

**CHINA'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY TEAM:
BIGGER ROLES AND TOUGHER
CHALLENGES AHEAD**

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EAI Background Brief No. 1342

Executive Summary

1. In China's "new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics", China must "become strong", in contrast with the Mao era when China "stood up" and the Deng era when China "got rich". A strong China will have to be manifested in a strong foreign policy.
2. During President Xi Jinping's first term, China had practically abandoned Deng Xiaoping's low-profile foreign policy for more active participation in global affairs and more assertive defence of China's national interest. China under Xi has also started to promote alternative visions of world order that it believes would better serve the world as well as its own interests.
3. The new foreign team, selected by the 19th Party Congress in October 2017 on the Party side and by the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018 on the government side, consists of strong personalities and seasoned professionals.
4. The foreign policy apparatuses have also been overhauled. Following the trend of President Xi's rule, foreign policy power has also migrated to the ruling party from the state side. The highest decision body on the Party side—the Central Foreign Affairs Leading Group—has been upgraded to Central Foreign Affairs Commission and a new agency is created to coordinate foreign aid programmes.
5. Wang Qishan, the anti-corruption tsar of Xi's first term, is now vice president of the state. He is expected to assist Xi in managing thorny issues in foreign policy such as China-US relations and Taiwan affairs.
6. Yang Jieci, former state councillor in charge of coordinating foreign policy, has been promoted to the 25-person Politburo. Wang Yi replaces him as both state councillor and foreign minister.

7. Xi has firmly established his authority in foreign policy after five years of recentralisation of power. His strong personality has affected the style of the entire foreign policy team. Even those reputed as liberal reformers are now talking tough.
8. The new team faces mounting challenges of a trade war with the United States, increasing interventions from external powers in the South China Sea, an about turn in US Taiwan policy, and a general trend of Western states turning cold and less compromising towards China. A new cold war appears to be brewing.