

**CHINA'S INNOVATION-DRIVEN
DEVELOPMENT UNDER
XI JINPING**

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Executive Summary

1. On 30 May 2016, Xi Jinping and other politburo standing committee members (except Zhang Gaoli who was in Russia) attended the National Conference on Science and Technology.
2. The conference was held at a time when China's economy was in great difficulty featuring overcapacity and weak growth. China's official news agency *Xinhua* compared it to the one held in 1978 when China was also at a historical juncture. The 1978 conference ushered in the "spring of science".
3. At the 2016 conference, Xi announced a three-step road map for China's strategy of innovation-driven development. Step 1 is to build China into an innovative nation by 2020; step 2 is to move China to the forefront of innovative countries by 2030; and step 3 is to make China an innovation power by 2050.
4. Innovation-driven development is the hallmark strategy of the Xi leadership. Previously, the Jiang Zemin leadership endorsed the strategy of rejuvenating the nation through science and education, followed by the Hu Jintao leadership's strategy of strengthening the country through human resources development.
5. China has made leaps and bounds in R&D personnel, expenditure and research outputs under Jiang and Hu. However, Xi is not satisfied with the overall performance of China's science and technology (S&T) system.
6. Xi is deeply concerned that if China continues to rely on "imported" core technologies, the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation would not be attainable. He aspires to see an innovative China that can set rules and standards in the new round of S&T revolution.
7. He favours the "whole-nation" approach, which concentrates resources—human and financial—on mission-oriented S&T programmes. To him, the ability to pool resources is a particular advantage of China.

8. Xi adopts a practical attitude towards natural scientists and researchers. He has explicitly expressed support for free, bold scientific explorations. By comparison, in a symposium to show goodwill to social scientists, he reiterated Party leadership, Marxism and Chinese characteristics.
9. Under Xi Jinping, China has announced a number of plans to build a more favourable working environment and a well-functioning ecosystem for innovation. This requires not only institutional changes within the S&T system, but also political reform to ensure the autonomy of Chinese universities and other research entities in innovation.