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CCP Revises Constitution For a "New Era"

On October 24, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) issued a revised version of its constitution (中国共产党章程). Since the current version adopted in 1982, it has been amended several times, including in 1987, 1992 and 2012. As the foundational document of China's ruling political party—and in practice more significant than the national constitution—the revisions act as an important coda to the results of the recently concluded 19th Party Congress and point out where China is likely headed for the next five years. Examination of the revisions and additions to the constitution reveal a number of important themes (People's Daily Weixin, October 30).

First and most important is the inclusion of CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想). The new constitution notes that:

> Since the 18th Party Congress, Comrade Xi Jinping has been the primary representative of the CCP….[his] "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" is a successor and development of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important

> thought of Three Represents (Jiang Zemin's core contribution) and the Scientific Outlook on Development (Hu Jintao's) and is the result of the sinification of Marxism….

Xi Jinping Thought can be understood as a an umbrella for a number of ideas and policy initiatives that include, most famously, the China Dream, Strong Military Dream, and Four Comprehensives (*China Brief*, September 21). The constitution continues, saying that "Xi Thought" "is a guide to action for the entire Party and nation to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people.."

A hallmark of this shift in focus can be seen by comparing the new constitution with the previous version. Throughout the document, "founding of the PRC" (建国) has been replaced with "establishment of New China" (新中国成立). This ties into the idea that through the CCP China began the process of revitalization and that under Xi's leadership it is entering a new period of rejuvenation.

This is important as it links Xi to China's newfound power. The argument is that while in true dialectical style each of his predecessors' ideologies and policies were important and necessary stages of Chinese development, Xi represents their culmination and triumph. Such a position justifies his elevation in 2015 to the "Core of the Leadership" (领导核心), making Xi not just the senior member of a large bureaucracy but also its spiritual focus (*China Brief*, March 7, 2016).

As a result, Chinese people can now feel the "Four Self-Confidences" (四个自信) another formulation that includes self-confidence in the path China is taking (道路自信), in ideology and theory, (理论自信) in the institutions of the country (制度自信), and in Chinese culture (文化自信).

The emphasis on culture is particularly noteworthy. Xi Jinping has made promotion of traditional culture and values a hallmark of his leadership (*China Brief*, July 6). Civilizational revitalization is therefore achieved in part through cultural revival. Exending the reach of Chinese culture is also a priority. The revised constitution includes newly added encouragement to "promote Chinese superior traditional culture" and…improve national cultural softpower."

While the General Principles (总纲) section lays out core tenets of CCP ideology and Xi Jinping Thought, the majority of the document is devoted to proper behavior for cadres. Most important of these is the attention given to fighting corruption and Party discipline.

Following yet another major theme of Xi's administration, the new constitution has language encouraging greater discipline among Party cadres and enhancing the role of Party oversight organizations like the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Subsequent chapters encourage party cadres to oppose "hedonism" and extravagance and promote honesty and diligence. Not coincidentally, the Chinese government is already taking steps to improve anti-corruption through the creation of a National Supervisory Commission, which

will absorb several anti-corruption organs (SCMP, November 6, 2017). Xi's power, however, goes beyond directing corruption investigations.

At the time of writing, over 20 universities and colleges have set up centers to study Xi Jinping Thought (VOAChinese, October 30). Those that might oppose Xi's initiatives now face not only an uphill factional and political battle, but also an organizational one. Chinese soldiers are exhorted to study Xi Jinping thought and the "Spirit of the 19th Party Congress" (*People's Daily*, November 6). For now, Xi's ideas will receive full support across the swath of CCP, State, and Military bureaucracy.

The public face of Xi Jinping's enhanced power—omnipresent propaganda, and oddly dramatic displays of loyalty such as the cadres paying homage to a tree planted by Xi—can appear comical (SCMP, November 8). However, Xi's control of the real levers of power and ability to control the Party's fundamental structure—as embodied by the Party's constitution—is perhaps a better indicator of his real power.

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Has Xi Jinping Become "Emperor for Life"?

By Willy Lam

The just-ended 19th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress has confirmed Xi Jinping's status as China's "Emperor for Life." The 64-year-old "core leader" has filled the country's highest-ruling councils—the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC)—with his cronies and loyalists. No cadres from younger generations were inducted to the PBSC, lending credence to the widely held belief that the 64-year-old Xi will remain China's top leader until the 21st Party Congress in 2027 or beyond (*Apple Daily* [Hong Kong], October 26; HK01.com, October 25). Moreover, the fact that "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" has been enshrined in the CCP Constitution has buttressed Xi's status as a Mao-like "Great Helmsman" for the Party and country. Projects planned for the "New Era" run into the 2030s and 2040s, which could provide Xi with a rationale to stay at the helm beyond the usual ten years. In a startling parallel to French King Louis XIV's famous pronouncement that "I am the state" ("*l'etat, c'est mois*"), Xi's near-total command of the levers of power is his way of telling all Chinese that "The Party? It is me!"

Composition of the New Leadership

In the CCP, power rests with those who can put loyal cadres in high positions. During the recent congress Xi did just that. As expected, General Secretary Xi and Premier Li Keqiang remain in the PBSC, China's highest ruling body. The five new inductees to the PBSC, all born in the 1950s, have sworn fealty to the "supreme commander." Li Zhanshu, Xi's confidant and hatchet man, will become Chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's parliament, next March. Party theorist Wang Huning is taking charge of the ideology and propaganda portfolio. Another

loyalist, the out-going Director of the Organization Department, Zhao Leji, will head the Party's top anti-corruption agency, the Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection (CCDI). Vice-Premier Wang Yang, regarded as an economic and financial reformer, will be named Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's highest advisory council. And the veteran Party chief of Shanghai, Han Zheng, is slated to be the next Executive Vice-Premier, the principal deputy to Premier Li.

The dominance of the inchoate Xi Jinping Faction (which consists of his underlings, cronies, and protégés when he worked in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces from 1985 to 2007, as well as his classmates at Tsinghua University and fellow natives of Shaanxi Province) is most pronounced in the larger 25-member Politburo. Fifteen of the Politburo members are Xi loyalists, plus cadres who have publicly sworn total allegiance to Xi. Not counting PBSC members Li Zhanshu, Zhao Leji and Wang Huning, prominent faction members who have made it to the Politburo include the following: the Party Secretaries (PS) of Chongqing, Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, respectively Chen Min'er, Cai Qi, Li Qiang and Li Hongzhong; the PS of Guangdong Province and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Li Xi and Chen Quanguo; Xi's chief adviser on economic matters, Liu He; the new Director of the General Office of the Central Committee Ding Xuexiang; the just-promoted heads of the Organization and Propaganda Departments, respectively Chen Xi and Huang Kunming; and the two Vice-Chairmen of the Central Military Commission, Generals Xu Qiliang and Zhang Youxia (Radio French International, October 25; *Oriental Daily News* [Hong Kong], October 25).

Given that most Xi Jinping faction members are relatively young, it will take them five years (until the 20th Party Congress in 2022) before they can exert tighter control over party, government and military organs. The PBSC to be formed at the 20th Party Congress could consist of mainly Xi Faction members. However, evidence suggests that there has been some pushback to Xi's expanding power. Xi had to make compromises regarding the wording of the CCP Constitution, and in his work report, Xi devoted space than anticipated to partially reinstating some of Deng Xiaoping's Open Door reformist policies.

Enshrinement of Xi's Theoretical Contributions in the Party Constitution

Xi suffered a minor setback regarding the enshrinement of his "theoretical contributions" in the CCP Constitution. Xi had wanted "Xi Jinping Thought" (习近平思想) to be inserted; this would have automatically elevated him to the same level as Chairman Mao, whose Mao Zedong Thought (毛泽东思想) has long been celebrated alongside Marxism-Leninism in the supreme document. Instead, "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" was honored in the CCP Constitution as a guiding thought for the Party and state. While not quite the elevation Xi hoped for, his influence in the new document is remarkable. While the names of his two predecessors, former presidents Jiang and Hu are not in the Constitution, "Xi Jinping" is mentioned 11 times. One clause even stipulates that CCP members must "resolutely

safeguard the authority of the *dangzhongyang* ["party center"] with Comrade Xi Jinping as core" while another admonishes Party members to "seriously study Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (*Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], October 29; *People's Daily*, October 28).

Yet the ultimate test of whether Xi lives up to his preferred image as the "Mao Zedong of the 21st Century" is whether the new Helmsman can introduce comprehensive reform in political, economic and social sectors. The much-touted "Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era" consists of a bevy of slogans—many of them recycled from earlier speeches by Xi—regarding China's achievements by the year 2035 and 2050. Xi said in his opening speech of the Congress that by the year 2020, China will become a "moderately prosperous society." The country will have attained all-rounded socialist modernization by 2035. And by 2050, China would become a "great modern socialist country" that is "prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful" (Xinhua, October 29; *People's Daily*, October 28). Yet according to independent Party historian Zhang Lifan, "'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' is not a new concept—and merely adding the term 'New Era' does not give a sense that there is theoretical innovation involved."

Implications for Economic Reforms

To realize the "New Era in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," Xi listed in his Congress Report fourteen policy directives. The first and most important one is to uphold "the Party's leadership over all sectors" of the country. Party members and ordinary citizens are called upon to "self-consciously safeguard the authority of the Party's central authorities and [its] concentrated, unified leadership." On economic issues Xi apparently made at least theoretical concessions to Party and State Council cadres who favored a faster pace of liberalization, saying the government would "unswervingly encourage, support and provide guidance to non-state sector economic development, so that the market will take up a decisive role in the distribution of resources." Xi changed the CCP Constitution to emphasize that the market would play a "decisive role"—and not just a "fundamental role," as stated in the old version of the document—in the allocation of resources. In an apparent effort to lure foreign investment, the Party chief even reintroduced the concept of "national treatment," where multinationals registered in China receive the same treatment as domestic firms (*Economic Daily* [Beijing], October 23; Ming Pao, October 20).

However, it is clear that the party-state apparatus' control over different economic sectors will be enhanced, not reduced. For example, the government has started buying shares in major private firms such as Tencent; while the number of government shares are just symbolic, this could lead to the appointment of party representatives on the board of directors of these giant private companies (Radio France International, October 12; *Wall Street Journal*, October 11). Moreover, the reform of SOE conglomerates, which is said to be a major economic liberalization policy in the com-

ing few years, has been slow and circumscribed. Although Beijing has pledged that these conglomerates should have mixed ownership, it is clear that the party-state will remain the major shareholder—and that the bulk of the top management will be party-state appointees (South China Morning Post, September 6; China Securities Journal, June 28). Xi's pro-forma backing for market forces and the participation of foreign companies could provide a theoretical justification for sidelined reformers in the State Council, led by Premier Li, to lobby for a bigger role in economic decision-making. The prominence of the party-state authorities in enterprises is illustrated by the unprecedented number of SOE chiefs who have been appointed to the policy-setting Central Committee. At least twenty such state entrepreneurs have attained this rare honor of joining the policy-setting Central Committee, albeit as alternate or non-voting members (Ta Kung Pao [Hong Kong], October 25; Finance.sina.com, October 24). They include (by order of the number of votes each new alternate member gets):

Alternate Members of the Central Committee of the CCP	
Ma Zhengwu (马正武)	President, China Chengtong Holdings Group Ltd. (中国城通集团)
Ma Guoqiang (马国强)	President, China Baowu Steel Group Corp. (宝武钢铁集团)
Guan Qing (官庆)	President, China State Construction Engineering Corp (中建总公司)
He Dongfang (贺东风)	President, Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China, Ltd. (COMAC) (中国商用飞机公司)
Cao Jianguo (曹建国)	President, Aero Engine Corporation of China (中国航空发动机集团有限公司)
Kou Wei (寇伟)	General Manager, State Grid (国家电网公司)
Cai Jianjiang (蔡剑江)	President, Aviation Industry Corp of China (AVIC) (中国航空集团)
Dai Houliang (戴厚良)	President, Sinopec (中国石化集团)
Lu Jun (吕军)	President, Sinograin Corp. (中国储备粮总公司)
Li Xiaobo (李晓波)	President, Taiyuan Iron & Steel Group (山西太原钢铁集团)
Chen Siqing (陈四清)	President, Bank of China (中国银行)
Yi Gang (易刚)	Vice-President, People's Bank of China (中国人民银行)
Yi Huiman (易会满)	President, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (中国工商银行)
Zhao Huan (赵欢)	President, China Agriculture Bank (中国农业银行)
Qian Zhimin (钱智民)	General Manager, China National Nuclear Corp.(中国核工业集团总公司)
Lei Fanpei (雷凡培)	President, The China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) (中国航天科技集团)
Tian Guoli (田国立)	President, China Construction Bank (中国建设银行)
Miu Jianmin (缪建民)	President, People's Insurance Company of China (中国人保集团)
Ren Hongbin (任洪斌)	President, China National Machinery Industry Corporation (Sinomach) (中国机械工业集团)
Yang Jincheng (杨金成)	Deputy General Manager, China Shipbuilding Industry Co. (中船重工集团)

The conflation of Party and business—which is the most important implication of the promotion of 20 state entrepreneurs to the Central Committee—could signal another round of "the party-state making advances, the private sector beating a retreat" in the economy.

Implications for Foreign Policy

"Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" bears striking similarities to Xi's better-known mantra the "Chinese Dream". Both slogans carry heavy nationalistic overtones. Xi's goal is render China into a "great modern socialist country" by or before the year 2050. As Xi noted last week, his administration would "comprehensively push forward major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, so as to usher in a multi-directional, multi-faceted, and three-dimensional diplomatic arrangement." State Councilor Yang Jiechi, who is the highest official in charge of diplomacy, has been promoted a Politburo member and vice-premier, a sure sign that the Xi administration is devoting more resources to diplomacy.

Conclusion: Who Will Challenge the New "Emperor"?

While Xi has emerged as possibly the most powerful leader since Mao, it is important to note that the CCP, which has 90 million members from disparate backgrounds, is not necessarily a monolithic party. In addition to alienating members of the rival Shanghai Faction and the Communist Youth League Faction, Xi has made a tremendous number of enemies through his Machiavellian use of the anti-corruption operation to eliminate or intimidate cadres who refuse to profess full fealty to him.

At this stage, these anti-Xi elements are lying low; but they could suddenly coalesce and pounce on Xi should the latter make a terrible foreign or domestic policy blunder. Xi's consolidation of power has significantly increased the probability that he will make such an error. As historian Zhang Lifan pointed out: "Xi wants to dictate all policies. And if he were to make a major mistake, nobody and no institutions would be able to rectify the blunder" (Central News Agency [Taiwan], October 26; BBC Chinese, October 25). For example, nationalism is a double-edged sword. Should Xi get into an ugly confrontation with the U.S. in say, the South China Sea—and should the Maoist dictator be seen as failing to stand up to the Americans—he might lose not only face but also power. His legions of enemies could seize the opportunity to oust him—or at least to deny him the feudalistic dream of being monarch for life.

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Taiwan Policymaking in Xi Jinping's "New Era"

Lauren Dickey

With the 19th Party Congress now complete, the "new era" (新时期) under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary and President Xi Jinping has officially begun. The quinquennial Congress endorsed Xi's ideological framework and policy agenda—a roadmap of how Xi will lead China in his second term.

A key question during this "new era" under Xi is the how of Chinese policy toward Taiwan will evolve. While the work report laid out the basic direction of policy, paired with Xi's personnel appointments, one can discern even more. The top governmental body for creating Taiwan policy is the Central Committee Leading Group on Taiwan Work (CCLGTW, 中央对台工作领导小组), making personnel changes in the group a key indicator of future policy. Promoting individuals whom Xi knows and trusts or those with a demonstrated capacity to execute the Party's political agenda, namely, advancing the goal of reunification at home and abroad.

Guidance for Taiwan Work in Xi's "New Era"

In Xi's work report at the 19th Party Congress, he explicitly stated that the Party and leadership "[stand] firm in safeguarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will never allow the historical tragedy of national division to repeat itself." Following the precedent of past Party Congresses, the work report emphasized the "guiding principle" (方针) of peaceful reunification as per the "one country, two systems" framework and reiterating a continued adherence to the one China principle as the basis for all dialogue, exchanges, consultations, and negotiations. Xi further conveyed a confidence in dealing with the threat of Taiwanese separatism or independence, confirming that China has "the resolve, the confidence, and the ability to defeat separatist attempts for 'Taiwan independence' in any form" (Sina, October 18).

Aside from a continued opposition to Taiwanese independence and pursuit of reunification as part of the broader China Dream of national rejuvenation, a few clues about changes in Taiwan policy during the "new era" can be gleaned from the work report. The CCP will continue to build on the notion of "two sides, one family" (两岸一家亲), sharing development opportunities on mainland China with Taiwan and deepening economic and cultural exchanges. Policy is further expected to shift to integrating Taiwanese nationals into mainland Chinese society, ensuring that "over time, people from Taiwan will enjoy the same treatment as local people when they pursue their studies, start businesses, seek jobs, or live on the mainland..." (Sina, October 18). Such policy initiatives seek to treat Taiwanese as Chinese, regardless of how Taiwanese themselves conceptualize national identity. **[1]** These initiatives would presumably cut the number of "carrots" currently offered to Taiwanese nationals—the academic schol-

arships, targeted internships or job opportunities, and business subsidies—that are unavailable to Chinese nationals. Finally, the added emphasis on developing a "patriotic united front" (爱国统一战线) suggests that Taiwan will continue to be the target of Chinese efforts to undermine Taiwan from within by building a greater corps of Taiwanese sympathetic to China's calls for reunification (*China Brief*, July 6). Such efforts will include spreading pro-unification messages in Taiwanese media, using China-friendly Taiwanese pundits in Chinese media as "red mouthpieces" (红喉舌), offering financial or other support for pro-unification organizations, and nurturing student groups (校方社团) on Taiwanese university campuses that are decidedly pro-Beijing in nature. Taken in sum, Taiwan policy work in the "new era" is oriented in a way that seeks to weaken Taiwan's *de facto* independence, sowing deception and creating false impressions or expectations within Taiwan about China's political goal of reunification. To implement such an agenda, Xi will rely upon a new cohort of Party cadre that is highly qualified to deal with Taiwan as both a domestic and international policy issue.

Central Committee Leading Group on Taiwan Work under Xi

	1st Term (2012-2017)	2nd Term (2017-)
Director	Xi Jinping (习近平)	Xi Jinping (习近平)
Deputy Director	Yu Zhengsheng (俞正声)	Wang Yang (汪洋)
Secretary-General	Yang Jiechi (杨洁篪)	Yang Jiechi (杨洁篪) or Wang Yi (王毅)*
Central Propaganda Department (中央宣传部)	Liu Qibao (刘奇葆)	Huang Kunming (黄坤明)
Central Military Commission (中央军事委员会)	Fan Changlong (范长龙)	Xu Qiliang (许其亮)
United Front Department (统战部)	Ling Jihua (令计划) Sun Chunlan (孙春兰)	You Quan (尤权) **[3]**
Taiwan Affairs Office (国台办)	Zhang Zhijun (张志军)	Liu Jieyi (刘结一)*
Ministry of State Security (国家安全部)	Geng Huichang (耿惠昌)	Chen Wenqing (陈文清)
Ministry of Commerce (国商务部)	Gao Hucheng (高虎城)	Zhong Shan (钟山)
Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (中央纪律检查委员会)	Wang Qishan (王岐山)	Zhao Leji (赵乐际)
State Council (国务院)	Wang Yang (汪洋)	Wang Yi (王毅) or Yang Jiechi (杨洁篪)*
Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (海峡两岸关系协会)	Chen Deming (陈德明)	?
CPPCC (人民政协)	Du Qinglin (杜青林)	(Deputy to Wang Yang 汪洋*)
Central Military Commission (CMC) Joint Staff Department (中央军事委员会联合参谋部)	Qi Jianguo (戚建国) Sun Jiangguo (孙建国)	?
CCP Central Committee (中央委员会)	Li Zhansu (栗战书)*	Ding Xuexiang (丁薛祥)*
Politburo Member (中央政治局常务委员会)	Yang Jing (杨晶)	Xiao Jie (肖捷)

(*) Denotes unconfirmed and/or pending appointments. Sources: **[3]**

Central Committee Leading Group on Taiwan Work

Atop the Party-state apparatus sit a series of Central Committee Leading Groups (CCLGs), each with the ability to propose policy topics directly to the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee (Xinhua, October 25). For Taiwan policy, no body politic carries greater importance than the Central Committee Leading Group on Taiwan Work. Tasked with implementing the Party line—the guidance encapsulated in the Party General Secretary's work report—the specific execution of the CCLGTW remains largely unknown, with few references to the group in Chinese state media. **[2]** However, the gradual institutionalization of the CCLGTW offers a precedent upon which to ascertain the post-19th Party Congress composition of this important group: it is directed by the CCP General Secretary, who has the chairman of the Chinese

People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) as his deputy, and includes other members from government ministries responsible for Taiwan work.

While personnel turnover following the 18th Party Congress suggested more continuity than change, the probable composition of the CCLGTW following 19th Party Congress implies precisely the opposite (*China Brief*, June 7, 2013). Such changes, however, are in the name of ensuring Taiwan work is spearheaded either by those trusted by Xi or with relevant career experience.

The only two individuals presumed to continue on the CCLGTW in Xi's second term are Wang Yang and Yang Jiechi. Few Chinese officials have as extensive experience as Yang Jiechi in managing the "Taiwan issue" on the international level. In his capacity as Ambassador to the United States, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and since 2013, as State Councilor and director of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group, Yang is certainly aware of how other countries respond to Chinese policy on Taiwan (Phoenix News, March 6, 2012; Central News Agency, May 31; Phoenix News, October 25).

Wang Yang, a former Party Secretary of Guangdong province who is widely recognized as a "reformist" (革命派), has focused primarily on issues within China, directing disaster relief bodies and the State Council's Leading Group for Poverty Alleviation and Development (国务院扶贫开发领导小组) in Xi's first term. From day one of Xi's tenure as General Secretary, Wang has been close to his side, traveling with Xi on his first overseas trip to Russia in 2013 and to subsequent G-20 meetings (*Ta Kung Pao*, November 21, 2014; Duowei, September 6, 2016; Central News Agency and Sina, October 25). As head of the CPPCC, the parent organization for United Front work, Wang's leadership and involvement in the CCLGTW sets the tenor for the implementation and operation of influence operations toward Taiwan. It is surmised that Wang will prioritize deepening cross-Strait economic exchanges and social integration (Xinhua, January 20; *Liberty Times*, October 26). A similar connection to Xi can be discerned in the quick ascension of Xu Qiliang, the first PLA Air Force general to hold the top ranking vice-chairmanship of the Central Military Commission (CMC), and once a subordinate to then-Fuzhou Party Secretary Xi (*China Brief*, October 2015; *South China Morning Post*, October 25).

For other appointees, personal connections to Xi appear to matter less than career experience. Wang Yi, will likely be involved with the CCLGTW by nature of his capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, adding to the depth of foreign policy experience and the international portfolio of the Party's Taiwan work. Huang Kunming who was previously the vice-director of the Central Committee's Publicity Department, was tapped to succeed Liu Qibao as director of the Central Propaganda Department (Xinhua, October 25; *South China Morning Post*, October 30). The United Front Work Department will be headed by You Quan, who was selected to assume Sun Chunlan's position to strengthen pro-Beijing elements at home and abroad (*Storm Media*, October 29; *United Daily News*, November 2; *South China Morning Post*, November 7). You

Quan, who previously followed in Sun's footsteps as Fujian Party secretary, has extensive experience working with Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan—areas of preeminent importance in Beijing's United Front Work influence operations (CCP Leadership Library, October 25; Xinhua, October 25).

Liu Jieyi, the current Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations, was selected as a full-member of the Central Committee and also appointed as deputy director of the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), making it all but guaranteed that in 2018 he will succeed Zhang Zhijun as head of the CCP Taiwan Work Office and the TAO (BBC Chinese, October 12). With a reputation for his fiery chastisements (怒怼天团), Liu is also likely to have been involved in blocking Taiwan's requests for access to UN-affiliated bodies, such as the World Health Assembly (*United Daily News*, October 12; *China Times*, October 13). Some assessments believe Liu will make Taiwan policy "tougher" (更强硬) by advancing China's global strategy to further isolate and pressure Taiwan (Duowei News, October 24; *Apple Daily*, October 25).

Conclusion

To understand the "new era" in Chinese policymaking toward Taiwan requires assessments of both personnel and policy. The introduction of new blood is intended to enhance the Party's ability to achieve its agenda toward Taiwan. Those selected to fill the ranks of the CCLGTW – appointments likely to be formalized at, if not before, the *Lianghui* (两会, National People's Congress and CPPCC meetings) in March 2018 – are those either trusted by Xi or with experiences relevant to implementing Taiwan policy.

China today has an increasingly diverse set of economic, political, and military tools at its disposal for asserting influence over Taiwan. In the "new era" of rule under Xi Jinping, the leadership appears more confident than before in its ability to prevent Taiwan from claiming *de jure* independence. Changes to the CCLGTW reflect such confidence, and further suggest the scope of Taiwan work in Xi's second term. Putting the right people in the right places is key to ensuring that the path to reunification continues solely on Beijing's terms. The revamped CCLGTW is bolstered by foreign policy and United Front cadre capable of adapting China's policy agenda on Taiwan well beyond national borders. Taiwan work in this "new era" is thus likely to center more than ever upon influence campaigns that seek to manipulate and influence the Taiwanese populace and other governments around the world, selling China's narrative of sovereign claims to Taiwan in a manner which intends to further erode Taiwan's *de facto* independence and the Tsai Ing-wen administration.

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One Belt One Road and East Africa: Beyond Chinese Influence

Cobus van Staden

In October the Chinese Communist Party enshrined Xi Jinping's "One Belt, One Road Initiative" (OBOR) in its constitution. The move again demonstrates how the sweeping plan linking China and Europe via land and sea routes now is at the heart of China's foreign policy and international development strategy. However, the project is not simply unidirectional. The Belt and Road Forum for Global Development held in Beijing in May gave China an opportunity to both present itself as part of a recently coined global community of countries along the trans-Eurasian route, and as a leader of that community. It offered China a chance to present a China-centered vision of globalization, clad in the rhetoric of mutual development.

The Western discussion of OBOR's global impact has generally framed the initiative in terms of enhancing Chinese influence along the OBOR routes and globally. **[1]** In fact, concerns around the expansion of Chinese power via OBOR was said to have kept several leaders from attending the summit (FMPRC, May 11).

However, viewing OBOR as a vector of Chinese economic influence and soft power is justified does not tell the whole story.

A Beijing-centered view of the initiative underplays its potential influence on regions along the route. OBOR is important not only because it might increase and channel Chinese influence through West Asia and the Indian Ocean basin, but also for the effect it might have on local and regional integration along the way. One of the less frequently discussed outposts of the OBOR route provides a useful illustration: East Africa. On official maps the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road only touches East Africa before turning towards Europe. However, this connection could have a significant impact on the region, both because of economic integration on a local level, and by forging connections between East Africa and neighboring regions. These integrations provide a useful example of the complexity of OBOR, and how its potential impact stretches beyond the specific issue of these regions' connections to China.

OBOR, East Africa and the Nature of Local Integration

The southern leg of OBOR's two westward routes, the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, is projected to reach Africa at the Kenyan port of Mombasa, where it meets a rail line inland to Nairobi. The sea route then proceeds

northward towards the Suez Canal and Greece. The fact that the official map of OBOR presents Kenya's landlocked capital Nairobi, rather than the harbor city of Mombasa, as a key node in the route points to the fact that OBOR is connecting to East Africa in a more complex way than meets the eye.

Nairobi is a regional node, thanks to a massive Chinese-funded railway and road network connecting Kenyan cities and extending towards other countries in the sub-region (AllAfrica, May 14). A line between Mombasa and Nairobi was completed in late May, and now carries 7,000 passengers per week (Xinhua, June 7). Another newly opened line links land-locked Ethopia's capital Addis Ababa- with the port of Djibouti (Xinhua, October 5). When finished, the network will connect Kenya with Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, as well as proving a link between Nairobi and the secondary port of Lamu. In the past, these kinds of developments have raised echoes of British colonial networks that funneled raw commodities out of Africa while undercutting local manufacturing with cheap imports. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta pointed out during the OBOR summit that if Beijing's "win-win strategy is going to work, it must mean that, just as Africa opens up to China, China must also open up to Africa". The recent discovery of oil and gas deposits around the East African coast means that the extractive model will certainly be strengthened once OBOR routes are set up. **[2]** It is clear that it will take a massive effort from African governments to not remain locked in this cycle (*Business Daily Africa*, April 19).

However, unlike colonial networks, the connection between OBOR and Chinese-funded local networks will not only boost extraction through harbor-hinterland connections. They will also connect regional centers to each other. In this sense, OBOR could partly ease a problem that has bedeviled African development since the end of the colonial era. The lack of coherent trans-border infrastructure networks is the result of incoherent planning by different colonial rulers, resulting in truncated connections that make it extremely expensive to get both raw materials and manufactured goods from one African country to the other. The lack of network maintenance endemic to many African countries has exacerbated the problem. The UN notoriously estimated that it is less expensive to transport a car from Japan to Cote d'Ivoire than transporting that same car from Ethiopia to Cote d'Ivoire. **[3]** While the OBOR-related regional rail network does not wholly solve this problem, it certainly goes a long way towards softening its impact in East Africa. While the networks will channel more Chinese goods into Africa and more raw African commodities to China, it also has the potential to facilitate trade and shared manufacturing between different East African economies. In this sense, the OBOR initiative has the potential to achieve a certain amount of regional integration—a long-held ideal of African development.

The question then becomes to which extent these regional rail and logistics networks can be seen as strictly part of the OBOR network, considering that it was planned before the official announcement of the OBOR initiative in

2013. The project forms part of a Kenyan national development plan and memoranda of understanding approving sections of the network were already signed by representatives of the Kenyan and Ugandan governments in 2009. However, the network is also largely funded by loans from Chinese lenders and built by Chinese state-owned corporations (railway-technology.com, [accessed November 7]. So these rail lines are not clearly either a Kenyan or Chinese initiative, but rather a complex meshing of African development plans with larger Chinese initiatives. In this sense, OBOR presents an intriguing perspective on the sometimes highly unequal nature of south-south cooperation, and raises questions about the nature of African agency in the 21st century.

OBOR and East Africa's Regional Connections

The complex enmeshing of African and Chinese agendas becomes clear in the case of Djibouti. The tiny country's position at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden gives it clear strategic importance, and renting out territory for foreign military bases is a key part of Djibouti's economy. Several countries, including France, Japan and the United States have bases in Djibouti. China has now joined them with its own base—its first overseas military base—only a few kilometers from the United States' Camp Lemonnier (*China Brief*, July 21). The Chinese base will be a coordination center for a host of military operations that, while predating OBOR, will also crucially strengthen it. A notable example is the multilateral anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, but it also includes peacekeeping in South Sudan (*China Brief*, August 22, 2016).

The combination of OBOR and the new military base has also opened new opportunities for Djibouti to restyle itself as a logistics center. The Chinese state-owned telecom China Telecom has recently chosen Djibouti has the site of a high-speed internet exchange, and Djibouti's government has announced plans to build a large new airport with the stated intention of maximizing its proximity to the Middle East to compete with West Asian logistics hubs like Dubai (*China Telecom*, December 5; GlobalRiskInsights, December 5). **[4]** If successful, proximity to OBOR could allow Djibouti to extend beyond its role as host to foreign armies towards competing or cooperating with other East African logistics centers like Nairobi and Addis Ababa. This regional development can't been seen apart from the Chinese state-owned companies' role in expanding data and other networks along the OBOR route, offering African countries the chance to gain influence locally and regionally from China's attempt to gain global influence (SCMP, December 2, 2016).

The rise of East Africa as a logistics hub is not surprising if one considers its geographical proximity to both the Middle East and Europe. If the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road becomes a reality, it will have the, perhaps inadvertent, effect of linking these nodes even more conclusively. Chinese investments in certain East African economies arguably already play that role. The most notable example of this is Ethiopia. Long a center for leatherwork, Ethiopia has increasingly played host to Chinese apparel and shoe manufacturers,

motivated by rising labor costs in China and incentives offered by the Ethiopian government. Chinese investment in special economic zones co-developed by Chinese companies and the Ethiopian government is increasing. The key market for the goods produced in these zones is Europe, and OBOR-related shipping routes past Ethiopia towards the Suez Canal, and the rail link between Ethiopia and Djibouti will be key to the further development of this manufacturing economy. There are signs that European companies (for example the Swedish fast fashion brand H&M) are also starting to use Ethiopia as a manufacturing base for similar reasons.

Chinese capital was key to the development of these special economic zones, and Chinese companies moving towards offshoring in order to target Europe were key to the establishment of Ethiopia as a potential center of garment manufacture. If OBOR is completed as planned, it will arguably both increase Chinese influence on the macro level while integrating East Africa with closer hubs to the north and east.

Even the most ardent enthusiast might find it difficult to take some of the Chinese government's rhetoric around OBOR's global influence seriously. As Xi Jinping stated during his opening speech at the May OBOR Summit:

> "We should build the Belt and Road into a road connecting different civilizations. In pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, we should ensure that when it comes to different civilizations, exchange will replace estrangement, mutual learning will replace clashes, and coexistence will replace a sense of superiority" (Global Times, May 14).

However, the rhetoric also appeals to African countries in two key ways. In the first place, it touches on African perceptions that the West can only see Africa through strategic and aid lenses. Xi hinted at this perception in a reference to China's choice to "not resort to outdated geopolitical maneuvering." In the second place, OBOR rhetoric gives a central place to development. In the same speech, Xi stated bluntly that: "Development holds the master key to solving all problems" (Global Times, May 14). This resonates with African listeners, for whom systemic underdevelopment trumps many other concerns. It becomes even more powerful when that development is envisioned to take place on local, regional and transnational levels simultaneously.

Conclusion

From its earliest iterations, OBOR was envisioned as both connecting regional hubs to China and connecting them to each other. Since to its coining in 2013, Chinese government statements have consistently called for greater regional integration, and emphasized the provision of trans-frontier transportation and logistics networks as key to the entire project (NDRC, March 30, 2015). Even if one takes the often grandiose official OBOR rhetoric with a grain of salt, it is worth noting that the initiative was articulated as a series of "interlinked regional integrations that ultimately translate into a link with Beijing.

Seen from Western capitals, both might seem equally objectionable, but in the African context the difference is significant. While Africa has enthusiastically done business with China over the last two decades, misgivings about the power imbalance between the two remain. It is exactly in offering nested development opportunities on the local, regional and global levels, that OBOR really speaks to Africa.

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Notes

1. See for example: Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Soft Power Offensive, One Belt One Road, and the Limitations of Beijing's Soft Power, Part 2" Council on Foreign Relations May 16, 2017 https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-soft-power-offensive-one-belt-one-road-and-limitations-beijings-soft-power-part-2
2. Augé, Benjamin, 2015."Oil and gas in Eastern Africa: Current Developments and Future Perspectives." French Institute of International Relations/OCP Policy Center. http://www.ocppc.ma/sites/default/files/OCPPC-Ifri-PN1502.pdf
3. Kimenyi, Mwangi S. et al, 2016. "Introduction: Intra-African trade in context" Brookings Africa Growth Initiative https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/01_intro_intra_african_trade.pdf
4. According to unconfirmed reports from local officials, a Chinese company which was awarded a contract to build the airports has had the contract revoked, perhaps indicating between Chinese companies local governments. See *Bloomberg*, October 19, 2017.

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Power Flows Downstream: Sino-Vietnamese Relations and the Lancang-Mekong River

By Emily Walz

China's international rivers are becoming a focal point for contests over control of natural resources—and potentially international conflict. China, in its powerful position as headwater nation, continues to actively promote hydropower development domestically and internationally. When downstream nations rely on un-dammed rivers for fisheries and irrigation, this puts pressure on an increasingly strained natural resource and introduces additional potential for tension into bilateral relations. Nowhere is this more clear than in the relationship between China and Vietnam, the nations that bookend the flow of the Lancang-Mekong river.

Official reports from the 10th meeting of the China-Vietnam Steering Committee on Cooperation held in Beijing in mid-April recite obligatory warm words and vague assurances of deepening cooperation and safeguarding maritime stability (Xinhua, April 17; State Council, April 18). Despite statements of "brotherly friendship," the two nations are in competition not just over fishing and mineral rights in the waters off their coasts, but for the water that China seeks to harness for hydropower and Vietnam needs for agriculture (CCTV, November 7, 2015). This water has been in short supply in recent years, with dire ramifications for Vietnam's Mekong delta, where the ocean creeps in when the river recedes. In 2016, an unusually strong El Niño weather pattern hit Vietnam, contributing to its worst drought in 90 years. Amid widespread crop failures, Vietnam submitted a request to China to ask for the release of water from its upstream dams (*Vietnam Express*, March 16, 2016). Even with this temporary influx, the drought was damaging to Vietnam. The World Bank downgraded its predictions of GDP growth, while a government report found that the drought cost Vietnam some $660 million (*Vietnam Express*, June 1, 2016). In 2016 the United Nations estimated that nearly a million people in Vietnam lacked access to drinking water (UN, March 20, 2016).

Beyond ocean-borne weather trends, the glaciers at the river's headwaters are receding, and China's reservoir dams increase evaporation rates upstream (ChinaDialogue, March 8). With other nations along the way moving to capitalize on the hydropower potential of the lower Mekong, the regional players are scrambling to advance their own interests and existing cooperation mechanisms are seeing strain.

Funding cuts have hit hard at the Mekong River Commission (MRC), the longest-running multilateral forum managing changes to the river, and one that has suffered criticism for mismanagement and its inability to stop potentially damaging development (*PhnomPenh Post*, January 15, 2016). Laos ignored requests for impact studies in 2012 when it built the Xayaburi dam, the first to cut across the lower Mekong's mainstream. The same scenario played out in 2015 and late 2016 with Laos's Don Sahong and Pak Beng dams, undermining the MRC's already weak authority (*PhnomPenh Post*, January 29, 2015).

China's Long Shadow

Part of the challenge in navigating cooperation among the Mekong nations is that the 1995 agreement applies to only four of the six Mekong basin nations: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The largest dams on the mainstream lay upriver, in the portion of the Mekong known as the Lancang, squarely in Chinese territory. China has been invited to join the MRC but has opted to act as a "dialogue partner," as has Myanmar, avoiding the obligation to be bound by the MRC rules of prior consultation for dam-building. Its existing dams are a fraction of the number China has planned for the Lancang, and many downstream are already alarmed at changes that have coincided with the dams' construction and the potential impact of further development.

In 2015, China created the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism, an apparently competing multilateral platform that includes all six Mekong nations and in which China plays a leading role. The MRC has said it welcomes LMC, all while insisting that its own organization remains more relevant than ever. However, the LMC's founding document does not mandate any prior consultation requirement and makes no mention of disputes or their resolution (China.org.cn, March 25, 2016).

Seeking Truth from Facts: China's Past Positions on Hydropower

China's position has been that the damming of the water flow is *good* for downstream nations and that there is no evidence that any negative changes in drought or flooding are linked to hydropower activity. If anything, China argues, the damming of the river provides stability for its downstream neighbors, tempering floods in the wet season and mitigating droughts during the dry.

For example, In a 2004 speech at the United Nations Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development in Beijing, He Gong, vice president of the Chinese Society for Hydroelectric Engineering and president of China Huadian Corporation (one of China's largest state-owned power generating enterprises and the company behind plans to dam China's free-flowing Nu River), discussed the "comprehensive benefits brought about by hydropower development" (UN, October 27, 2004). He argued for speeding up hydropower development in China, saying "making the running river endless energy and making the beautiful rivers more beautiful while constructing hydropower projects is now both the expectation of people and the way of building stronger China." This faith in power of "scientific development," and particularly hydropower, to cure China's social problems has been a constant for decades and continues to guide government action. As evidence of this belief, the State Council in 2016 issued approval for a pilot program harnessing water and mineral resources for poverty alleviation (State Council, October 18, 2016).

When the positive hydropower narrative has been challenged, Chinese officials, media, and professionals have fought back (FMPRC, April 2, 2010). In 2010, droughts on the Mekong prompted an uptick in criticism of China and its dams. A news article coinciding with a Mekong River Summit quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang who insisted that the droughts were due to environmental crises independent of China and that the Lancang only contributes 13.5 percent of the Mekong's flow, a point often repeated in official statements (Beijing Daily, April 2, 2010).

The spirit of this defense has persisted. In a 2014 interview posted on the central Chinese government portal, Professor of Foreign Affairs Zhou Yongsheng angrily denounced arguments in the Vietnamese media suggesting that upstream development was damaging the Mekong ecology as "very irresponsible" (Gov.cn, December 22, 2014). He argued, "we all know that water resources development, such as dams, engage in water and electricity, is not to reduce the river water flow, because the dam is only filled to a certain high-level, water flow is normal," and cited the dams'

mediation effect and its ability to take into account the needs of people downstream.

However, research such as a 2016 Finnish study published in the *Journal of Hydrology* points out that the seasonal water flows constitute a vital "flood pulse" crucial to replenishing bodies like Cambodia's Tonle Sap and the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, and that eliminating this natural cycle is itself damaging to the ecology. (*Journal of Hydrology*, February 2017).

The MRC's CEO has been careful not to echo these accusations, instead saying only that the 2016 drought was the fault of a super El Niño weather pattern and focusing instead, as China would prefer to do, on the "warmth and friendliness" of relations and China's benevolence in releasing water during the worst of the drought.

Exporting Infrastructure

China's hydropower policies have illustrated its leadership's philosophy and broader priorities domestically and internationally for decades. Its unilateral dam construction has provided a model for other nations, promoting an approach that verges on a zero-sum game. As the headwater nation, China has the most leverage over the flowing of the river and has in the past acted with the impunity this affords.

China's general insistence on sovereignty and resistance to binding multilateral commitments makes it necessarily sympathetic to nations like Laos seeking to bolster their hydropower resources. But beyond serving as an example and a political ally, China has supported other Mekong nations in building dams on the ground through its program of infrastructure-building-for-hire. China is at present the world's largest builder and financier of hydropower dams.

When building dams, Chinese companies nominally recognize the social impacts of the planned project in its submitted documents, primarily focus on the people who will need to be resettled. However, China has a poor record of compensating those displaced by development domestically, and many of its relocation schemes have been disasters for villagers. **[1]**

A Softening Stance: Learning How To Manage River Disputes

While China continues to act unilaterally, there have been some signals in recent years that its leadership recognizes the increasing importance of river policy to its foreign affairs and has moved to moderate its tone. The formerly brash go-it-alone approach to the Lancang is at odds with China's efforts to promote itself as a benevolent regional power.

According to Li Zhifei, a scholar at the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the LMC was established as a response to strong international criticism of China that began in 2010 (GWU, April 10). It appears that China has elected to abandon an ineffective counteroffensive that did little to soothe downstream suspicions and instead win over its Southeast Asian neighbors by funding new projects through the LMC.

Li maintains that domestic debates in the past ten years have influenced the Chinese government to take a "cautious approach to dam building, especially in ecologically sensitive and seismically active regions." Prior to 2010, China did not pay much attention to research on Lancang-Mekong river water issues, and was taken by surprise when the water issues rose to become one of the core issues in border and foreign affairs (GWU, April 10). Particularly in the case of the 2010 drought, she argued, China did not know how to respond effectively to international criticism.

Li suggests that China reacts slowly to transboundary river issues because of the byzantine bureaucracy behind its current water management system. The country has no fewer than 14 departments involved with transboundary river management, many of which were tasked with overlapping functions, which leads to an uncoordinated response.

To promote more effective transboundary cooperation, Li suggests that China should heed domestic experts' suggestions to implement "ecology compensation" and apply the model internationally "so if downstream countries' development and utilization are affected, China should provide ecology compensation to remedy their economic loss and ecosystem management." Even if China had a perfect record of offsetting the injuries of development on vulnerable populations, the idea that China can simply compensate locals fairly for the disruption to their former livelihoods is unlikely to succeed: it is hard to put a price on an entire region's food security. Already there are squabbles over exactly how much any of the agricultural resources now under threat are truly worth, and many of the dams' effects are likely to outlast any compensatory scheme.

Running Dry

All of the Mekong basin nations have been guilty of elevating development and the potential for electricity supplies over environmental concerns and agricultural needs. However, the costs the costs may be greater than any had expected, particularly in the context of climate change, when previously unlikely natural events become more commonplace. Headwater glaciers continue to shrink, and changing weather patterns mean river flows are decreasing independent of development, accelerating a textbook tragedy of the commons with the potential to inflame tensions throughout Southeast Asia.

Many dams may only last a fraction of their predicted lifetimes due to sediment buildup, and their negative impact on China's adaptation capacity to climate change has been known for years (*China Brief*, May 15, 2012). Dams are not the climate panacea the government has made them out to be and China and Laos may come to rue the place of dams in their development plans.

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1. See Andrew C. Mertha, *China's Water Warriors Citizen Action and Policy Change*, Cornell University Press, 2010.

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