The Political Management of Mayors in Post-Deng China

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Abstract

This article examines how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) maintains political control over municipal elites in post-Deng China. First, it analyses the career paths of mayors for all prefecture-level municipalities between 1990 and 2000. It then shows how the dual processes of economic decentralization and the decentralization of the personnel management system has not led to a decline of the CCP's capacity to enforce key organizational norms. An ordered probit model of cadre promotion suggests that the economic performance of cities has little substantive impact on promotion or removal from office. However, strict enforcement of cadre retirement regulations has the effect of shortening the tenure of mayors, which facilitates the promotion of a greater share of secondary officials than was possible before the reforms of the personnel system, but weakens the link between good governance and political rewards.

Introduction

During the post-Maoist era, the centre of gravity of the Chinese political economy tilted decisively towards cities. The unprecedented pace of China's economic transformation favoured urban growth, which in turn increased the political relevance of municipalities and the officials who rule them. Cities now control a far greater share of the country's resources than at any point in the history of the People's Republic. In 2000, Chinese municipalities accounted for 51.8 percent of the country's GDP, 50.1 percent of its industrial output and 76 percent of the value of services (Jiang and Cui 2001). This increased economic might was largely deliberate. As early as 1979, the Centre[1] targeted some of its boldest policy initiatives at municipalities, symbolized by the early creation of Special Economic Zones (Crane 1990; Kleinberg 1990). After 1984, economic decentralization was generalized to other areas, but Premier Zhao Ziyang stressed that coastal cities would enjoy economic privileges that would not be extended to the less developed and more rural Chinese hinterland (Yang 1990). The leadership's favourable bias towards cities survived the transition of 1989. Until 2002, Jiang Zemin

and Zhu Rongji—both former mayors and party secretaries in Shanghai—presided over further reform initiatives that benefited cities (Naughton 1995; Wang and Hu 1999).

In parallel with their rapid economic transformation, cities also enjoy greater formal institutional weight. Their number rose rapidly—from less than 200 in 1978 to over 660 today[2]—but more importantly their formal bureaucratic rank as well as those of the cadres who rule them has also increased. Many county seats have been elevated to the status of 'prefecture level municipalities' (*diji shi*), and 15 cities now have 'vice-provincial' rank (*fushengji shi*).[3]

Scholars who have examined China's decentralization often conclude that the economic power of the localities has eroded the political authority of the Centre.[4] This article examines how this authority is exercised with respect to city mayors. My choice of focus is not simply because cities are inherently important, but also because the terms of the debate on the political impact of China's economic decentralization rely excessively on *provincial* aggregate data. Critics of decentralization who focus on central–provincial fiscal relations (Hu and Wang 1996; Wang 1994, 1995, 1997) conclude that state capacity has weakened, while their detractors, who emphasize the role of institutional and political controls—particularly the power of appointment of central Party institutions (Brødsgaard 2002; Burns 1989; Harding 1981; Manion 1985), argue that the political authority of the Centre is still very much intact in high-priority areas (Bo 2002; Huang 1995, 1996; Lampton 1992).

As important as provinces are, they may not constitute the proper level of analysis to adjudicate the debate, because of their particular position in the Chinese political hierarchy. Both Huang (1996) and Bo (2002) find evidence that central control over provincial appointments facilitates policy enforcement, but that result is hardly surprising given that Beijing has always retained direct *nomenklatura* authority over provincial leaders. The institutional capacity of the Chinese state should instead be tested against a tougher standard, namely Beijing's capacity to impose its policy preferences when principal–agent relations are not as straightforward as those linking central and provincial leaders. It seems more fruitful to focus on *local* political actors over which Beijing only exercises *indirect* control—such as mayors.

The party control mechanisms differ vastly between provincial and municipal cadres. Although personnel management over city, county and township cadres has evolved over time, under the current system, top municipal leaders are appointed by the provinces, without direct

central control (Burns 1989, 1994; Landry 2000).[5] Furthermore, focusing on municipal elites allows one to test hypotheses about regional differentiation that cannot be evaluated by looking at provinces alone. Specifically, one can learn whether the Party's organizational practice vis-à-vis local officials is consistent across provinces, and whether its personnel choices follow the logic of rewarding good governance in the localities. This article tests the hypothesis that municipal performance affects the political fate of mayors.

The Political Control of Cadres

The CCP has mobilized considerable resources to enhance its political control over local cadres. It sought to improve personnel management by gradually reshaping the institutions that collect information, monitor the performance of local governments, and sanction officials (Harding 1981; Huang 1995; Whiting 2001). These institutional reforms were designed to act as a counterpoise against the centrifugal forces of economic decentralization. The web of Party organization departments (*zuzhi bumen*), discipline inspection commissions (*jiwei*) and local CCP committees is expected to root out cadres who flaunt central policies, are guilty of 'localism', or who are shown to be corrupt.[6] This strategy of reform has allowed economic decentralization to proceed, but seeks to reduce the costs of devolution.

The political principals of the Chinese state recognize that effective governance is a necessary condition to maintain regime legitimacy among ordinary citizens (Tang and Parish 2000). They rely on the CCP's institutional dominance to enforce the norm among cadres that the goal of achieving a 'relatively wealthy society' (*xiaokang shehui*) is critical to the regime's strategy for long-term survival. They stress the need to recruit and promote officials who deliver good governance—defined, for the most part, in terms of economic growth (Wei 2002: 1733). Article 6-2 of the 'Regulations on the Work of Selecting and Appointing Leading Party and Government Cadres' specifies that 'cadres should . . . be determined to carry out the reform and opening-up policy, be devoted to the cause of modernization, and work hard for the building of socialism and the making of concrete achievements' (CCP Organization Department 2002). The Centre has devised various incentive mechanisms to reduce shirking and to improve performance among local cadres.[7]

The question of how best to select and reward local officials has always vexed the CCP's 'organizational and personnel management system' (*zuzhi renshi xitong*), but the problem is especially acute when the

cadre management system is decentralized (Zhang 1994). In his classic analysis of the Maoist polity, Schurmann (1968) argued that reliance on ideology could effectively compensate for weakened state organizations during periods of decentralization. The decline of ideology in the reform era has revived the role of formal organizations as instruments of political control. The Centre's challenge of controlling cadres is dual: local officials not only have broad leeway to steer the local economy in a direction that they choose, but *leadership selection itself* is also decentralized. Since Beijing controls directly only a handful of posts below the provincial level, it must trust that appointed provincial leaders have both the will and the capacity to implement personnel selection policy in a fashion that does not undermine the Party's political authority at the sub-provincial level.

Operationalization and Data Collection

This evaluation of the CCP's personnel management strategy is based on fairly systematic data about China's municipalities.[8] Mayors (*shizhang*) constitute a natural pool to study how Party committees allocate political power: they exercise broad responsibilities in economic management, but remain politically subordinate to *provincial* Party organizations. They do not rank so high that they stand no chance of further promotion if they perform well. In recent years, the composition of the top echelon of party leaders has reflected the importance of experience as mayors and municipal secretaries for promotion to higher political office.[9] Since mayors typically serve concurrently as (first) deputy secretary of municipal CCP committees (*shiwei fushuji*), promotion to the post of municipal secretary is a natural career move for analysis. Other types of promotions are also possible: mayors sometimes become provincial vice-governor, or are deployed in central ministries. Thus, the dependent variable of interest is promotion, within the same locality or elsewhere.

The collection of local political and economic data in the PRC is a challenging task. Data collection about provinces has improved (Bo 2002; Huang 1996), but this is decidedly *not* the case below the provincial level. Although basic socio-economic performance indicators have generally been available since the 1990s, systematic political data are much harder to collect. Until recently, even lists of local officials were typically not available below the provincial level, let alone detailed biographical information about the cadres in question. Thus, practical considerations have motivated the focus on mayors: They are the lowest

level of local cadres for whom reasonably systematic biographical information is available. Since the late 1980s, the Chinese Urban Development Research Council (CUDRC) has been publishing biographical notices of mayors annually (Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui 1985-2001; Li and Bachman 1989). This information has been combined in the present study with a cross-section time-series dataset of municipal performance, supplemented with data gathered from a variety of sources that allow one to track, with reasonable confidence, cadre careers after their terms as mayor.[10]

Municipal Governance in the Era of Marketization

Prima facie, performance standards are clearly spelled out and uniform across cities. The Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui (2001) lists 33 socio-economic indicators of municipal modernization (see Appendix at end of article) and rates cities accordingly. The linkage between performance and promotion is even highlighted visually, with the mayor's name, picture and short biography prominently displayed above the table.

Mayors have a broad mandate to 'govern well', but they must do so under market pressures that increasingly constrain the capacity of the local state to control local outcomes. In fact, many objectives of good governance tend to *reduce* bureaucratic control in favour of non-state actors. Several indicators measure the growing impact of market forces that are beyond the direct control of local officials. For example, the share of services in the GDP (Indicator 3) depends heavily on the size of the non-state sector in the local economy. Similarly, openness to international trade (Indicator 5, calculated as Import + Exports/GDP) is affected in part by global market conditions which local officials can hardly control. These indicators probably measure the pace of the localities' economic modernization, but it is harder to conclude that they accurately measure the leadership's contribution to the modernization of the local economy.

These indicators are powerfully biased towards GDP performance: the variables that seek to measure 'economic development' not only account for almost a third of the overall index, but other factors are also strongly correlated with output growth, either by construction (Indicator 9) or indirectly (Indicators 10, 11 and 12, *inter alia*). Simple co-linearity tests between the main components of the index confirm that the indicators are deceptively broad (see Table 1).

Market forces also have the effect of exaggerating performance gaps across localities. The rise of regional disparities has been well documented across provinces (Wang and Hu 1999), but the differences are even more

TABLE 1: Test of Co-linearity between Key Components of the CUDC Municipal Performance Index

Dependent Variable: Infrastructure Index Regression with robust standard errors (N=104)				
	F(1, 102)	23.86	Prob > F	0.00
	R2	0.22	Root MSE	2.07
Variable		Coef.	Robust SE	
Environment Index		0.358	0.073	***
Constant		5.367	1.040	***
Dependent Variable: Economic Performance Index Regression with robust standard errors (N=104)				
	F(1, 102)	37.75	Prob > F	0.00
	R2	0.26	Root MSE	3.37
Variable		Coef.	Robust SE	
Quality of Life Index		0.692	0.113	***
Constant		6.947	1.511	***

Note: The data are based on the subset of cities (N=104) for which performance indicators are published. This does not represent a complete set of all Chinese cities.
Source: Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui 2001.

pronounced among sub-provincial units. Table 6 (pp. 44-45) illustrates the large inter-municipal disparities in contemporary China, although the broad components of the overall performance exhibit some co-linearity.[11]

Large inter- and intra-regional disparities have disturbing implications for the Party authority. At worst, persistently poor performance undermines the credibility of the regime's claimed successful transition to a 'socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics'. If the CCP is serious about penalizing poor governance and rewarding good governance, then career patterns among local cadres should reflect this heavily differentiated landscape. By this reasoning, officials posted in fast-growing cities ought to be promoted more frequently than their counterparts posted in regions in relative economic decline.

In summary, China's rapid economic transformation has aggravated the Party's adverse selection problem. Provincial CCP committees may have the power to appoint and dismiss mayors, but this institutional strength remains theoretical in the absence of accurate ways to measure the leadership abilities of local officials. As marketization deepens, it is increasingly difficult to map the economic performance of the localities to the specific action of officials.

Who Are China's Mayors?

Chinese mayors are typically well-educated men in their fifties and overwhelmingly *Han*.[12] Although they share the broad characteristics of provincial officials (e.g. more than two-thirds have received some form of tertiary education), they are younger. Whereas Bo (2002) reports a mean age of 55.5 years, male mayors typically are just above 50 and their female counterparts just above 48. In contrast to provincial officials, ethnic minorities seem under-represented (under 5 percent)—a low number, but one that also reflects the concentration of municipalities in coastal *Han*-dominated provinces.

Formal personnel regulations (CCP Organization Department 1995, 2002) strongly suggest that the odds of promotion depend on a cadre's personal characteristics. The rule of retirement (60 for most cadres, 55 for women) constrains career prospects heavily. Age limits were initially introduced to rejuvenate the post-Cultural Revolution leadership (Manion 1993; Shen 1994). This policy not only led to the replacement of 'old revolutionaries' by 'career bureaucrats' (Harding 1981; Lee 1991), but was also conducive to a considerable improvement in the overall level of education among cadres, since newly appointed officials were typically better trained than their predecessors (Landry 2000; Shen 1994) (see Tables 2 and 3).

TABLE 2: Mayors: Level of Education (1990-2000)

Education Level	Male	Female	All Cases (as % of total)
Graduate Level	297	9	(12.3)
College	1,149	22	(47.1)
Vocational College (dazhuan)	419	13	(17.3)
High School*	68	0	(2.7)
Other**	504	2	(20.3)
Total	2,437	46	
(%)	(98.1)	(1.9)	

Source: Database.
** Including vocational education (zhongzhuan); * Including missing data.

Enforcing the retirement age is no longer controversial: the mayors' average age has hovered around 50 since 1990, well within formal regulatory limits. The data indicate strongly that they are always removed from office by the age of 60, unless they serve in deputy-provincial-

TABLE 3: Mayors' Age, by Gender and Minority Status (1990-2000)

Gender	Mean Age	No.	Std. Deviation
Male	50.50	1,979	4.97
Female	48.10	0,046	4.54
Total	50.44	2,025	4.97
Ethnicity			
Han	50.43	1,920	4.98
Minority	50.58	0,105	4.74
Total	50.58	2,025	4.97

Source: Database.

level cities or centrally administered municipalities (CAMs), where the formal retirement age is higher. Even in this group, no one has remained in office beyond the age of 64.[13] Mayors also tend to serve shorter terms: the 1990 average of 3.2 years that matched the regulatory standard of three-year appointments had declined to a mere 2.3 years by 2000. Since 1998, few mayors have served a full three-year term (see Table 4 and Figure 1).

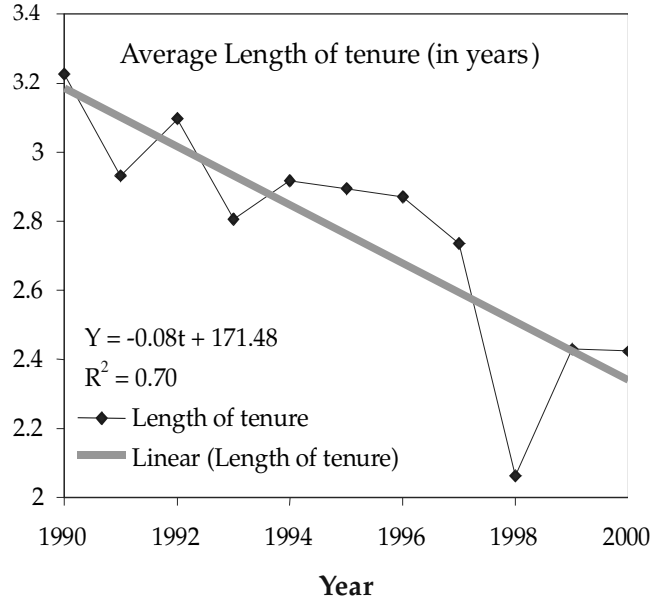
TABLE 4: Mayors: Age Distribution (1990-2000)

Year	No.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
1990	197	50.5	5.4	35	63
1991	198	50.4	4.9	36	63
1992	196	50.6	5.3	36	64
1993	176	50.3	4.8	37	62
1994	175	50.9	4.7	38	62
1995	183	50.9	5.1	34	63
1996	162	50.7	5.1	35	64
1997	164	50.8	5.1	39	61
1998	175	50.0	4.8	37	61
1999	194	50.2	4.7	38	62
2000	205	49.6	4.6	38	63

Source: Database.

The norm of retirement is a powerful way to guarantee that relatively young cadres—who are arguably better trained and more attuned to the workings of a market economy—reach leadership positions in the localities. However, its enforcement can also come at the expense of

FIGURE 1: Mayors' Average Tenure (1990-2000)



Note: Units are years of tenure at the time of observation.
Source: Database.

cadre accountability. O'Brien and Li's finding that cadre rotation among rural cadres weakens accountability (1999: 176) applies here as well. It is difficult to see how a mayor, no matter how effective he may be, can signal his contribution to local development if his expected tenure in office is barely above two years.

Modelling the Relationship between Cadre Characteristics, Municipal Performance and Political Outcomes

Dependent Variable: Promotion

For the sake of tractability, a mayor's political fate is ordered along a single dimension and analysed as an ordered probability model: In a given year, he/she can 'exit'[14] (coded 0), 'continue' as mayor or be transferred to a position of identical rank (coded 1); or be 'promoted' to the rank of municipal party secretary (coded 2) in the same city or elsewhere.[15] Recall that ordered probit models make no scaling assumption of any kind: one need not assume that the difference between an exit and continuation is more or less desirable than the difference between 'continue' and 'promoted'. One need only be satisfied that:

$$\text{Exit} < \text{Continue} < \text{Promoted}$$

While the definitions of 'promotion' and 'transfer' are not particularly controversial, the reader may question the treatment of an 'exit' as less desirable than continuing as mayor. Mayors disappear from the dataset for various reasons. In some cases, they die in office or retire from public life. Alternatively, cadres may be eased into non-executive positions at the local People's Congress or the People's Political Consultative Conference. This ranking assumes that such posts are less desirable than the post of mayor. However, a third possibility is decidedly more threatening to statistical inference: exit may also reflect promotions to unobserved posts in provincial departments or central ministries. Since there is no comprehensive database of Chinese leaders above the prefectural level, there is no way to confirm that this third case is rare enough to ignore. However, every effort was made to verify that officials coded as 'exit' do not reappear in executive positions elsewhere.

A mayor's appointment marks the beginning of the last decade of his political career, barring exceptional circumstances. The dataset includes a handful of leaders who attained high office in the 1990s, including Jiang Zemin, Zhu Rongji, Li Ruihuan and Bo Xilai, but the presence of former mayors among China's top leaders should not mask the grimmer reality that promotions are relatively rare events.

Independent Variables

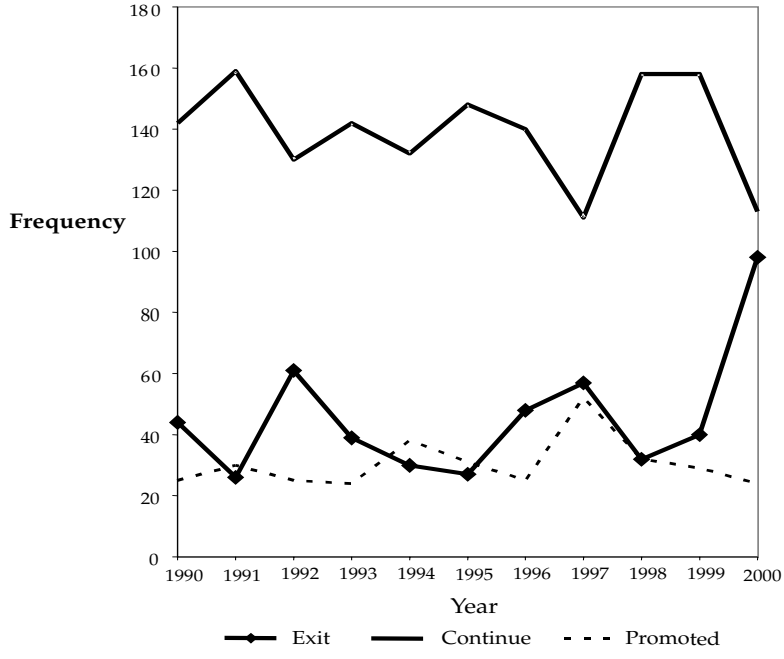
Mayors' Individual Characteristics

The model accounts for the salient individual attributes of cadre promotion regulations. These variables include age (in years), level of education, gender, as well as whether the cadre is *Han* Chinese or not. The effects of these variables are discussed in detail in the next section. In addition, two contrasts capture the length of tenure up to the year of observation: three to five years, which corresponds roughly to a second term in office, and six years or longer.[16]

Municipal Bureaucratic Rank

A second set of variables captures the bureaucratic rank of each municipality. 'Central Appointment' accounts for cities whose leadership is managed from Beijing. Furthermore, CAM party secretaries often sit as full or alternate members of the Central Committee, which enhances their visibility and access to core decision-makers. Their peculiar position in the Chinese political hierarchy is likely to increase their odds of promotion. In addition, an interaction term for 'Vice-Provincial Cities' accounts for instances of extensive autonomy over economic policy combined with par-

FIGURE 2: Mayors: Distribution of Political Fate (1990-2000)



Note: In order to avoid 'right censoring', the analysis ends in 2000, a year when the fate of almost all mayors is known.
Source: Database.

tial central political control. Such is the economic status of provinces, but only their mayor and party secretary are centrally appointed. Deputy-mayors and secretaries remain under provincial management, since they have the rank of prefecture-level cadres (*diji ganbu*).

Municipal Performance

At the current stage of the dataset development, it is necessary to restrict the set of municipal performance criteria to four indicators that are highly correlated with the municipal performance index published in 2001:

- the city size (population);
- the city's overall wealth (GDP per capita);
- the extent of the transition to a market economy–measured by the share of services to the local GDP; and
- openness to the world economy, measured by the magnitude of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the city.[17]

TABLE 5: Mayors: Promotions, Exit, and Continuation by Province (1990-2000)

Province	Promotion Category (%)			N (row)
	Exit	Continue	Promoted	
Beijing	18	45	36	11
Tianjin	18	64	18	11
Hebei	21	62	18	120
Shanxi	33	54	13	61
Neimenggu	28	53	19	43
Liaoning	25	61	14	152
Jilin	19	60	21	84
Heilongjiang	27	59	14	12
Shanghai	9	73	18	11
Jiangsu	16	71	13	137
Zhejiang	28	62	11	104
Anhui	15	66	19	124
Fujian	23	71	6	78
Jiangxi	24	61	15	66
Shandong	17	64	19	151
Henan	21	62	17	153
Hubei	23	67	11	93
Hunan	24	66	10	131
Guangdong	18	63	19	186
Guangxi	22	68	10	87
Hainan	14	82	5	22
Chongqing	0	90	10	10
Sichuan	17	72	11	135
Guizhou	22	75	3	32
Yunnan	24	63	12	41
Tibet	9	82	9	11
Shaanxi	22	65	13	77
Gansu	16	69	15	55
Qinghai	18	73	9	11
Ningxia	24	76	0	25
Xinjiang	27	73	0	22
China	21	65	14	2,366

Pearson $X^2(62)$: 73.18 Probability: 0.11.
Source: Database.

Provincial Contrasts

A set of dummy variables tests the hypothesis of systematic disparities in the way provincial party committees exercise political authority. Most of the published research on disparities refers to economic disparities (Hu and Wang 1996; Tan 1997; Wang 1995, 1997; Wang and Hu 1999). Here, provincial contrasts relate instead to a *political* logic. Assuming that economic disparities are reasonably accounted for by municipal performance indicators, provincial contrasts capture systematic differences across provincial party committees. Recall that apart from CAMs and vice-provincial cities, it is the provinces and not the Centre that exercise direct *nomenklatura* authority over municipal leaders. Principles of organizational discipline suggest that personnel policy is implemented uniformly across provinces. If the hypothesis holds that cadre management practices are similar across provinces, these contrasts should be irrelevant in the multivariate model. Conversely, if systematic variations exist across provinces, these contrasts should exhibit both statistical significance and powerful substantive effects.

At face value, differences in the political fate of mayors exist across provinces. In Xinjiang and Ningxia, mayors (who usually belong to ethnic minorities) *never* become party secretary, while in Beijing, Jilin, Shandong, Anhui and Guangdong, promotions occur in about 20 percent of cases, which is well above the national average of 14 percent. It remains to be seen whether these differences are statistically significant and reflect true behavioural differences across provincial party committees. I shall return to this point in my discussion of the ordered probit model.

Time Contrasts

Finally, annual dummy variables[18] account for two distinct processes. They control for time-specific shocks that are not specifically encapsulated in the model. Furthermore, annual dummy variables 'purge' the stochastic term of possible biases caused by omitted time-dependent variables and reduce autocorrelation among error terms, a major pitfall of cross-section time-series models.[19]

Results

I present three closely related versions of the multivariate model of mayor promotion. Model 1 estimates the odds of the ordered outcome (exit<continue<promotion) for the entire sample. Models 2 and 3 split the sample between cities located in coastal provinces and cities of interior provinces.

TABLE 6: Ordered Probability Estimates

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
		All Provinces			Coastal Provinces			Inland Provinces		
		1780			874			941		
Log-Likelihood		-1453.9			-674.1			-761.6		
p >X^2		0.000			0.000			0.000		
Independent variables	Type									
Mayor's Characteristics										
Tenure 3-5 years	d.	-0.191	0.063	***	-0.183	0.062	***	-0.191	0.064	***
Tenure 6 years+	d.	-0.496	0.147	***	-0.483	0.143	***	-0.493	0.148	***
Year of birth, 1927-1965	c.	0.029	0.008	***	0.025	0.008	***	0.027	0.008	***
Gender, 1=Female	d.	-0.012	0.183		0.010	0.177		-0.013	0.181	
Minority, 1=Minority	d.	0.026	0.198		-0.041	0.151		-0.016	0.152	
Graduate	d.	-0.060	0.163		-0.019	0.155		-0.016	0.158	
College Education	d.	0.010	0.130		0.036	0.122		0.018	0.125	
Voc. College Educ.	d.	-0.059	0.154		-0.064	0.145		-0.021	0.148	
City Characteristics										
Central Appointment	d.	0.492	0.270	*	0.331	0.213		-	-	
Deputy Provincial City	d.	-0.466	0.306		-0.268	0.278		-0.036	0.201	
Population (10,000 people)	c.	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	*
GDP per capita (RMB 1000)	c.	0.011	0.005	**	0.013	0.007	*	0.011	0.006	*
Share of services (% GDP)	c.	-0.006	0.003	*	-0.007	0.003	**	-0.007	0.003	**
FD (US$ 1000)	c.	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	
Provincial Contrasts										
Chongqing	d.	-	-		-	-		-0.362	0.375	
Hebei	d.	0.162	0.184		0.031	0.100		-	-	
Shanxi	d.	-0.059	0.245		-	-		-0.210	0.196	
Neimenggu	d.	-0.030	0.161		-	-		-0.162	0.193	
Liaoning	d.	0.224	0.170		0.083	0.120		-	-	
Jilin	d.	0.370	0.238		-	-		0.228	0.189	
Heilongjiang	d.	-0.012	0.181		-	-		-0.162	0.134	
Jiangsu	d.	0.146	0.191		0.017	0.105		-	-	
Zhejiang	d.	-0.112	0.199		-0.235	0.127	*	-	-	
Anhui	d.	0.339	0.201	*	-	-		0.176	0.143	
Fujian	d.	-0.031	0.205		-0.162	0.140		-	-	
Jiangxi	d.	0.084	0.255		-	-		-0.055	0.202	

TABLE 6: Ordered Probability Estimates (cont.)

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
		All Provinces			Coastal Provinces			Inland Provinces		
		1780			874			941		
Log-Likelihood		-1453.9			-674.1			-761.6		
p >X^2		0.000			0.000			0.000		
Independent variables	Type									
Shandong	d.	0.310	0.219		0.173	0.159		-	-	
Henan	d.	0.229	0.207		-	-		0.059	0.145	
Hubei	d.	-0.070	0.195		-	-		-0.233	0.130	*
Hunan	d.	-0.146	0.180		-	-		-0.309	0.100	**
Guangdong	d.	0.310	0.209		0.197	0.144		-	-	
Guangxi	d.	0.056	0.196		-	-		-0.096	0.148	
Hainan	d.	0.181	0.170		0.070	0.109		-	-	
Sichuan	d.	0.283	0.194		-	-		0.105	0.128	
Guizhou	d.	-0.085	0.170		-	-		-0.227	0.081	***
Yunnan	d.	-0.038	0.255		-	-		-0.198	0.206	
Shaanxi	d.	0.347	0.266		-	-		0.189	0.227	
Gansu	d.	0.549	0.275	**	-	-		0.394	0.261	
Qinghai	d.	0.255	0.207		-	-		0.110	0.167	
Time Contrasts										
1999	d.	0.558	0.127	***	0.542	0.126	***	0.544	0.125	***
1998	d.	0.693	0.136	***	0.668	0.133	***	0.671	0.132	***
1997	d.	0.731	0.147	***	0.701	0.145	***	0.710	0.143	***
1996	d.	0.479	0.143	***	0.451	0.140	***	0.459	0.140	***
1995	d.	0.951	0.137	***	0.917	0.135	***	0.925	0.134	***
1994	d.	0.967	0.157	***	0.921	0.152	***	0.944	0.154	***
1993	d.	0.790	0.168	***	0.744	0.165	***	0.766	0.167	***
1992	d.	0.644	0.170	***	0.591	0.166	***	0.621	0.167	***
1991	d.	1.090	0.176	***	1.026	0.170	***	1.068	0.172	***
1990	d.	0.873	0.181	***	0.790	0.177	***	0.852	0.177	***
Ancillary Parameters										
Cut 1		56.336	15.65	***	47.484	23.855	***	51.276	15.184	***
Cut 2		58.404	15.66	***	49.534	23.873	***	53.332	15.198	***
Observed Distribution of the Dependent Variable										
Probability (Exit)		0.19			0.18			0.20		
Probability (Continue)		0.67			0.67			0.66		
Probability (Promotin)		0.14			0.16			0.13		

Note: Observations are mayor-years. Some provincial contrasts are omitted due to missing data or for the purpose of ensuring model identification. The baseline of the time contrasts is 2000. 'c' denotes a continuous variable, 'd' a dummy. All models use robust standard errors, adjusted for clustering by city. ***: p<0.01 **: p<0.05 *: p<0.10.

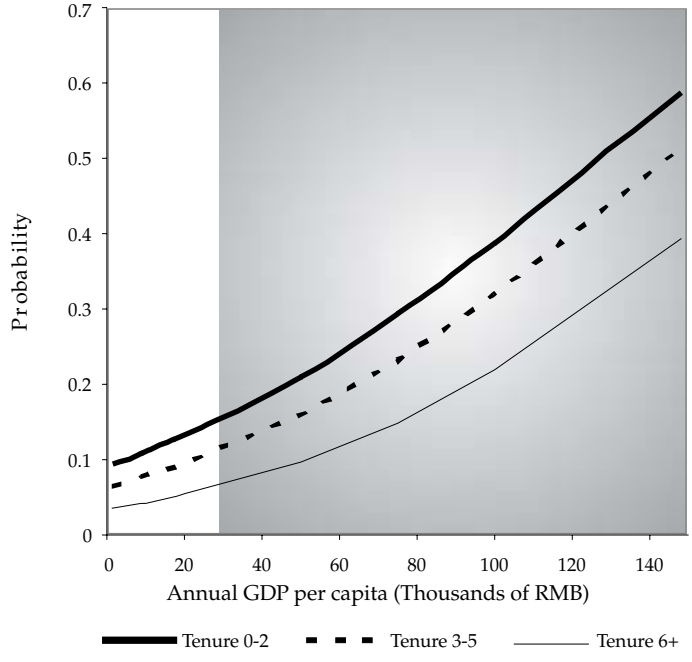
Municipal Performance

Does municipal performance matter? Municipal economic performance seems to have a positive but limited impact on the political fate of mayors. Figure 3 plots the fitted odds of promotion for a typical case.[20] It evaluates the impact of municipal performance by varying municipal GDP per capita within sample values, and does so in three cases: mayor whose 'tenure so far' is less than three years; three to six years; and more than six years. While all three models suggest that performance—in this relatively narrow sense—matters, they still point to the limited capacity of Chinese political institutions to reward 'good' governance. First, the odds of promotion remain low if we limit our measure to 'typical cities'. The observed maximum GDP of RMB 148,000 per person in Shenzhen in 2000 is a far cry from the sample mean of RMB 8,651. If we restrict our assessment to the effect of economic performance around the mean, the results are far less spectacular: our typical mayor overseeing a hypothetical trebling of the GDP from the sample mean to RMB 18,170 (namely, a one standard deviation improvement) would only see the odds of promotion shift from 0.11 to 0.13, a trivial gain.[21] Disturbingly, developing the service economy seems detrimental to one's political career, even if we restrict the analysis to interior provinces where such changes are arguably welcome.[22] Finally, the impact of economic openness (measured by the amount of FDI) is nil. These results hold when the sample is split between coastal and interior cities. Thus, it appears that the Party's stated preference for performance-based career advancement is hardly consistent with the revealed preferences of provincial party committees. In this sense, my findings are in accordance with Bo's conclusion that growth *per se* does not explain promotion patterns among provincial cadres (Bo 2002).[23] Overall, it is doubtful that municipal leaders are being rewarded for their economic performance while in office.

As discussed earlier, the decentralized and increasingly marketized nature of municipal economies may well be at the root of this weak principal–agent relationship. Regardless of the statements of the officials concerned, it is not altogether clear that mayors and government officials 'cause' or 'slow' economic development in the first place. To use Naughton's image (1995), as the economy 'grows out of the plan', the mapping of bureaucratic actions to specific outcomes is arduous, if not irrelevant.

The weak linkages between performance and political careers may also be rooted in other political considerations. Even though shorten-

FIGURE 3: Fitted Impact of Municipal Economic Performance on the Probability Promotion of Mayors, by Tenure Length



Note: Plots are based on model 1. The shaded area denotes usually high GDP values, greater than one standard deviation above the sample mean.

ing tenure lengths tend to obfuscate personal accountability, appointers may still have a powerful incentive to do so, for two reasons. First, frequent turnover allows CCP committees to reward a larger proportion of secondary officials. Long tenures would increase competition for (rare) desirable posts and be demoralizing to competent cadres whose prospects for political advancement would be limited. These concerns motivated the push for cadre rejuvenation and orderly retirement in the first place. The pool of secondary officials is very large: typical cities have at least three deputy party secretaries and three vice-mayors. With shorter tenure at the helm, more officials can expect to reach the top executive positions.

Second, the fight against corruption provides the other incentive to shorten cadre tenure. Leaders who remain entrenched in their localities are more likely to develop extensive informal '*guanxi*' networks that undermine party authority. When cadres spend only a couple of years in executive positions, opportunities for 'corrupt' or 'localist' behaviour are less likely to arise.

Municipal Bureaucratic Rank and Size

Model 1 also indicates an important political difference between mayors under direct central management and those whose careers are primarily handled by provincial party committees. All else being equal, the former are more likely to be promoted than the latter. The interaction term shows no difference between CAMs and deputy provincial cities. What matters is the existence of central political control, not whether a city has the full rank of a province or not.[24]

Cadre Characteristics

On the other hand, all three models highlight the importance of the cadres' individual characteristics and are highly consistent with the hypothesis that key organizational rules on cadre promotion prevail in the localities. Older mayors are less likely to be promoted than younger ones. The effect of age is particularly acute when length of tenure is also taken into account. At the beginning of his sixth year in office, the same hypothetical mayor in Jiangsu discussed above—but this time varying his age and holding GDP per capita at the sample mean—has a mere 1.2 percent chance of promotion were he born in 1940, in contrast to a 20 percent chance for an otherwise identical mayor born in 1970, in his first term. Notice that the effect of tenure is not linear: the substantive effect is much greater among younger mayors than older ones.

Since provincial organizations departments take personnel regulations seriously and since cadres rarely become mayor before the age of 50, the logic of tying promotions to performance works as an incentive to keep tenure relatively short, lest competent cadres reach the age limit by the time they reveal themselves as leaders worthy of promotion. To some extent, this seems to be the case.

Gender and *Ethnicity*

In addition to a rule of earlier retirement than men, female cadres also suffer from significant institutional discrimination. Not surprisingly, the pool of Chinese women mayors is very small (16 since 1990; see Table 7) and promotions are exceedingly rare: only Xu Xiaoqing eventually became party secretary in Jingdezhen where she was mayor from 1995-97.[25] The promotion model suggests that discrimination affects female cadres at earlier stages of their career, not when they have already reached the rank of mayor. Uneven access to tertiary education and membership in the Communist Party are likely act as powerful barriers to entry in the cadre corps.

TABLE 7: Female Mayors, 1990-2000

Name	Year of Birth	Education	Comment
An Li	1948	College	Mayor of Liaoyuan (Jilin), 1992-94
Huang Yanrong	1955	Vocational College	Mayor of Ya'an (Sichuan), 2000-
Li Kang	1957	College	Mayor of Qingzhou (Guangxi), 2000-. Zhuang Nationality
Li Yumei	1956	Graduate	Mayor of Linyi (Shandong) 1997-
Ma Languo	1954	College	Mayor of Xingtai (Hebei), 1998
Ma Qiaozhen	1945	College	Mayor of Jincheng (Shanxi), 1996-98
Shi Lijun	1948	Vocational College	Mayor of Laiwu (Shandong), 1993-97
Shu Xiaoqin	1956	Vocational College	Mayor of Jingdezhen (Jiangxi), 1995-97 Promoted Party Secretary of Jingdezhen, 1998-
Song Shu'ai	1944	College	Mayor of Chengde (Hebei), 1990-92
Xu Yan	1944	College	Mayor of Nantong (Jiangsu), 1990-94
Wang Xia	1954	M.A.	Mayor of Yan'an (Shaanxi) 1999-. Promoted Party Secretary of Yan'an, 2001-
Wang Jumei	1949	Unknown	Mayor of Nanyang (Henan) 1999-
Xuan Lin	1948	College	Mayor of Wuhu (Anhui), 2000-
Yuan Fenglan	1942	Vocational College	Mayor of Guilin (Guangxi), 1991-94
Yuan Shiwu	1936	College	Mayor of Huzhou (Zhejiang), 1992-94
Zhu Tong	1949	M.A.	Mayor of Baishan (Jilin), 1998-2000

Source: Database.

However, once selected into officialdom, women do not seem to suffer from unequal treatment, at least among mayors.

Similar results obtain with respect to ethnic minorities. Again, when we discount the issue of access to the cadre corps in the first place, there is scant evidence of discrimination against ethnic minority mayors. Consider model 3, which encompasses all 'autonomous regions', as well as many inland provinces with a high proportion of ethnic minorities such as Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and Gansu. *Ceteris paribus*, mayors in autonomous regions are not promoted to party posts less often than their counterparts in ordinary provinces, despite the conventional wisdom that high positions for minority leaders are restricted to government jobs, while *Han* officials hold key Party posts. These results hold when the minority status of individual cadres is included. In short, the Party does not discriminate (positively or negatively) between *Han* and other officials, measured spatially or individually (see Table 8).

TABLE 8: Percentage of Cases of Minority Mayors, 1990-2000, by Province

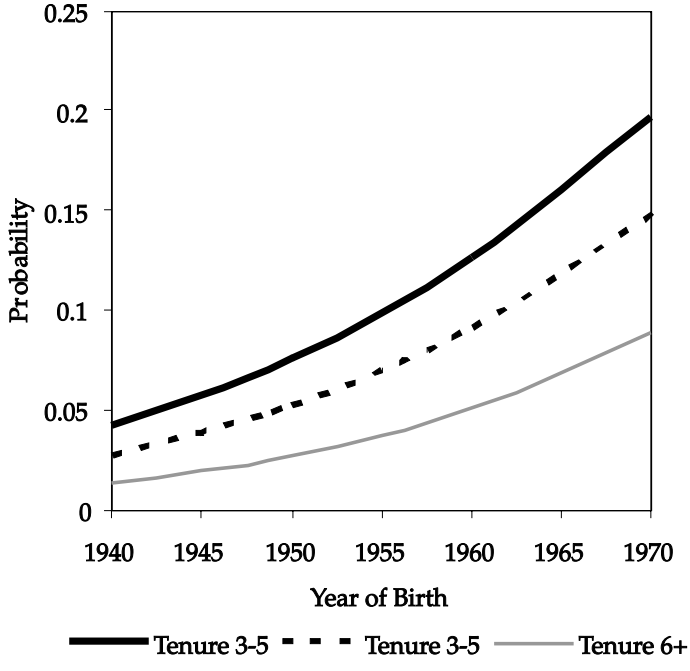
Province		**%**
Tibet	AR	93.3
Inner Mongolia	AR	51.5
Ningxia	AR	45.7
Xinjiang	AR	40.6
Guizhou		23.3
Jilin		5.1
Liaoning		4.5
Gansu		3.8
Guangxi	AR	2.8
Hebei		2.8
Heilongjiang		2.8
Jiangxi		2.0
China	3.5	

Notes: Units of analysis are mayor-years AR = Autonomous Regions.

Regional Differentiations

The regional contrasts do not reveal particularly severe disparities in the way provincial committees manage the political careers of mayors. The cleavage is instead institutional. The Centre seems somewhat keener to promote mayors under its purview than are the provinces, perhaps because it uses these large, prosperous and politically important cities as testing-grounds for officials earmarked for future critical appointments in the central bureaucracy. Lin Shusen's recent promotion in Guangdong is a case in point. After his long tenure as mayor of Guangzhou, he was promoted to party secretary in Guangzhou and obtained a seat as alternate member of the CC in November 2002. To be sure, a few provinces exhibit usual behaviour: for example, in Hunan, Hubei and Guizhou, promotions seem to be rare. Yet, the overall results fall short of exhibiting rampant localism in the form of large and systematic differences in the behaviour across provincial Party committees.

FIGURE 4: Fitted Impact of Age on the Probability Promotion of Mayors, by Tenure Length



Note: Plots are based on model 1.

Conclusions

The Chinese Communist Party has retained its capacity to shape political outcomes in the localities. Despite decentralization, the organizational system remains firmly in control of cadre careers. On the surface, provincial Party organizations are applying the broad policies laid out since the 1980s to rejuvenate the cadre corps, impose strict retirement rules, and combat the entrenchment of local elites by keeping terms of office relatively short. These achievements are rare among communist systems, or even authoritarian ones, and may help explain the durability of the Chinese political system. They are even more noteworthy when one considers the high degree of decentralization that characterizes contemporary Chinese institutions. Unlike so many studies of decentralization in other issue areas, I find little evidence of rampant localism with respect to cadre management: the rules seem to apply evenly across provinces.

Party institutions may be powerful, but they are not necessarily efficient. The CCP is proving less able to develop incentive mechanisms

that reward officials who perform, and penalize those who do not. In its urge to rejuvenate the cadre corps and combat corruption, the CCP's institutional response is to accelerate turnover among mayors. This decision seems to have taken precedence over the need to allow officials who perform to remain in place. To be sure, there appears to be a slight positive bias in favour of cadres who oversee quantitative growth, but the political system is not designed to promote desired qualitative changes that take place in the long run. I concur with Huang (1995) and Edin's (2003) view that state capacity is not necessarily declining, but I question the conclusion that Beijing's core economic priorities take precedence over other political considerations. The CCP may want to govern effectively, but the preponderance of the evidence in this study suggests that other political motivations—such as the need to distribute political rewards to a greater share of secondary officials—shape the political careers of local elites much more powerfully than the regime's stated goals of improving local governance.

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Notes

1 By 'Centre', I refer to the Chinese term *zhongyang* which implies the leadership and institutions of the Communist Party and the Central Government, in contrast to provincial and local party and government institutions.

2 In 1978, China had only 193 officially recognized cities, including 92 county-level cities (*xianji shi*). By 2000, the number had risen to 663: four centrally administered municipalities (CAMs); 15 'vice-provincial-level cities' (*fu shengji chengshi*); 244 ordinary municipalities (*diji shi*); and 400 county-level cities (*xianji shi*) (Dai 2000; Zhongguo guojia tongji ju 2001).

3 Dalian, Guangzhou, Xian, Shenyang, Wuhan, Ningbo, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Nanjing, Shenzhen, Qingdao, Harbin, Changchun, Xiamen and Jinan. Chonqing was upgraded to a CAM in 1997.

4 The literature of decentralization and central–local relations in the post-Mao era is vast. (See *inter alia*: Blecher and Shue 1996; Falkenheim 1980; Friedman 1993; Goodman 1986, 1992, 1994; Goodman and Segal 1994; Hao and Lin 1994; Huang 1996; Lampton 1992; Liu 1996; Oi 1992, 1995; Oksenberg and Tong 1991; Park *et al.* 1996; Shirk 1990; Solinger 1977, 1996; Walder 1995; Watson 1984; Whiting 2001; Wong 1997; Xie *et al.* 1995; Yang 1990, 1994, 1997).

5 However, the practice of 'reporting for information' (*bei'an*) confers on the Centre the right to overrule provincial decisions within a specified amount of time.

6 The latest personnel regulations explicitly stress the need to control deviant behaviour and root out corruption among the cadre corps (Cui 2002).

7 In 2000, Zhu Rongji introduced the 'cadre responsibility system' for local officials. Various types of 'responsibility systems' have been implemented in many issue areas, including family planning (Chu 1999), public health and the fight against SARS, as well as flood

prevention and control (Zhang and Wang 2000). The system extends to county and township officials (O'Brien and Li 1999; Edin 2003).

8 County-level cities are not included in the analysis.

9 This group extends beyond the well-known 'Shanghai Faction' (Jiang Zemin, Zhu Rongji, Wu Bangguo and Chen Zhili), including among others: Li Ruihuan (former mayor of Tianjin); state councillor Wu Yi (former vice-mayor of Beijing); Yu Zhengsheng (minister of construction and former mayor and CCP secretary of both Yantai and Qingdao); and Chen Yaobang (minister of agriculture, and former deputy CCP secretary of Wuxi).

10 In addition to the biographical notices of the Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui [China Urban Development Research Committee], leadership information was compiled from local and provincial yearbooks, issues of the *Zhongguo chengshi fazhan baogao* [Chinese Urban Development Report] , issues of *China Directory,* as well as municipal government websites. Refer to the data sources section of the bibliography for statistical sources on municipal performance. Special thanks to Julie Zeng, Yumin Sheng and Shiru Wang for their research assistance, and to the Universities Service Centre for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

11 This part of the analysis is limited to the set of 104 cities for which all 33 performance indicators are available. Unfortunately, indicators and related indices have only been by published by the CUDC since 2000. The remainder of the article is based on a much broader cross-section time-series political-economic dataset.

12 Namely, somebody who does not belong to any officially recognized ethnic minority.

13 Li Ziliu, mayor of Guangzhou, was 64 when he was replaced in 1996.

14 A mayor who is removed from office to the position of chairman of the Municipal People's Congress is treated as an exit because the post does not imply executive authority. This was the case of Jiang Jin, mayor of Jiangmen (in Guandong) from 1999-2001. Similarly, appointments to the Local Political Consultative Conference are treated as exits.

15 Transfers are coded 1 (continue) when cadres are deployed to a similarly ranked city. For instance, Li Jianchang was appointed mayor of Baoding (Hebei) in March 1998. He was subsequently sent to serve as mayor of Kaifeng (Henan). The rule applies to transfers to provincial CCP or government bureaux. For instance, Huang Huahua, mayor of Meizhou in 1991, became secretary general of the Guangdong provincial committee in 1992. When a mayor becomes party secretary of a city or assumes a higher-ranking post in provincial or central governments, she is coded 2 (promotion). For instance, Xu Mingyang, mayor of Jiaozuo (Henan) until July 1995, was promoted to vice-chairman of the Tibet A.R., a clear promotion, even though he never served as CCP secretary in Jiaozuo.

16 I do not use the simple continuous measure of tenure length because it is unreasonable to assume a linear relationship. Instead, the relationship is J-shaped: cadres are not expected to be replaced immediately after their appointment, but the odds of reassignment/exit increase substantially as they enter their second term (three to five years) and should be even greater beyond the end of a second term (six years and more).

17 It would be preferable to rely on foreign trade, as listed in the performance indicators of the Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui. Unfortunately, municipal-level foreign trade data are too inconsistent for the early 1990s to be incorporated in the model.

18 The baseline (omitted) is the year 2000.

19 In addition, all models use the method of robust standard errors, adjusted for clustering by municipality.

20 The simulation assumes that the mayor is male, Han, was born in 1960, holds a college degree and is posted in an ordinary municipality in Jiangsu province.

21 The predicted probability of the highest ranked outcome (here, promotion) in ordered probit models is equal to $\prod(k-X\beta)$, where k is the last cut-point estimate, $X\beta$ the linear effects and $\prod$ the cumulative normal distribution (Long 1997: 114-47).
22 The coefficient is not only of the wrong sign, but it is also significant at the 0.1 level, or better!
23 However, I cannot confidently conclude that the fiscal element in career prospects can be ruled in or out as a predictor of promotion, as Bo does. Unlike provinces, municipal statistical data do not indicate the share of fiscal revenue that cities remit to the centre, whether directly (since 1994) or indirectly through the provincial tax collection bureaux (before 1994).
24 The result does not seem to hold when the sample is split between coast and interior provinces. The very small number of observations in each sub-sample is likely to explain the larger standard error estimates.
25 Wang Xia's promotion as party secretary of Yan'an in 2001 falls beyond the period of analysis.

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Appendix 1: Municipal Performance Indicators of 104 cities (2000)

		Indicator	Goal	Weight	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Economic Development (28 Points)	1	GDP per capita (US dollars)	5000 and over	8 points	2.59	1.66	0.46	8.00
	2	Share of non-agricultural sectors in GDP (%)	90 and over	4 points	3.74	0.43	2.15	4.00
	3	Share of services in GDP (%)	55 and over	4 points	2.97	0.68	1.13	4.00
	4	Contribution of technical progress to GDP (%)	50 and over	4 points	3.29	0.69	0.40	4.00
	5	Imports + exports / GDP	45 and over	4 points	1.43	1.30	0.00	4.00
	6	Degree of urbanization (%)	60 and over	4 points	2.81	1.15	0.46	4.00
Subtotal					**16.10**	**3.89**	**5.86**	**27.06**
Human Capital (17 points)	7	Literacy rate among people aged 15 and above (%)	95 and over	3 points	2.95	0.15	1.85	3.00
	8	Proportion of the population with vocational college education and above (%)	10 and over	3 points	2.06	0.94	0.01	3.00
	9	Educational expenditure as % of GDP	5 and over	3 points	1.09	0.69	0.01	3.00
	10	Average life expectancy (Years)	75 and over	4 points	3.87	0.13	3.47	4.00
	11	Reduction in natural growth rate of the population (per thousand)	5 and below	2 points	1.63	0.44	0.52	2.00
	12	Death rate during delivery (per thousand)	10 and below	2 points	1.67	0.49	0.46	3.00
Subtotal					**12.07**	**3.19**	**1.37**	**16.96**
Quality of Life (22 points)	13	Engel's Index (%)	30 and below	4 points	3.13	0.42	1.71	4.00
	14	Available housing space per capita (m2)	18 and over	2 points	1.68	0.38	0.79	3.16
	15	Electricity use per capita (Kilowatts per hour)	600 and over	2 points	1.03	0.56	0.20	3.00
	16	Phone penetration per 100 peoples (units)	50 and over	2 points	1.33	0.58	0.18	2.00
	17	Home computer utilization ratio (%)	20 and over	2 points	0.84	0.60	0.00	2.00
	18	Number of commercial points (per 10 000 people)	100 and over	2 points	1.78	0.42	0.44	2.00
	19	Number of financial points (per 10,000 people)	10 and over	2 points	0.94	0.49	0.09	2.00
	20	Number of libraries, museums and theatres (per 10,000 people)	1 and over	2 points	0.81	0.66	0.06	2.00
	21	Number of doctor's visits (per 10,000 people)	50 and below	2 points	1.24	0.57	0.01	2.52
	22	Number of criminal cases (per 10,000 people)	15 and below	2 points	1.21	0.70	0.18	2.01
Subtotal					**13.22**	**2.86**	**2.72**	**21.87**
Environmental Protection (18 points)	23	Coverage of green areas	35 and over	3 points	2.38	0.75	0.09	3.00
	24	Availability of public green space per capita (m2)	10 and over	3 points	1.94	0.77	0.28	3.00
	25	Treatment of used industrial water (%)	90 and over	3 points	2.63	0.61	0.20	3.00
	26	Treatment of used household water (%)	60 and over	3 points	1.86	0.93	0.04	3.00
	27	Handling of garbage (%)	80 and over	3 points	2.54	0.79	0.13	3.00
	28	Air pollution level (Grade)	Second Grade and below	3 points	2.76	0.44	1.50	3.00
Subtotal					**13.02**	**3.10**	**2.34**	**18.00**
	29	Availability of paved roads per capita (m2)	10 and over	3 points	2.24	0.73	0.36	3.00
	30	Utilization of motorized Vehicles (per 10 000 people)	1000 and over	3 points	1.66	0.97	0.02	3.00
	31	Availability of running water (%)	100	3 points	2.82	0.46	0.81	3.00
	32	Consumption rate of natural gas (%)	100	3 points	2.45	0.65	0.37	3.00
	33	Number of domestic and international air routes (N)	30 and over	3 points	1.89	1.18	0.10	3.00
Subtotal					**10.03**	**2.34**	**3.98**	**15.00**
Total				**100 points**	**64.45**	**11.16**	**27.5**	**90.33**

Source: Data compiled from *Zhongguo chengshi nianjian* (2001).