



XI JINPING'S LEADERSHIP STYLE AND CHINA'S LIKELY POLICY DIRECTION

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China's new leader, Xi Jinping, has moved remarkably quickly to outline his personal vision for the country and this has attracted attention inside China and abroad. In doing so he has departed from the usual norm for China's top leaders, who wait at least two and a half to three years before spelling out their concept and trying to translate it into a 'guiding ideology' for the country. In the process he has set himself apart from all the other members of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). The alacrity with which Xi Jinping has moved signals not only his self-confidence, but implies a high degree of assurance of backing from China's veteran leaders. It is another indicator that he and his predecessor, Hu Jintao, shared a close, collaborative partnership. Xi Jinping's attempt to demonstrate that he will have a visibly different style of leadership came within a month of his being appointed General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC) by the 18th Party Congress, which was held in Beijing from November 8-14, 2012. The 18th Party Congress additionally approved his appointment as President of China at the forthcoming National People's Congress (NPC) session presently scheduled to be held from March 5, 2013.

Xi Jinping's 'southern tour', or '*nanxun*', early in December, 2012, was aimed at multiple audiences and emitted a multiplicity of messages. It hinted at the acknowledgement of popular dissatisfaction in some areas as well as the impatience in certain quarters at the slow pace which threatens to stall economic reforms. The main themes in Hu Jintao's Work Report to the 18th Party Congress, as well as in Xi Jinping's first two speeches immediately after conclusion of the Party Congress to the Politburo's first 'collective study session'

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and the CMC meeting, were reflected in Xi Jinping's tour to Guangdong province. The Work Report and Xi Jinping's speeches all stressed the need for cadres to follow a frugal work-style, be close to the people, and eradicate corrupt practices—the latter especially singled out as having assumed serious proportions threatening the very existence of the CCP. Hu Jintao had, on at least three earlier occasions, warned of the threat to the CCP's existence from the high incidence of corruption. The widespread practice of cadres buying luxury cars, expecting lavish banquets during inspection visits, and leading a profligate lifestyle, had come in for pointed critical mention at three gatherings organized in Beijing earlier this year by the children of powerful and extremely influential veteran cadres, or 'princelings'. Significantly, these 'princelings' are all associated with Xi Jinping and have been supportive of him.

Xi Jinping has kept the focus on combating corruption as publicised in his remarks on December 24-25, 2012, to Chen Changzhi, Chairman of the Central Committee of the China Democratic National Construction Association (CDNCA). Recalling Mao Zedong's comment in 1945 to Huang Yanpei, a former Chairman of this non-communist party, that governments will never be slack at work if they are under the supervision of the people, Xi Jinping said Mao's warning remains valid. Quoting an ancient Chinese proverb that "things must have gone rotten before insects can grow", Xi Jinping urged the Party to stay clean and self-disciplined.

The Hong Kong media and Hong Kong's Phoenix TV, which were the first to report on Xi Jinping's visit — prominently picked up four days later by the Mainland China media — publicised that Xi Jinping was accompanied by his wife and that his

entire entourage travelled in mini-buses escorted by police but without disrupting normal traffic. He was photographed waving to, and on occasion mixing with, the common people.

Xi Jinping's first visit outside Beijing after taking over as Party Chief was a 4-day (Dec 7-11, 2012) inspection tour of the wealthy southern province of Guangdong. From December 7, he visited the Shenzhen and Zhuhai Special Economic Zones (SEZ), Shunde and Guangzhou. Chinese commentators promptly compared this with Deng Xiaoping's '*nanxun*', or 'southern tour' of 1992, which Deng Xiaoping undertook to give a push to the economic reform process that had then threatened to stall. Xi Jinping used the trip to deftly play up his and his family's association with Deng Xiaoping by laying a wreath at the Deng Xiaoping Statue in Lotus Hill Park. He also called on four retired cadres who had accompanied Deng Xiaoping on his 'southern tour'.

In the months leading up to the 18th Party Congress, a series of articles in the official Chinese media had debated the advantages of accelerated economic reforms. Hu Jintao's Work Report, with the entire drafting process of which Xi Jinping was closely associated, contained 86 references to 'reforms', considerably more than the 70 in Premier Wen Jiabao's Report to the National People's Congress (NPC) earlier this March, indicating that the economic reform process with the objective of achieving 'common prosperity' would definitely continue. Accelerated or radical reforms are unlikely, however, as Xi Jinping will do nothing that threatens stability or upsets the powerful and strongly entrenched interests in the State owned Enterprises (SoE's). Xi Jinping's tour also took place just weeks before the important annual Central Economic Work Conference opened in Beijing on December 16. As anticipated, the Central Economic Work Conference side-stepped important issues such as income redistribution.

It is interesting that Hu Deping, son of the popular former General Secretary Hu Yaobang, is a supporter of Xi Jinping and has been supportive of Wang Yang, till recently the Party Secretary of Guangdong. In the middle of this year Hu Deping identified Guangdong as the province which could be expected to resolve the contentious issue of peasant's property rights and land reforms. Adhering to practice, Wang Yang accompanied Xi Jinping throughout the 4-day tour. Soon after the tour Wang Yang was replaced

on December 18, by a cadre on the career fast track, 1963-born Hu Chunhua, also known as 'little Hu' and who was elevated at the recent Party Congress to the Politburo. Among other places, Hu Chunhua served in Tibet (1983-97) before being appointed First Secretary of the Communist Youth League (CYL) and later as Party Secretary of Inner Mongolia in November 2009. He is a protégé of Hu Jintao.

Xi Jinping's selection of Guangdong for his first tour outside Beijing also had personal overtones. His father, Xi Zhongxun, who was Guangdong Governor and Party Secretary from 1978 to 1981 before becoming Vice Premier, had established the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and been Political Commissar of the Guangzhou Military District. Xi Jinping visited his 86-year old mother, Qi Xin, who lives in Shenzhen.

Xi Jinping's tour, however, did not have just economic content but included visits to PLA bases including the 124th division of the 42nd Army in Luofushan, Huizhou and the PLA Navy's South China Sea fleet, where he boarded the destroyer 'Haikou'. In Zhuhai, he visited the China Aviation Industry General Aircraft Co., which manufactures military and civil aircraft. At all these places he made speeches expressing pronounced nationalist sentiments. China's official news agency 'Xinhua' reported Xi Jinping as emphasizing that "whatever time and whatever circumstances, [the army] must listen to the Party and follow the Party." He asked PLA officers and non-commissioned officers to adopt 'real combat criteria' in military training and intensify such awareness among soldiers. Xi Jinping reiterated that the PLA's core task was to improve its ability to wage regional wars in the information age and conduct diversified military operations. Xi Jinping's visit to China's leading IT companies, like Tencent, hinted at the close collaboration between the PLA and IT companies, of which there is a concentration in Guangdong's Dongguan county.

The other important area which Xi Jinping has chosen to stress unusually early in his term could become his contribution to the CCP lexicon in case, towards the end of his first term in 2017, it is introduced in to the Party Constitution along with 'Mao Zedong Thought', 'Deng Xiaoping's Theory', Jiang Zemin's 'Three Represents' and Hu Jintao's 'Outlook on Scientific Development'. This is the "Chinese Dream", which blends his concept of the country's future with the probable key thrust areas for his

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administration. Promptly after conclusion of the 18th Party Congress and Xi Jinping's mention of it in a speech in late November while visiting a museum exhibition called the 'Road to Revival', the "Chinese Dream" is being referred to by high ranking Party cadres with increasing frequency, including in their interactions with foreigners when comparisons with the 'American Dream' are not infrequent. It has become a hot topic on Sina Weibo and Chinese Television. Xi Jinping defined the "Chinese Dream" as "achieving the great revival of the Chinese nation", which resonates with definitive nationalist overtones. Party cadres say it envisages: Chinese people with higher incomes, better living conditions or environment and, a strong Chinese nation. Achieving the "Chinese Dream" implies inclusive growth and co-opting the country's ethnic minority nationalities. Blogs posted by some 'netizens' are, however, critical and question whether this is a dream of the 1.3 billion Chinese people or only the Chinese leaders. Others hope that China does not become a society where only money matters.

Significantly, Xi Jinping tasked a team of confidants, where Wang Huning is said to have had a leading role, almost three years ago to formulate the "Chinese Dream". The formulation appears to weave together crucial aspects of Xi Jinping's policies. The "Chinese Dream" is unambiguous that economic reforms will be pursued while retaining the emphasis on 'common prosperity'. Sensitivity to the need for maintaining social stability simultaneously places curbs on radical reforms. Reports emanating from Beijing that China's incumbent leadership favours an 8 per cent annual rate of growth and that the recent Central Economic Work Conference avoided tough reform initiatives directed at income redistribution – despite a rapidly rising gini coefficient – or State owned Enterprises (SoEs) because of their influence, lend credence to this. Hu Jintao's Work Report to the 18th Party Congress for the first time ever included a section on the "Ecology", or environment, and this finds an echo in the "Chinese Dream". Popular dissatisfaction with polluted rivers, adulteration and food safety would have been contributory factors. The clear references to a strong Chinese nation and "achieving the great revival of the Chinese nation" have nationalist overtones and figure often in Xi Jinping's speeches. They refer to the modernization of the PLA and implicitly recall the humiliations suffered by China at the hands of

foreigners in the past, in turn, underscoring China's unwillingness to compromise on issues that are seen by Beijing as impinging on national sovereignty or territorial integrity.

In addition to these overt moves that have raised popular expectations, Xi Jinping has been equally quick in asserting control over the Party's supervisory apparatus. Meng Jianzhu's elevation to the PB and appointment as Head of the Party's apex security body, the Central Politics and Law Commission, indicates that Xi Jinping, instead of any other PBSC member, will exercise direct supervisory control over matters relating to internal security and Intelligence.

Little noticed has been the expansion and strengthening of the Secretariat of the CCP's 18th Central Committee (CC). The Secretariat of the 18th CC has been enlarged to include seven members and, unlike for the past couple of decades, is a visibly influential body that includes a

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member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) and four members of the Politburo (PB). This suggests a more pro-active role for the Secretariat, which reports directly to the CCP CC General Secretary. Its membership points to its orientation and Xi Jinping's likely priority areas in his first term.

The inclusion of Liu Yunshan, PBSC member who continues to oversee the propaganda and culture portfolios, as the senior most

member in the Secretariat implies that political and ideological education accompanied by controls on the media and internet will be a priority. Liu Yunshan will be an influential voice on matters relating to initiatives in culture and China's 'soft power'. He will have a say on matters concerning Tibet and Tibetans because of his experience in shaping a decisive role for the Party's propaganda apparatus during the 2008 riots. Liu Qibao, PB member and Director of the CCP CC Propaganda Department will probably reinforce Liu Yunshan's conservative views. Zhao Leji, Head of the CCP CC's Organisation Department who entered the PB at the 18th Party Congress and was formerly Party Secretary of Shaanxi Province, is included in the Secretariat along with Li Zhanshu, PB member and Director of the powerful CCP CC General Office and third generation 'Red revolutionary' cadre. Zhao Hongzhu, PB member, ex-Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province and a former PLA officer, represents the CDIC in the Secretariat indicating that rooting out

corruption will receive priority. This appears to be reinforced by the appointment of PBSC member Wang Qishan as Chairman of the expanded CDIC, which for the first time includes younger cadres born in the 1950s and 1960s. Yang Jing, a Mongol, is the sole minority cadre.

The inclusion in the Secretariat of Du Qinglin, a former Vice Chairman of the CPPCC and Director of the UFWD, is interesting. At 67 years, Du Qinglin should have been on the verge of retirement but has instead been inducted into the Secretariat. Viewed together with the appointments of 67-year old Guo Jinliong, who served many years in Tibet, as Beijing Party Secretary; Chen Quanguo, who reports circulating in Beijing claim was appointed Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Party Secretary at Xi Jinping's behest; and Ling Jihua as Director of the UFWD; Du Qinglin's inclusion in the Secretariat could indicate an impending initiative aimed at Tibet and Tibetans.

Finally, Xi Jinping has very quickly begun assembling his personal team, or brains trust. Key figures among them who have so far been identified are: Li Shulei, 49 years old and former Vice President of the Central Party School. He has been appointed Xi Jinping's Political Secretary. Li

Shulei knows Xi Jinping from his days in Xi'an, Shaanxi and was brought to Beijing by Xi Jinping in December 2007 as Vice President of the Central Party School. The other individual is 60-year old Liu He. Fluent in English, Liu He has been drafted in to Xi Jinping's personal staff as the speech writer for economic issues. Once a soldier with the PLA's 38th Group Army, Liu He was Deputy Director of the Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs and has been involved in drafting Five Year Plans since the 8th Five Year Plan (1991-95). Wang Huning, promoted to the PB at the 18th Party Congress and fluent in French, is the third individual being relied upon by Xi Jinping and is credited with having been tasked by Xi Jinping three years ago to formulate the "Chinese Dream". According to some reports he was closely involved in drafting Jiang Zemin's 'Three Represents'. His wife, Zhou Qi, is the daughter of a former Vice Minister of State Security. Born in 1955, he has been a close associate of Hu Jintao and accompanied him on virtually all his tours. Xi Jinping is also expected to tap the reputed liberal Chinese economist Sun Liping, who was his doctoral adviser, for advice on economic issues.



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