

**THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
AT EIGHTY-SIX**

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Executive Summary

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) turned 86 on 1 July 2007. In the past decades, the CCP grew from a party of only 53 members to a ruling party of more than 72 million members. In the past five years, the CCP recruited about 12 million new members, at an annual rate of 2.4 million.

By the end of 2006, the CCP had more than 3.5 million organizations (including party committees and party branches) at the grassroots level, 44,000 more than the previous year. More than 420,000 firms established party organizations. Out of 2,419,000 non-public firms, 178,000 established party organizations, representing 7.4 percent.

In recent years, the CCP recruited new members that are younger, better educated and from increasingly diverse social and economic backgrounds. Proportions of workers, peasants, and soldiers in the CCP dropped significantly, while white-collar managers and private entrepreneurs became visible in the Party.

The CCP went through dramatic transformations in the past nine decades and is faced with a number of serious challenges such as rampant corruption among party members, social problems as a result of rapid industrialization and social changes, intensified social conflicts, and its own “legitimacy” issue.

To set an ideological tone for the upcoming 17th National Party Congress in the fall of 2007, General Secretary Hu Jintao delivered an “important speech” at the Central Party School on 25 June 2007.

Hu’s speech composed of four major points: uphold the ideological principle of emancipating the mind; push forward policies of reform and opening up; implement scientific development and social harmony; and attain the goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way by 2020.

Apparently, the leadership under Hu Jintao is not planning to go back to the ideological straitjacket of the Maoist era nor do these leaders have a roadmap for democratization in China. The 17th National Party Congress of the CCP, therefore, will likely focus on personnel reshuffles rather than introduce major new policies.

The CCP has made serious efforts to stay relevant in the past three decades, but it may run the risk of collapse if it fails to conduct timely and substantial political reforms. The Party has successfully delivered high economic growth, but it has not kept up with the aspiration of the rising middle class who want a more open system, less restriction of the media, and more political participation.

The most important task facing the central leadership under Hu Jintao in the next five years is to render the CCP relevant in a globalized world that is going through fundamental changes. It will have to stay the course of reforms and opening up to the outside world, while providing technocratic solutions to political, economic, social, and environmental problems resulting from globalization and economic modernization.