

**THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL
PEOPLE'S CONGRESS IN
CHINESE POLITICS**

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Executive Summary

1. The Fourth Plenum of the 18th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which lasted from 20 to 23 October 2014, decided to establish the rule of law in China, putting the National People's Congress (NPC) and its Standing Committee in the spotlight of Chinese politics.
2. The NPC is China's one-chamber parliament. Its Standing Committee functions on behalf of the NPC most of the time during the year. The chairman of the NPC Standing Committee is usually a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, the most powerful organ of the CCP.
3. Known as a "rubber stamp" in the Western media, the NPC has experienced ups and downs in its history of 60 years. Started in 1954 as the one-chamber legislature in the People's Republic of China (PRC), the NPC became practically dysfunctional during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976.
4. The legislature was resurrected in the post-Cultural Revolution era. Several of its leaders such as Peng Zhen (彭真), Wan Li (万里) and Qiao Shi (乔石) had made great contributions to its construction as an effective law-making institution.
5. In recent years, especially during the 10-year tenure of Wu Bangguo (吴邦国), the NPC has lost its vigour and become an instrument of the Party apparatus and a true "rubber stamp".
6. In March 2013, Zhang Dejiang (张德江) was elected chairman of the 12th NPC Standing Committee, making him the ninth person to assume this role in the history of the PRC.
7. Concurrently No. 3 ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Zhang has remained a mystery to not only foreigners but also many Chinese as well.

8. A non-princeling, Zhang in fact came from a humble family. Contrary to widely held belief, he is not the son of Major General Zhang Zhiyi (张志毅), the founding father of the cannon forces in the People's Liberation Army.
9. A capable administrator, Zhang had rapid promotions due to his efforts and merit. He is the only person in the history of the PRC who was the party chief of four provincial units. He was party secretary of Jilin (吉林), Zhejiang (浙江), Guangdong (广东) and Chongqing (重庆). He was also a vice premier of the State Council from 2008 to 2013.
10. It remains to be seen whether Zhang is truly entrusted with the power to turn the NPC around and make some progress in establishing the rule of law in China.