The 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Formal Institutions and Factional Groups

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Introduction

The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) constitutes the nucleus of the political system in China, and the leadership changes in the Central Committee, especially during the National Congress of the CCP, often reveal fundamental changes in Chinese politics.\(^1\) The 16th National

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Congress, held in Beijing from 8 to 14 November 2002, was one of the most significant events in Chinese politics in the early twenty-first century. As the first of its kind in the new century, the Congress not only elected a new leadership that would lead China in the next five years but also managed a generation change from the third to the fourth.

Although it is important to analyze personal characteristics of Central Committee members to understand the trends of personnel changes as most scholars of China studies usually do, it is more important to study institutional representation on the Central Committee because election to the Central Committee generally depends more on the post that a person holds in the Chinese political system than on personal characteristics. For this reason, instead of providing a detailed description of personal characteristics of 16th Central Committee members, this article is going to focus on institutional representation on the 16th Central Committee. Moreover, this article also seeks to reveal informal dimensions of Chinese politics through an analysis of factional groups.

The article will start with an examination of the balance of power among formal institutions such as provincial units, central institutions, the military, and others. It will develop a power index based on the status of Central Committee members and compare the indexes across these formal institutions. It will then analyze the balance of power among factional groups such as the Shanghai Gang, the Princelings, the Qinghua Clique, and the CCYL Group. It will develop a group cohesion index for each of them and evaluate their group cohesion in comparative terms. It will also study factional overlaps and see to what extent these overlaps affect their interactions.

**Balance of Institutional Power in the 16th Central Committee**

There are three major institutions in China: provinces, central institutions, and the military. In a broad sense, as David Goodman correctly observed, leaders