



British Embassy Beijing

China Politics Update – October 2017

China's new leadership was unveiled on 25th October at the conclusion of the once-every-five-year Communist Party Congress, with Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang starting a second term in office. Five new members have joined Xi and Li in the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), which is the most important political body in China (see their biographies overleaf). These new members will soon be appointed (if not already) as the heads of the top legislature, the propaganda & ideology department and the anti-corruption body, followed by a wider shakeup of senior government officials (at the Government meetings in March 2018).

All of the seven PBSC members, including Xi and Li, came from an educational background of humanities or economics, whereas previously engineers dominated the elite politics. This may be due to an ever urgent need for the leadership to address domestic social issues (e.g., income inequality and insufficient social service), which Xi said has now become the biggest challenge threatening the Party's ruling.

Xi has consolidated power, as most of the newly appointed Party officials to the Politburo are identifiably his allies. His name and ideology (coined as "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era") has been enshrined in the Party's Constitution, which has placed his ideological contribution on the same level as Mao Zedong, the founding father of the People's Republic of China. Xi kept to retirement norms but abandoned the convention of appointing his successor during the Party gathering, leaving doubt as to whether he will remain beyond 2022 to do a third term.

New policy measures have been introduced during the Congress, including setting up a central leading group on law based governance, establishing a national supervisory body over natural resources and piloting the merge of local government agencies to improve efficiency. At the same time, the main measures that have been put in place during Xi's first term will continue, such as military reform, rule of law, anti corruption and environment protection. There was also a reassurance of economic "reform and opening up", however the rhetoric was not new, and reform has been patchy so far.

Public opinion is split over Xi's grand vision of turning China into 'a modern and strong country'. Many genuinely believe that China will soon become the most powerful nation around the world, with their own livelihoods improved. Others have adopted a sarcastic tone tagging themselves as 'disadvantaged groups' (*kunnan qunzhong*) who suffer inequity and injustice – they feel that they have been left behind in the process of the nation's 'great rejuvenation'.

Enquiries and feedback are welcome. Please contact:

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Politburo Standing Committee

Xi Jinping

Party Secretary General, Chair of Central Military Commission, State President



Born in 1953, Xi is the son of Xi Zhongxun, a revolutionary-era leader and former vice-premier. After taking office in 2012, Xi launched a fierce war on corruption, which has taken down an unprecedented 10% of the Central Committee members, including a serving Politburo member Sun Zhengcai. Xi also set out an ambitious reform programme, covering the economy, the law and the military. He has also adopted a proactive approach in foreign policy, including the launching of the 'Belt and Road Initiative' and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Li Keqiang

No. 2 Politburo Standing Committee member, Premier



Born in 1955, Li is a highly capable economic technocrat. He has experience leading less-developed provinces, and a particular interest in rural reform and development issues. Educated in law and economics, Li built his career in the Communist Youth League, and is close to the former President Hu Jintao.

Since Li started his role as Premier, speculations have become rampant that his authority in economic policy making was greatly weakened by President Xi's own trusted advisors. Nevertheless, over the past five years, Li has been driving hot-button economic issues, particularly the upgrade of China's growth model and cutting red tapes for businesses. He is expected to start his second term as Premier in March 2018 during the government annual meetings.

Li Zhanshu

No. 3 Politburo Standing Committee member, currently the Chief of General Office of the Central Committee, likely to become Chair of the National People's Congress (the top legislature) next March



Born in 1950, Li is identified as a close ally of President Xi Jinping, whose friendship dates back to the early 1980s when both of them served as county-level officials in the northern Hebei Province. Li has a diverse career, ranging from central government postings to the governor of different regions across the country. In 2012, Li was promoted to Director of the General Office of the Central Committee, a key position that is typically held by the top leader's entrusted allies. Having now become the No. 3 Politburo Standing Committee member, Li is expected to take over China's top legislature, the National People's Congress. This reshuffle will be made at the government annual meetings in March 2018.

Wang Yang

No. 4 Politburo Standing Committee member, Vice Premier, likely to take over Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (equivalent to the Upper House of Parliament) next March



Born in 1955, Wang possesses extensive leadership experience in local regions, including the inland Chongqing municipality and the southern coastal Guangdong province. He is credited with pioneering the Guangdong model of development, featured by an emphasis on private business and a greater role for civil society. He is thus considered to be a reformer with a most liberal mind among the elite politicians. In his capacity as Vice Premier since 2013, Wang has taken on important roles of heading poverty reduction and intellectual property. He is expected to take over Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference next March, responsible for reaching out to non-Communist-Party groups and individuals.

Wang Huning

No. 5 Politburo Standing Committee Member, currently Chief of Central Policy Research Bureau of the Party. Likely to oversee ideology and propaganda



Born in 1955, Wang Huning is one of the few who have worked closely with China's three presidents: Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. Over the past 15 years, Wang has headed the Central Policy Research Office, taking on roles of national policy advisor, chief speech writer and principal theorist to the country's top leader. Wang came from an academic background –he was a professor of international politics in the prestigious Fudan University before moving to politics in 1995. His memoir Political Life, published two decades ago, has now become a big hit on the Internet.

Zhao Leji

No. 6 Politburo Standing Committee Member, Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, having taken over from Wang Qishan as China's top graft-buster



Born in 1957, Zhao graduated from Peking University with a BA in philosophy. Zhao's family has a link with Xi Jinping's – Zhao's father used to work with Xi's father. At the very core of Xi's political outlook is the idea of controlling the Party properly – after all its grip on power depends on a 'healthy' Party. Zhao has been picked by Xi to play a key role in this respect, serving as the Head of the Organisation Department of the Party. Before moving to Beijing in 2012, Zhao had served as the Party head of Qinghai and then of Shaanxi province.

Han Zheng

No. 7 Politburo Standing Committee Member, currently Party Secretary of the Shanghai Municipality. Will probably become Executive Vice Premier in March 2018



Born in 1954, Han has spent his entire career working in Shanghai. Han has been widely recognized as owing his advancement to the former president Jiang Zemin. Han has managed to make the transition to the new leadership, having developed a good relationship with Xi Jinping when he served as Xi's deputy in Shanghai back in 2007. Han enjoys a reputation of being a competent, seasoned financial and economic technocrat, as well as his market friendly policy orientation in Shanghai.

Communist Party of China: 19th Politburo



Xi Jinping
Party Secretary General
Chair of Central Military Commission

Li Keqiang



Premier

Li Zhanshu



National People's Congress (tbc)

WANG Yang



Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (tbc)

Wang Huning



Party Secretariat and Propaganda

Zhao Leji



Central Commission for Discipline Inspection

HAN Zheng



Exec. Vice Premier (tbc)

Ding Xuexiang Likely new head of the General Office	Wang Chen Likely Vice Chairman of the NPC	Liu He tbc	Xu Qiliang Vice-chairman, Central Military Commission	Sun Chunlan (female) Likely Vice Premier	Li Xi tbc
Li Qiang Currently Party Secretary, Jiangsu province	Hu Chunhua Currently Party Secretary, Guangdong province	Li Hongzhong Currently Party Secretary, Tianjin Municipality	Yang Jiechi Currently State Councillor for Foreign Affairs	Yang Xiaodu Currently Minister of Supervision	Zhang Youxia Vice-chairman, Central Military Commission
Chen Xi Likely new head of the Organization Dept.	Chen Quanguo Currently Party Secretary, Xinjiang	Chen Miner Currently Party Secretary, Chongqing Municipality	Guo Shengkun Currently Minister of Public Security	Huang Kunming Likely Minister of Propaganda	Cai Qi Currently Party Secretary, Beijing Municipality