

**CHINA'S POLITICS AND POLICY AT 17TH
PARTY CONGRESS: HU'S LEGACY SECURED
BUT SUCCESSION ISSUE REMAINS OPEN**

CHEN Gang, WANG Zhengxu & YANG Dali

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Executive Summary

From the 15th to the 21st of October 2007, the 17th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, China's most important political gathering every five years, convened in Beijing.

The Congress delegates voted for a new CCP Central Committee of 204 members. The election processes were tightly controlled and the number of votes each CC members garnered was kept from public view.

The Central Committee in turn was asked to ratify a new line-up of a 25-member Political Bureau. Members of the reshuffled Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, the leadership core of the country, made their debut on 22nd October.

Xi Jinping (习近平), Li Keqiang (李克强), He Guoqiang (贺国强) and Zhou Yongkang (周永康) are the new faces on the Politburo Standing Committee. Zeng Qinghong, Wu Guanzheng and Luo Gan retired.

Xi and Li, both in their 50s and holding doctoral degrees, are strong contenders to take up the top Party and government posts in five years time. Xi is a princeling (太子党) and Li a member of the Youth League (团派).

While the composition of the Political Bureau reflected horse-trading and compromise, the 17th Party Congress nonetheless witnessed the consolidation of CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao's power and the influence of his policy agenda.

Some of his colleagues in the Youth League have been promoted to the Politburo, and after only one term as Party General Secretary, Hu's idea of "scientific development" has also been enshrined in the Party Charter. This achievement places Hu among the pantheon of greats.

The current line-up still reflects the substantial influence of Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong.

The Congress puts Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang on the Political Bureau Standing Committee as possible successors to Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. As China is facing enormous internal and external challenges in the next few years, Xi and Li have to stand up to the test before they can establish their leadership.

Despite greater attention on balanced development, the ruling Communist Party continues to give top priority to China's rapid economic growth.

After double-digit annual economic growth in his first five-year term, Hu Jintao set the NEW ambitious target of quadrupling per capita GDP from 2000 to 2020.

Hu Jintao has also introduced a much more expansive and ambitious social and political agenda into the idea of a "well-off society," offering the Chinese people a list of populist welfare goals with which the Party hopes to continue to harness public support.

Hu Jintao also outlined a list of political reforms to pursue both within the Party and People's Congress system. While these are limited reforms in themselves, they mark the formal return of political reforms, especially the promotion of political democracy, on the political agenda.

Although Hu remained tough on the Taiwan issue, warning that China would "never allow" any separatist attempts to succeed, he proposed the possibility of signing a formal "PEACE ACCORD" with Taiwan to formally end the hostile status across the Taiwan Strait.