

CHINA'S WAR ON SMOG: CAUSES AND RATIONALE

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Executive Summary

1. Earlier in 2014, Premier Li Keqiang declared “war on pollution” and vowed to “fight it with the same determination we battled poverty”.
2. The call for a war on pollution arose from China’s mounting environmental woes in recent years. One of the most serious woes is the deteriorating air quality in vast parts of the country.
3. The year 2013 was the worst year of hazardous smog in the history of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Smog reached crisis levels in major cities, which lasted several months and affected over 600 million people in China.
4. The sources of air pollution are complex. Heavy reliance on coal for energy and heating, rapid increase of car use and polluting industries are the main causes of the smog crisis.
5. Severe air pollution has caused huge economic costs and health damages, threatening the sustainability of China’s further development. Smog has attracted public attention no less than that of the touchy issue of rampant bureaucratic corruption.
6. Since it came to power less than two years ago, the Xi Jinping-Li Keqiang government has been proactive in preventing and controlling air pollution. The most remarkable is a five-year plan that includes specific goals to improve nationwide as well as regional air quality by 2017.
7. The Xi-Li government’s resolution and capability to fight the war on smog are increasingly perceived as a touchstone of its competence of governance.