They are a special group

among Chinese elites, with the advanced knowledge in technology, management, and other fields that is urgently needed for China's modernization. However, due to their overseas experiences in the West, these returnees, as potential carriers of democratic values, may eventually soften one-party rule in China. In the recruitment of elites, how does the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) reconcile this possible tension between political loyalty and professional expertise as it seeks to achieve the dual goals of regime stability and economic growth? This issue is crucial to the survival of the communist regime.

This chapter identifies China's recruitment of Western-educated returnees into the party-state as *promotion with reservation*. Many returnees are appointed by the CCP as ranking cadres for economic development; however, these appointees not only face political obstacles to advancing upward mobility but also find that their promotion channels and workplaces are limited. The CCP needs returnees' professional expertise for development, but is concerned about the threat Western democratic values pose to regime stability. Accordingly, the CCP recruits returnees with reservation.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part illustrates the effect of the duality of the Chinese party-state on the recruitment pattern of Western-educated returnee elites. The second part addresses the research design of this study. In the third part, the focus turns to analyzing returnee elites' overseas study experiences, primarily their academic fields and purpose of foreign study. In the fourth part, this study analyzes returnee elites' political mobility in terms of rank promotions, office categories, and party affiliation. This study also examines the differences in mobility paths among various returnee elite groups.

The nature of the Chinese party-state and elite recruitment

Elite recruitment, including both eligibility for elite status and selection to specific elite positions, is a crucial function of a political system.⁷ It reflects the dominant political values of the political system, particularly the preferences of the screening institutions and the distribution of political influence among social groups. Elite recruitment also affects avenues for political participation and status by making certain credentials and resources more important than others, while also affecting the stability of the system.⁸ In other words, the nature of a political system affects the pattern of elite recruitment, which in turn provides clues with which to evaluate change and stability of the system in the years to come. Following this logic, this section will first illustrate the nature of the Chinese party-state and then discuss its impact on the recruitment pattern of returnee elites.

Regime nature: capitalist developmentalism and post-totalitarianism

The Chinese party-state in the reform era is both *capitalist developmental* and *post-totalitarian*. The duality of the Chinese party-state is precisely reflected in the phrase "one center and two basic points," which was officially adopted by the CCP in 1987. The Party has treated economic development as the central task of

the present era, simultaneously advancing both the four cardinal principles and the policy of reform and opening. Although he lacked a complete blueprint of reform, Deng Xiaoping did have clear goals: to push forward China's economic modernization and to preserve the CCP's grip on power. These two goals profoundly shaped the nature of the party-state in the reform era and then affected its recruitment policy.

Facing the catastrophe caused by the Cultural Revolution, in 1978 Deng Xiaoping shifted the party line from continuous revolution to economic development. Because state planning had become more associated with stagnation than with growth, Deng searched for a new development model. Using state-driven industrial policies to expand the private economic sector, the CCP gradually installed a state capitalist economy.⁹ In order to carry out reform policies, the CCP abolished the system of life-tenure for leading cadres and recruited younger and better-educated technocrats. The rise of technocrats has become a striking phenomenon in today's China.¹⁰

Accordingly, the Chinese party-state shares some features with the East Asian developmental model.¹¹ Key components in the East Asian experiences—such as development-minded top leaders, economic technocrats, state autonomy from society, and legitimization by performance in rapid economic growth—can be found in the Chinese model, though significant differences between China and East Asian countries do exist, as the introductory chapter of this book has stated.

Developmentalism is but one characteristic of the Chinese party-state, which also possesses a post-totalitarian trait.¹² The CCP's enthusiasm for communist utopia has gradually been replaced by economic development, as exemplified by the evolution of official ideology from the systematic interpretation of "the primary state of socialism" (*shehuizhuyi chuji jieduan*) in the report to the 13th Party Congress in 1987 to the addition of "three represents" (*sange daibiao*) into the Party Charter in 2002. The intensity and extensiveness of massive political movements for rectifying the Party and its working style (*zhengdang zhengfeng*) have also declined significantly in the reform era.¹³ Further, leadership replacement and collective decision-making in the power center have been institutionalized to a certain extent.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the CCP has refused to replace the socialist political establishment by Western democratic institutions. The Party has retained its control over personnel appointments, the repressive apparatus, and major mass media. The CCP also firmly represses autonomous social forces that may threaten its rule, such as Falungong. In order to defend its one-party rule, the CCP has built up a theory of socialist democracy with particularly Chinese characteristics.¹⁵ Political reforms, such as administrative innovation, streamlining, and intra-party democracy, must be subject to the leading role of the CCP. These phenomena demonstrate that the Chinese party-state has post-totalitarian traits such as political monopoly, the penetration of the state into civil society, the waning role of communist utopia in guiding national development, the institutionalization of collective leadership, and the decline of mass mobilization in scale and frequency.

Elite recruitment: promotion with reservation

The deductive consequence of the duality of the Chinese party-state on the recruitment pattern of Western-educated elites is *promotion with reservation*. Chinese leaders are willing to place these returnees in ranking posts but, at the same time, aim to prevent them from potentially destabilizing the regime by limiting their opportunities to hold posts that are strategically important to the survival of the regime. Returnees possess advanced knowledge and professional expertise. The CCP definitely welcomes returnees serving their homeland for development; after all, this is the main reason that China opened the door of foreign study to young students and scholars.

However, from the perspective of the CCP, Western-educated returnees may, nonetheless, have the potential to destabilize the regime. The inclusion of new elites is a key element for an organization to cope with environmental changes. While the cooperation of new elites allows an organization to obtain new expertise and resources that may increase its chance of survival, this strategy of adaptation may also endanger the organization if these co-opted elites do not accept its goals.¹⁶ The CCP faces such a dilemma when it recruits Western-educated talents. Due to their exposure to democratic life during the period of foreign study, these recruits may come to be sympathetic to Western democratic values, which are in conflict with the political values of the communist regime.¹⁷ The expectation of many Westerners is that these Chinese returnees not only have learned science and technology but also have come to understand, if not accept, the cultural and political values of their host countries. Accordingly, the CCP fears the subtle evolution of the socialist regime by the influence of the West on returnees.¹⁸ This concern is not simply unwarranted anxiety. The cultivation of American political values into elites of other nations by means of ideological persuasion and transnational learning could and would alleviate the cost that the United States would pay to achieve its foreign policy goals via material inducement and sanctions.¹⁹ Accordingly, it is a central concern for the CCP to reduce this political risk in the process of recruiting Western-educated returnees into the cohort of ruling political elites.

Under these circumstances, the upward mobility of Western-educated returnee elites in China must depend on both professional expertise and political reliability, two considerations reflected in the Party's criteria for selection of these elites. Returnees are more likely to occupy certain types of ranking posts, such as heads of technical ministries in the government and directors of major universities. They usually play a leadership role in limited functional areas such as education, science and technology, finance, foreign trade, and foreign affairs. Nevertheless, they seldom work in organization, propaganda, ideology, and military and national security organs and are less likely to become top leaders in the regime. Furthermore, certain returnee groups, such as those who have studied abroad for short periods, those who have studied the natural sciences and economics and management, those receiving public financial support for foreign study, and those who have been visiting scholars and trainees, are relatively more welcome than other returnees to enter the ruling group.²⁰

This pattern of *promotion with reservation* in China is distinguished from the normal recruitment pattern under the totalitarian/post-totalitarian state and from the pattern under the developmental state. The recruitment pattern under the totalitarian/post-totalitarian state can be best labeled as *reservation*. In the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and pre-reform China, the Party seldom sent significant numbers of students and scholars to the West for study and research, due to the belief in the superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist, both economically and politically. For example, from the 1950s to the 1970s, China sent limited numbers of students to Western countries, and those who went were sent with the purpose of foreign language education.²¹ During this time period, returnees could not enter the leadership of the Party and the government, although some were active in the fields of foreign affairs, higher education, and technology.²²

Under the East Asian developmental state, Western-educated returnees face fewer political barriers to entry into the ruling elite group, and thus the recruitment pattern can be described as *promotion*. For example, Taiwan and South Korea maintained close military, economic, and political relationships with the United States after World War II. These ties provided the foundation for young talents of these East Asian countries to study in the United States and other Western countries. In order to expedite economic growth, authoritarian rulers in these countries offered many policies to attract their Western-educated students to serve their homeland.²³ In addition, close ties with the United States made authoritarian rulers in these two East Asian countries politically less suspicious of and less resistant to Western-educated returnees. Many returnees were thus appointed to hold strategic, critical positions in both the government and the party apparatus. In Taiwan, many returnee-turned-officials served in both the government and the Kuomintang party apparatus and played a positive role in democratization.²⁴ In Korea, a significant proportion of ruling political elites from the 1960s to the 1970s had also had foreign study experiences.²⁵

Definition, sources of data, methodology

Having indicated the effect of regime nature on the recruitment of Western-educated returnee elites, this section defines the concept of Western-educated returnee elites and describes the sources of data. Following the strategy of positional analysis,²⁶ this chapter defines Western-educated returnee elites as civilian officials born in China who have spent at least three months in Western countries for study, training or research, and have held a post at the vice-minister level or above in the Party apparatus, the government, the judicial system, the People's Congress, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), official mass organizations, major state-owned enterprises, or major universities and research institutes in the period from January 1979 to April 2008.

This study adopts a loose definition of returnee elites for the purpose of comparison and contrast. This definition sets the minimum requirement of foreign study length at three months, shorter than Cheng Li's one-year requirement.²⁷ This significantly increases the number of returnees under analysis and allows the study to

compare the mobility of returnee elites with various foreign study experiences, from short-term training to doctoral degrees. Returnees with a leadership post in the People's Congress, the Chinese Political Consultative Conference, official mass organizations, democratic parties, and major universities and research institutes are included, although their political role is mainly ritual or policy-consultative.

In order to depict the impact of the dual traits of the Chinese state on the mobility pattern of Western-educated returnee elites in the reform era, this chapter will engage in two kinds of comparison. The first kind of comparison targets the differences in mobility pattern among various returnee elite subgroups. The second kind of comparison focuses on the differences in career pattern between returnee elites and nationwide ranking cadres. Due to the unavailability of complete and systematic information about the mobility trends of the latter group, the chapter will instead use incumbent provincial leaders or other elite groups as the reference.

The biographical data in this study are primarily drawn from these sources: (1) the Chinese political elite database (<http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/index.htm>) constructed by the author since December 2003; (2) official websites of ministries, commissions, the People's Bank of China and administrations of the State Council, 31 provinces, major universities, and research institutes; (3) official websites of *People's Daily* (<http://edu.people.com.cn>) and Xinhua News Agency (<http://www.xinhuanet.com>). The biographical data were last updated in mid-April 2008. Some biographical histories are incomplete, due to the unavailability of information.

In order to present the CCP's preference of recruiting Western-educated returnee elites, this study analyzes the following types of data: (1) major fields of foreign study, (2) purposes of foreign study, (3) workplace types, (4) rank promotions, and (5) party affiliation. Major fields are composed of four types, including natural sciences and engineering, economics and management, social sciences, and humanities. Returnees' purposes of foreign study are divided into five categories: visiting scholars, training, bachelor degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree. If a returnee has gone to Western countries several times for various purposes, he is classified into the category of highest degree obtained abroad. The classification for those who studied abroad without obtaining a degree is based on the purpose of foreign study which has the longest duration. Returnees' workplaces are classified into four categories, including party, government (including the judicial system), major universities and research institutions, and peripheral organizations (including democratic parties, mass organizations, major state-owned enterprises and the People's Congress and the CPPCC). These office types represent returnee elites' mobility channels. Rank promotions indicate the first year to hold posts ranking at the vice-minister, minister, and leader levels, respectively. When a returnee holds some posts of different ranking levels, only the highest one is counted. This variable records returnee elites' upward escalation. The last variable under analysis is party affiliation, including CCP members and non-CCP members.

After collecting and compiling data, this study obtained the biographical history of 315 retired and incumbent officials who qualified for the definition of returnee elites. Their share in the whole elite population ranking at the vice-minister level and above in 1979–2008 should remain small because the number of ranking

cadres is usually over 2,000 per year.²⁸ Although Western-educated returnee elites are a small proportion of Chinese political elites, the statistical results clearly show the pattern of *promotion with reservation*.

Returnee elites' foreign study experiences

Major fields of foreign study

Now the focus moves to analysis of the returnee elites' foreign study experiences in terms of major fields and purposes of foreign study. Since returnees' purpose of foreign study is highly correlated with their duration of foreign study, this chapter does not discuss the latter. A returnee usually spends four years or longer overseas if his purpose of foreign study is to obtain a doctoral degree. On the contrary, a visiting scholar or trainee seldom stays overseas longer than one year, unless he has been abroad several times.

As Table 9.1 shows, at the vice-minister rank level, returnees with natural sciences and economics majors overwhelmingly outnumber those majoring in social sciences and humanities. The joint percentage of the former two majors ranges between 75.1 percent and 100 percent in the past three decades. However, the share of returnee elites with natural sciences majors shrinks from 100.0 percent to 47.8 percent in the past two decades, while the percentage of those with an economics background increases from 0.0 percent to 32.8 percent. Those majoring in social sciences and humanities constitute 14–21 percent of the entire returnee elites after the late-1980s. The major fields of returnee elites at the minister and the leader rank levels are not analyzed because their majors, as well as their purpose of foreign study, do not change in the process of upward mobility.

Table 9.1 Returnee elites' major fields

Major fields		Period					Total	
		1979–83	1984–88	1989–93	1994–98	1999–03		2004–08
Natural sciences and engineering	N	7	11	16	37	44	32	147
	%	100.0%	68.8%	76.2%	71.2%	54.3%	47.8%	60.2%
Economics and management	N	0	1	2	6	20	22	51
	%	0.0%	6.3%	9.5%	11.5%	24.7%	32.8%	20.9%
Social sciences	N	0	2	2	3	10	9	27
	%	0.0%	12.5%	9.5%	5.8%	12.3%	14.9%	11.1%
Humanities	N	0	2	1	6	7	3	19
	%	0.0%	12.5%	4.8%	11.5%	8.6%	4.5%	7.8%
Total	N	7	16	21	52	81	67	244
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* N refers to the number of returnees holding a vice-minister level post for the first time in a period interval.

The statistical results clearly indicate the recruitment pattern of *promotion with reservation*. On the one hand, the Party's preference to recruit returnees trained in natural sciences, engineering, economics, and management reveals the primary role of these foreign-educated talents in the modernization of China. The shrinking of the share of returnee elites with technical backgrounds further reflects that the Party has gradually adjusted its recruitment policy over time with the different stages of socio-economic development and the needs of governance. This phenomenon is consistent with the tendency of the latest nationwide pattern of elite mobility. For example, after the recent reshufflings of provincial party and governmental leaderships, only 26 out of 98 provincial party secretaries and deputy party secretaries and about 50 out of 270 governors and vice-governors are trained in natural sciences and engineering.²⁹

On the other hand, the upward mobility of returnees with social sciences and humanities backgrounds is constrained. In the past two decades, their share in the returnee elite group has usually been less than one-fifth. However, in the past decade, these educational credentials have been increasingly important among the Chinese political elites overall. As of June 2006, 37.1 percent of the 62 provincial party secretaries and governors had majored in social sciences and humanities; in April 2008, 33.9 percent held these majors.³⁰ Such an overall difference between returnee elites and Chinese political elites in educational credentials outlines the CCP's reservations on recruiting returnees with social sciences and humanities majors. Due to the nature of their disciplines, these returnees are more likely to be exposed to the workings of democracy and its cultural and philosophical foundation during their foreign study durations than those majoring in natural sciences and engineering.

Purpose of foreign study

Table 9.2 shows that, after the early 1990s, returnee elites who went abroad as visiting scholars and trainees overwhelmingly outnumber those with postgraduate study experiences. Their share gradually increases from 25 percent in the early 1980s to 66.2 percent in the mid-2000s, and steadily holds at 60 percent or more in the past two decades. The percentage of returnees receiving doctoral degrees from overseas universities declines from 50 percent in the early 1980s to 9.1 percent in the early 1990s, and ranges from 20 percent to 26 percent thereafter.

The above distribution of returnee elites' purpose of foreign study also indicates the recruitment pattern of *promotion with reservation*. Returnees with doctoral degrees from overseas universities make up 23.3 percent of all returnee elites, while those receiving master's and bachelor degrees make up 10.5 percent and 3.8 percent respectively. Postgraduate students, particularly doctoral students, are more likely to learn advanced knowledge from the West. The share of returnees with doctoral degrees becomes relatively stable after the mid-1990s. The existence of ranking cadres with doctoral degrees from overseas universities represents the Party's focus on modernization because they usually occupy a leading post in the ministries in charge of economics, technology, education and other professional

Table 9.2 Returnee elites' purpose of foreign study

<i>Purposes of foreign study</i>		<i>Period</i>						<i>Total</i>
		<i>1979-83</i>	<i>1984-88</i>	<i>1989-93</i>	<i>1994-98</i>	<i>1999-03</i>	<i>2004-08</i>	
Visiting scholars	N	0	2	10	26	41	24	103
	%	0.00%	13.30%	45.50%	40.00%	40.20%	32.40%	35.90%
Training	N	2	4	5	17	22	26	76
	%	25.00%	26.70%	22.70%	26.20%	21.60%	34.70%	26.50%
Bachelor degree	N	0	2	2	4	1	2	11
	%	0.00%	13.30%	9.10%	6.20%	1.00%	2.70%	3.80%
Master's degree	N	2	2	3	4	11	8	30
	%	25.00%	13.30%	13.60%	6.20%	10.80%	10.70%	10.50%
Doctoral degree	N	4	5	2	14	27	15	67
	%	50.00%	33.30%	9.10%	21.50%	26.50%	20.00%	23.30%
Total	N	8	15	22	65	102	75	287
	%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

* N refers to the number of returnees holding a vice-minister level post for the first time.

fields. For example, Gao Xiqing (Vice Chairman of the China Security Regulatory Commission, CSRC, from 1999–2003) played an important role in creating China's stock exchanges.³¹ Laura Cha May Lung (Vice Chairman of the CSRC from 2001–2004) focused on improving the corporate governance of Chinese listed companies and the process of public issuance of shares in China.³²

Nevertheless, the share of returnee elites with doctoral degrees does not significantly increase with the integration of China into the global market, and more and more Western-educated PhD degree holders have returned home after the 1990s. This phenomenon is inconsistent with the increasing importance of postgraduate education backgrounds in the entirety of Chinese elites. For example, a news report in February 2008 indicated that, of the total of 270 governors and vice-governors, 210 have postgraduate education experiences (77.8 percent), of whom 58 obtained doctoral degrees (21.5 percent).³³ Another news report in August 2007 revealed that, among provincial party secretaries and deputy party secretaries, 60 percent of 98 have postgraduate education backgrounds,³⁴ and most of them had been locally educated.³⁵ This pattern of recruitment is very different from Kuomintang's recruitment policy under authoritarian rule in Taiwan.

The Party's recruitment preference leans toward returnees with short-term teaching, research, and training for several reasons. Visiting scholars and trainees usually have a full-time job in educational and research institutes, or even hold a post in the government at various levels before going abroad, and have deeper contacts with the political establishment. They are also usually older and politically more mature than those studying abroad for degrees. In addition, the shorter the length of time that returnees stay in the West, the less likely they are to be "polluted" by Western democratic values. They are more likely to be treated as

politically reliable by the party-state. Finally, these returnees are ready to serve the homeland within a shorter amount of time, matching the Party's urgent need for development. The rise of these returnee elites is the Party's solution to reconcile the tension between modernization and political reliability.

Meanwhile, China's endeavors to improve the knowledge of officials through various international training programs also demonstrate the indispensability of Western knowledge to China's modernization. Since the early 1990s, China has gradually, but systematically, sent potential young cadres from central and local governments to participate in international short-term training programs.³⁶ These programs are usually co-sponsored by the Chinese central and local governments and foreign universities, such as Harvard University, Yale University, Oxford University, Cambridge University, Australian National University, and the University of Sydney.³⁷ These programs are designed to build the knowledge and skills in various issues, which are urgently needed for China's socioeconomic development, such as managerial economics, rural reform, public management, urban and sustainable development, environmental protection, and public administration. Trainees are typically officials at the middle- and low-ranking levels, but some are vice-ministers and vice-governors. More than 90 percent of the officials at the provincial or ministry level have received training abroad, costing China more than US\$12 million every year.³⁸

Returnee elites' political mobility

Rank promotions, promotion channels and party affiliations

This section focuses on returnee elites' career paths, including rank promotions, workplace types and party affiliations. As Table 9.3 shows, returnees seldom advance to the vice-minister rank level through the party channel. The share of those who do advance to this level ranges from 4.5 percent to 18.8 percent in the past 30 years. Increasingly, returnees receive promotions by holding governmental posts. The percentage gradually increases from 22.2 percent in the early 1980s to 46.8 percent in the 2000s. About one-fifth to one-quarter of returnees rely on the university channel to become vice-minister level cadres after the mid-1980s, while the role of peripheral organizations declines, from more than one-third in the 1980s to less than one-fifth in the mid-2000s.

For returnees advancing to the minister rank level, 50–66.7 percent obtain promotions after the early 1990s due to their appointment to governmental posts. Leadership posts in the peripheral organizations provide the other major promotion channel for returnees. Commonly, more than one-third of returnee elites rise to the minister rank level in different periods through this channel. On the contrary, the party channel remains a difficult one for returnees. In the past 30 years, only two returnees have risen to the minister rank through the party channel: Wang Huning and Hua Jianmin.

For returnees at the leader rank level, peripheral organizations provide the only major channel of upward mobility. The percentage varies from 80 percent to

Table 9.3 Returnee elites' promotion channels by rank levels

<i>Advancing to the vice-minister rank</i>								
<i>Office categories</i>		<i>Period</i>						<i>Total</i>
		<i>1979-83</i>	<i>1984-88</i>	<i>1989-93</i>	<i>1994-98</i>	<i>1999-03</i>	<i>2004-08</i>	
Party	N	1	3	1	7	9	12	33
	%	11.1%	18.8%	4.5%	10.8%	8.7%	15.6%	11.3%
Government	N	2	5	9	20	48	36	120
	%	22.2%	31.3%	40.9%	30.8%	46.6%	46.8%	41.1%
Major universities and research institutes	N	3	4	4	13	20	16	60
	%	33.3%	25.0%	18.2%	20.0%	19.4%	20.8%	20.5%
Peripheral organizations	N	3	4	8	25	26	13	79
	%	33.3%	25.0%	36.4%	38.5%	25.2%	16.9%	27.1%
Total	N	9	16	22	65	103	77	292
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Advancing to the minister rank

<i>Advancing to the minister rank</i>								
<i>Office categories</i>		<i>Period</i>						<i>Total</i>
		<i>1979-83</i>	<i>1984-88</i>	<i>1989-93</i>	<i>1994-98</i>	<i>1999-03</i>	<i>2004-08</i>	
Party	N	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%	4.3%
Government	N	0	1	2	6	7	7	23
	%	0.0%	16.7%	66.7%	50.0%	58.3%	58.3%	50.0%
Major universities and research institutes	N	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Peripheral organizations	N	1	4	1	4	4	5	19
	%	100.0%	66.7%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	41.7%	41.3%
Total	N	1	6	3	12	12	12	46
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Advancing to the leader rank

<i>Advancing to the leader rank</i>								
<i>Office categories</i>		<i>Period</i>						<i>Total</i>
		<i>1979-83</i>	<i>1984-88</i>	<i>1989-93</i>	<i>1994-98</i>	<i>1999-03</i>	<i>2004-08</i>	
Party	N	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	20.0%	10.0%	10.3%
Government	N	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	10.0%	10.3%
Peripheral organizations	N	4	2	2	5	2	8	23
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	83.3%	40.0%	80.0%	79.3%
Total	N	4	2	2	6	5	10	29
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* N refers to the number of returnees obtaining rank promotion.

100 percent, with the exception of the period from 1999 to 2003. Advancing to the rank of leader through appointment to party posts also remains difficult for returnees. In fact, only three returnees in the past 30 years have followed this escalation path: Huang Ju, Chen Liangyu and Wang Huning. Another three returnees advanced to become leaders through the government channel: Hua Jianmin, Chen Zhili and Cao Jianming.

The above phenomena reflect the CCP's focus on both economic development and political reliability. The number and the percentage of returnees advancing to the vice-minister level and the minister rank levels through the government channel increases over time. Returnees are able to head technical and management ministries of the State Council,³⁹ and they are also able to make contributions to modernization in the field of higher education by leading major universities and research institutions. This reveals that the CCP is willing to use returnees' expertise for development.

On the other hand, the mobility of Western-educated returnees in the party-state is inhibited for several reasons. First, the CCP is not enthusiastic about assigning returnees to leading posts in the party apparatus. For example, Table 9.4 shows that only 18.9 percent of returnee elites have held a full-time post at the vice-minister level in the Party while 81.1 percent have not. The percentage decreases to 14.3 percent at the minister level and further declines to 10 percent at the leader level. This recruitment pattern has been constant over time in the past three decades. Second, although the CCP appoints some returnees to leadership posts in provincial governments and in the functional ministries within the State Council, it is reluctant to pick them to head the CCP Politburo and the State Council. In fact, most returnees obtain their leader rank in the National People's Congress and the national committee of the CPPCC. Third, returnees seldom have the opportunity to become provincial party secretaries and governors, positions that have become the training ground for the leadership of the party and the central government.⁴⁰ In fact, over the past three decades, only seven returnees at the minister rank level have ever held one of these two strategically important posts in their political career.⁴¹

Party affiliation also reinforces the political obstacles returnee elites face in the process of upward escalation to the top leadership of the Party and the government. As Table 9.5 shows, the shares of non-CCP members at the vice-minister, the

Table 9.4 Returnee elites' working experiences in the Party

<i>Rank level of posts</i>		<i>Working experiences in the Party</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
Vice-minister	N	57	244	301
	%	18.9%	81.1%	100.0%
Minister	N	7	42	49
	%	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
Leader	N	3	27	30
	%	10.0%	90.0%	100.0%

Table 9.5 Returnee elites' party affiliation

Rank levels		Party affiliation		Total
		CCP members	Non-CCP members	
Vice-minister	N	180	112	292
	%	61.6%	38.4%	100.0%
Full minister	N	32	14	46
	%	69.6%	30.4%	100.0%
Leader	N	12	17	29
	%	41.4%	58.6%	100.0%

minister, and the leader rank levels are 38.5 percent, 30.4 percent, and 58.6 percent, respectively. The share of non-CCP members in the returnee elite group is much higher than that among Chinese ranking officials overall. From 1981 to 1998, the yearly percentage of non-CCP members among all ranking officials was less than 13 percent.⁴² Accordingly, a significant proportion of returnee elites—those without CCP membership—have no opportunities to become real decision-makers. This increases the political barriers to upward mobility that returnees face.

The effect of the purpose of foreign study on rank promotions and their channels

This section focuses on the purpose of foreign study, particularly short-term foreign study (visiting scholars and training) and long-term foreign study (doctoral degree), as it affects rank promotions and promotion channels. This chapter will not discuss the effect of major fields on rank promotions and promotion channels because as Table 9.1 has shown, returnees with natural sciences and economics majors overwhelmingly outnumber those majoring in social sciences and humanities.

As Table 9.6 shows, when returnee elites advance to the vice-minister rank, more than 50 percent of those with foreign experiences of training, pursuing a bachelor's degree, or pursuing a master's degree advance through the government channel, while another 16.7–25 percent do so via the party channel. Returnee elites with experiences as visiting scholars and in doctoral study follow a different mobility path; about 60 percent of them had worked for major universities, research institutes, and peripheral organizations when they received rank promotions. Another one-third of them have advanced to the vice-minister rank level by holding governmental posts, and only 4.3–6.7 percent received rank promotions at party posts.

When returnee elites advance to the minister rank, more than half of those with experiences as visiting scholars and with foreign training come through the government channel, while another 27.3–41.2 percent obtain promotions at leadership posts in peripheral organizations. By contrast, one-half of returnees receiving a doctoral degree from foreign universities advance to the minister rank

at leadership posts in peripheral organizations, and another 40 percent advance through the government channel. Party posts are not an easy promotion channel for returnees, particularly for those returnees who receive degrees from overseas universities. When returnees advance to the leader rank, they primarily rely on the peripheral organization channel. Some returnees with short-term study experiences are promoted through the party and government channels.

In general, returnee elites' purposes of foreign study do affect their mobility paths. While those with foreign experiences as visiting scholars and training have a slight chance to advance to the minister and the leader rank levels through the party channel, those receiving degrees from overseas universities have no chance at all to do so. Furthermore, while governmental posts are the key channel for returnees with short-term foreign experiences to advance to the minister rank, the peripheral organizations are the most important channel for those with master's or doctoral degrees. When returnees advance to the leader rank, the peripheral organizations become the only important channel. However, some returnees with experiences as visiting scholars and foreign training can still obtain promotions through the party and the government channels. Different mobility paths among various returnee elite subgroups, in terms of purpose of foreign study, reveal the CCP's recruitment preference for returnees. Those returnees going abroad for short-term research and training programs usually maintain close ties with the political establishment. They have a better chance than those receiving degrees from foreign universities to enter the top leadership of the Party and the State Council.

Conclusion

How does the CCP reconcile the possible tension between political reliability and professional expertise in the process of recruiting Western-educated returnees into the party-state in order to achieve the dual goals of regime stability and economic growth? This chapter argues that the CCP's recruitment of Western-educated returnees follows the pattern of *promotion with reservation*. The Party has recruited a number of returnees as ranking cadres for economic development; however, it has also set political barriers in their political careers in order to ensure the longevity of the communist regime. In other words, Western-educated returnee elites in China are beneficial for governance, but not for rule. This unique recruitment pattern is reflected jointly by: (1) the prominence of natural sciences and economics over social sciences and humanities; (2) the preference of promoting returnees with foreign experiences as visiting scholars and training over those with foreign postgraduate study experiences; and (3) the relatively high proportion of non-CCP members.

The Party's willingness to recruit returnee elites clearly reveals the crucial role of advanced Western knowledge in China's socioeconomic modernization. This is the *promotion* dimension of the pattern of *promotion with reservation*. However, the recruitment patterns of returnee elites differs from the tendencies that exist in the Chinese ranking cadres overall—the increasing importance of social sciences

and humanities, the emphasis of postgraduate education, particularly on the doctoral degree, and the low proportion of non-CCP members. These differences indicate the *reservation* dimension of the recruitment pattern.

Returnee elites' mobility paths also reveal the Party's recruitment preference. Governmental posts at the vice-minister and minister levels provide a major channel of upward mobility for returnees. They are usually assigned to a post in the central government or provincial governments in charge of public health, education, technology, agriculture, macroeconomic regulation, finance, international trade, taxation, or transportation. This phenomenon, revealing the *promotion* dimension of the pattern of *promotion with reservation* in China, is consistent with the party-state's goal of socioeconomic development. However, the importance of this mobility channel quickly declines when returnees advance to the leader level. Furthermore, few returnees obtain rank promotions by holding a post in the party apparatus. In fact, the overwhelming majority of returnee elites have never occupied a ranking party post in their entire career. These tendencies show that returnee elites, particularly those with long foreign study experiences, are less likely to join the CCP Politburo and the State Council. This career limitation represents the *reservation* part of the mobility pattern of Western-trained returnee elites.

This unique recruitment pattern of Western-educated returnee elites results from the duality of the Chinese party-state. The development-driven trait of the party-state drives the CCP to promote returnee elites with professional expertise for economic growth, but its post-totalitarian trait reminds it to be cautious about the potential threat of Western-educated returnees to communist rule. As a result of the convergence of development-driven and post-totalitarian traits, the mobility pattern of returnee elites in China differs from that in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and from the pattern in East Asian countries, on the other hand.

The durability of this recruitment model of Western-educated returnee elites depends on the longevity of the duality of the Chinese party-state. The CCP has overcome the problem of the lack of political succession mechanisms but has been unable to build efficient supervisory mechanisms to curb cadres' corruption and abuse of power. This problem has roots in the post-totalitarian trait of the party-state, namely, the monopoly of political power. In order to maintain regime legitimacy, the CCP also needs to prove its governance capacity in solving social inequality, rural decay, environmental pollution, and other problems. At present, it remains too early to judge the fate of the Chinese party-state.

Notes

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- 2 Among the 356 full and alternate members of the 16th CCP Central Committee, 32 persons had study or work experiences abroad lasting at least one year. See Cheng Li and Lynn White, "The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Emerging Patterns of Power Sharing," in Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu (eds.),

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 - 4 David Zweig, "Competing for Talent: China's Strategies to Reverse the Brain Drain," *International Labour Review*, Vol. 145, No. 1–2 (September 2006), pp. 65–89; Cheng Li, "Coming Home to Teach: Status and Mobility of Returnees in China's Higher Education," in Cheng Li (ed.) *Bridging Minds across the Pacific: U.S.–China Educational Exchanges, 1978–2003*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 69–110.
 - 5 David Zweig, Changgui Chen, and Stanley Rosen, "Globalization and Transnational Human Capital: Overseas and Returned Scholars to China," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 179 (September 2004), pp. 735–758.
 - 6 Three exceptions are Cheng Li, "The Status and Characteristics of Foreign-Educated Returnees in the Chinese Leadership," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 16 (Fall 2005), pp. 1–21, http://media.hoover.org/documents/clm16_lc.pdf; He Li, "Returned Students and Political Change in China," *Asian Perspectives* 30, No. 2 (Summer 2006), pp. 5–29; Chien-wen Kou, "Ji Zhongyong you Fangfan de Jingying Zhenbu: Zhonggong Haiguipai Gaoguan de Shitufazhan yu Juxian" [Elite recruitment of promotion with restraints: The political career of Chinese ranking returnee-turned-officials and their limitation], *Zhongguodalu Yanjiu* [Mainland China Studies], Vol. 50, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 1–28.
 - 7 David C. Schwartz, "Toward a Theory of Political Recruitment," *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (September 1969), p. 552.
 - 8 Lester G. Seligman, "Elite Recruitment and Political Development," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (August 1964), pp. 612–613.
 - 9 Yu-shan Wu, "Tanru Zhongguodalu Jinggai Celue zhi Yanjiu: Yige Bijiao de Tujing" [Mainland China's economic reform strategy: A comparative approach], *Zhongguodalu Yanjiu* [Mainland China Studies], Vol. 46, No. 3, (June 2003), pp. 1–30.
 - 10 For the rise of Chinese technocrats and their career mobility, see, for example, Cheng Li, *China's Leaders: The New Generation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), pp. 25–50.
 - 11 For the characteristics of a developmental state, see Ziya Onis, "The Logic of the Developmental State," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (October 1991), pp. 111–116; Adrian Leftwich, "Bringing Politics Back In: Towards a Model of the Developmental State," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (February 1995), pp. 400–427; Chalmers Johnson, "The Developmental State: Odyssey of a Concept," in Meredith Woo-Cummings (ed.), *The Developmental State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 37–39.
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 - 17 Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Absence of Decision: Foreign Students in American Colleges and University* (New York: Institute of International Education, 1983), p. 20; He Li, "Returned Students and Political Change in China," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2006), p. 15.
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 - 20 Chien-wen Kou, "Ji Zhongyong you Fangfan de Jingying Zhenbu", pp. 1–28.
 - 21 Xi Cheng, *Dangdai Zhongguo Liuxuesheng Yanjiu* [Research on returned students in contemporary China], (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Shehui Kexue, 2003), pp. 32–35.
 - 22 For example, Qian Sanqiang, Wang Ganchang, Deng Jiaxian, Qian Xuesen all made important contributions to China's satellite, nuclear and missile technologies but their political careers stopped as vice ministers. Li Siguang and Qiao Quanhua advanced to the rank of minister. However, they were exceptional cases.
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 - 25 Byong-Man Ahn, *Elites and Political Power in South Korea* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2003), pp. 163, 166–167.
 - 26 Robert D. Putman, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 15–16.
 - 27 Cheng Li, "The Status and Characteristics of Foreign-Educated Returnees in the Chinese Leadership," p. 3; Cheng Li, "Coming Home to Teach," p. 83.
 - 28 Available information shows that the *yearly total* of ranking cadres varied from 1,646 to 2,590 in the period from 1978 to 1998 and the average yearly total is 2,210. See Zhonggong Zhongyang Zuzhibu, *Dangzheng Lingdaoganbu Tongji Ziliao Huibian (1954–1998)* [Collection of statistical data on Party and governmental leading cadres (1954–1998)], (Beijing: Dangjian Wenwu, 1999), p. vii.
 - 29 Donghua Yin, "Shengbu Xinzhengyao Liuda Qunti Tezheng" [New provincial-ministerial level leading cadres' six group characteristics], *Juece* [decision-making], No. 8 (August 2007), p. 33; Shaofeng Guo, "31 Shengqushi Huanjie Xuanju Jieshu, 12 Wei Daishengzhang Shunli Zhuanzheng" [31 provinces, autonomous regions and direct-controlled municipality have completed their leadership elections, twelve acting governors were formally appointed]. *Xinhuanet* [New China News online] February 1, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2008-02/01/content_7537594_2.htm. Accessed on April 25, 2008.
 - 30 Cheng Li, "Reshuffling Four Ties of Local Leaders: Goals and Implications," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 18 (Spring 2006), pp. 12–14. Provincial leaders' education information of 2008 comes from the author's data.

- 31 Gao Xiqing graduated from Duke University's School of Law in 1986 and became the first Chinese citizen to pass the New York State Bar Exam. After practicing law with a Wall Street law firm from 1986–88, he returned to China. He was instrumental in the establishment of Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges in 1990. He is now the General Manager and Chief Investment Officer of the China Investment Corporation, China's sovereign investment fund.
- 32 Mrs. Cha moved to Hong Kong from Shanghai at the age of two and became a Hong Kong citizen. She received a Juris Doctor degree from Santa Clara University in 1982 and then practiced as an attorney in the 1980s in San Francisco and Hong Kong. Her appointment marks the first time China has recruited an official outside mainland China to hold a vice-minister post. Before joining the CSRC, she had 10 years' experience at Hong Kong's capital markets regulator, the Securities and Futures Commission, and was appointed its deputy chairman in 1998.
- 33 Guo, "31 Shengqushi Huanjie Xuanju Jieshu."
- 34 Donghua Yin, "Jiedu Shengbu Xinzhengyao Liuda Qunti Tezheng," p. 33.
- 35 According to the author's data, five incumbent vice governors obtained their doctoral degree from foreign universities. No provincial party secretary, deputy party secretary or governor have the same educational credentials. Among provincial party secretaries and deputy party secretaries, only three persons have overseas study experiences as visiting scholars and trainees. Among all governors and vice governors, only 28 have foreign study experiences.
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- 39 Some examples are Minister of Education (Chen Zhili, Zhou Ji), Minister of Health (Chen Zhu), Minister of Science and Technology (Zhu Lilan, Xu Guanhua, Wan Gang), Minister of Transportation (Huang Zhendong), Minister of Commerce (Lu Fuyuan), Minister of Railways (Fu Zhihuan), and Head of State Administration of Taxation (Xiao Jie).
- 40 Zhiyue Bo, "The Provinces: Training Ground for National Leader or a Power in Their Own Right?" in David M. Finekelstein and Maryanne Kivlehan (eds.), *China's Leadership in the 21st Century: The Rise of the Fourth Generation*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 66.
- 41 They are Chen Liangyu (former Party Secretary of Shanghai), Chen Mingyi (former Governor of Fujian), Huang Ju (former Party Secretary of Shanghai), Huang Zhendong

(former Party Secretary of Chongqing), Li Hongzhong (Governor of Hubei), Wang Min (Party Secretary of Liaoning), Xu Kuangdi (former Mayor of Shanghai). Their foreign study experiences are limited to participating in training programs or engaging in short-term research and teaching in the West.

42 Zhonggong Zhongyang Zuzhibu, *Dangzheng Lingdaoganbu Tongji Ziliao Huibian* (1954–1998), 4.