

**CHINA'S NEW PLAN FOR NURTURING
TOP LEADERS: EVIDENCE FROM
PROVINCIAL POLITICAL
ELITES SELECTION**

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Executive Summary

1. The new 2019 plan to nurture party and government leaderships (PGLs) for the country shows the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) intention to start reshuffling leading cadres at all levels and selecting political elites for the next party congress scheduled for 2022.
2. Unlike the previous plan, the recent one re-emphasises Xi Jinping's authority in specifying general requirements and stipulates requirements for the PGLs, cadres' training, supervision and performance assessment.
3. In particular, the CCP will appoint principal party secretaries who were once party secretaries at lower levels, optimise the age structure by recruiting from different age groups, and select leaders based on their expertise and from different sources including state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public institutions.
4. In the reform era, the CCP has built a cadre management system with various rules to select talents, enhance cadres' performance and prevent structural problems such as bureaucracy, overstaffing and inefficiency. It has detailed rules on supervising cadres' work and strengthening their accountability, and periodically updated its prerequisites for cadres selection and appointment.
5. In the 2019 update, the CCP emphasised cadres' loyalty to the Party central, diligence and integrity as promotion criteria. The CCP requires the department to submit reports after daily and close observation of cadres; allows public competition for vice leading positions; and conducts interviews of democratically recommended candidates.
6. Since the new plan took effect in 2019, the CCP has promoted 99 cadres to provincial leadership, a crucial level in Chinese politics. The characteristics of these appointees give an indication of the CCP's preferences and governance priorities.

7. The age group (below 60) of the current provincial leading cadres made them suitable candidates for the next Central Committee (CC). Eight are alternate members of the current CC and provincial governors who are likely to become full members in the 20th CC.
8. According to the recent appointments, the CCP has capped the age at 58 for provincial leaders and placed priorities on strengthening governance by promoting younger cadres to the government, while keeping party forces in the government at a relatively stable level.
9. Compared with previous practices, the CCP paid more attention to selecting cadres from SOEs, particularly those who have financial expertise, a signal that it is strengthening its control on local finance.
10. Cadre promotion trends show that some provincial leaders seem politically promising, particularly for those who rose to prominence after 2019 and are below 50 years of age. They stand out because of gender, ethnicity, positions in provincial PGLs and background, being former party secretaries at the prefecture level.