

**CHINA'S POLITICS IN 2013:
DETERMINED LEADERSHIP AND
HARDLINE POLICIES**

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Executive Summary

1. At the Chinese Communist Party's Third Plenum in November 2013, China's newly appointed president, Xi Jinping, had shown himself to be a tough and charismatic leader whose vision is to fulfill the "Chinese dream."
2. Xi portrayed himself as a populist statesman with a ruling style that is utterly different from that of Hu Jintao, his predecessor. He has adopted a hardline on curbing official extravagance, corruption and online criticism, and is a steadfast reformist in his first year of office.
3. At the Third Plenum, Xi obtained omnipotent power over socioeconomic policies, the military, domestic security issues, propaganda and foreign affairs through the establishment of the National Security Council and the Central Leading Group on Comprehensively Deepening Reforms.
4. With this, Xi has altered the trajectory of top Chinese leaders who witnessed diminishing political authority with each generation change.
5. Politically, Xi has shown little interest in democratizing the country. He is however keen in pushing through unfinished market reforms that will further restrain state intervention in the economic realm.
6. Xi's austerity policy on official extravagance has implications on two fronts: politically it has placated civil anger over official profligacy in an economic slowdown and consolidated Xi's populist image; economically, luxurious products and services have been hit hard.
7. Xi has also embarked on a crusade against rampant government and military corruption with the detention of an unprecedented number of high-level corrupt officials.

8. Xi, taking on a Maoist tinge and launching a “rectification” campaign to “purify” the CPC, has struck a populist note through vows of fighting both “tigers” and “flies” – powerful leaders and lowly bureaucrats – in his campaign against corruption.
9. Xi endorsed a package of socioeconomic overhaul tasks at the Third Plenum in November 2013. He may have emulated the tactic of late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping in signaling left (ideologically) while turning right (economically) in the 1980s and 1990s.
10. Great power comes with great responsibilities. The transition from collective leadership to strongman politics has posed challenges to Xi. It is imperative that Xi establishes a workable relationship with each of these members, without which he will not be able to deliver what he has promised.