

China Politics Weekly

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Dear friends and colleagues,

On this, our hundredth issue, it seems only right to reflect over what we have seen since this newsletter began in early 2014. For most China watchers, the past three and a half years have been focused on trying to figure out who Xi Jinping is, how much power he has, and what he wants to do with it. Amazingly, answers to these questions are, even now, tentative at best.

I'm going to be in Beijing for all of August, so get in touch if you would like to meet while I am in town. Time willing, I will also try to organize some CPW dinners on politics and the economy, so also get in touch if you would have any interest in attending one of those.

A popular politician

One of the most striking things about Xi Jinping has been how much like a modern politician he seems, at least in the Chinese context. The contrast with the cardboard uber-bureaucrat Hu Jintao could not be more striking, and unlike most of his black-haired, suit-clad colleagues, Xi seems to come off as a real person.

From the moment he took the stage as leader of the Party on November 15, 2012, Xi has cultivated a persona as a man of the people. His first speech was largely devoid of the stultifying Party-speak typical of most official addresses. Instead he promised to serve the people and provide them with better education, steady work, a stronger social safety net and better healthcare, among other things.

He also promised a clean and honest Communist Party. He has since instituted the most wide-ranging anti-corruption campaign in Party history. At the same time, he has cultivated an image of a modest everyman, eating baozi and eschewing fancy clothes for an understated windbreaker. His media and PR people have done a great job of promoting this reputation, and the result is that he is arguably the most popular Chinese politician since Zhou Enlai. (For those readers interested in having long, inconclusive debates about the popularity of various Chinese leaders, get in touch!).

Popular with the people, but not the Party

Yet for all Xi's popularity, there is a persistent sense that he has yet to consolidate power. While well regarded by man elites and *hongerdai*, Xi has not been particularly well-liked within the wider Party. He failed to achieve a spot on the Central Committee in 1997 because he did not receive enough votes, and was only made an alternate by special intervention of the Organization Department. *Tuanpai* don't like him because of his princeling pedigree and the fact that he blocked Li Keqiang from taking over as General Secretary (this, I would guess, has a lot more to do with distance between Xi and Li than any disagreement on policy). And the way he has gone after Jiang Zemin's people is bound to have ruffled a lot of feathers in their camp.

Perhaps because of the above, Xi's tenure so far has been plagued by constant rumors of palace intrigue, including assassination attempts and coups. It's hard to give much credence to the most outlandish of these rumors, but Xi's own constant railings against "cliques" and "vested interests" certainly implies that there is still a struggle going on within the Party. The often confused policy coming out of Beijing seems to be a pretty clear indication that not everybody is on the same page.

Putting people in place

What is clear is that Xi is working hard to get his people into positions of power. In this, the first few years of Xi's leadership have born a striking resemblance to those of Jiang Zemin. Just as Jiang worked to move his lieutenants from Shanghai into positions of power in Beijing, there has been a steady stream of Xi associates taking up important posts within key Party and government organizations. It seems plausible that in the years to come we will talk of a "Xi Clique" in the same way that we talk of Jiang's Shanghai Gang. Yet, on the economic front, there is no clear analogue to Zhu Rongji, and policy in this area continues to feel pulled in multiple contradictory directions.

All eyes on 2017

At this point, it seems like we will have to wait until the 19th Party Congress to get a more meaningful understanding of Xi's power and agenda. Jockeying for positions is already intense, and rumors abound about who might take what role.

CPW will be watching and documenting it all, and we look forward to doing so with you, our wonderful readers. Thanks to all for their support over the first 100 issues. We look forward to the next hundred.

Your comments and feedback are always welcome. Old issues are always available at www.chinapoliticsweekly.com. Sign up or unsubscribe by sending an email to info@chinapoliticsweekly.com.

PBSC Week in Review

Xi Jinping <i>Party General Secretary; PRC President; Chairman of Central Military Commission</i>	July 17	Xi sent a congratulatory message to the opening of the African Union summit in Kigali, Rwanda.
	July 16	Xi sent a message of condolences to French President Francois Hollande after the attack in Nice, France.
	July 12	Xi met with European Council Chairman Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.
Li Keqiang <i>Premier</i>	July 16	Li spoke at the Asia Europe Meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Full text of his speech (in Chinese).
		Li met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
		Li met with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
		Li met with Myanmar President Htin Kyaw in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li returned to Beijing.

July 15 Li attended and spoke at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Romanian Prime Minister Dacian Cioloș in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li expressed condolences after the Nice, France July 14 attack.

July 14 Li held talks with Mongolian Prime Minister Jargaltulga Erdenbat in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Chairman of the State Great Hural Miyegombo Enkhbol in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xun Phuc in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Latvian President Raimonds Vējonis in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li met with Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li and Mongolia Prime Minister Jargaltulga Erdenbat held a joint press conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Li published a written instruction ahead of World Youth Day.

July 13 Li sent a congratulatory message to new British Prime Minister Theresa May.

		Li and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker attended and spoke at the China-EU Business summit.
		Li arrived in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia for an official visit and for the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).
	July 12	Li chaired a symposium studying the current economic situation with experts and entrepreneurs.
		Li held talks with European Council Chairman Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.
Zhang Dejiang <i>Chair of the National People's Congress</i>	July 15	Zhang met with Pakistan National Assembly Deputy Speaker Muraza Javed Abasi.
Yu Zhengsheng <i>Chair of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference</i>	July 15	Yu spoke at a seminar following up a central work conference on ethnic affairs.
	July 12	Yu met with a Taiwanese Youth Delegation.
Liu Yunshan <i>Head of Party Secretariat; Head of Propaganda</i>	July 15	Liu attended the 2016 Party School spring semester graduation ceremony.
Wang Qishan <i>Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection</i>		
Zhang Gaoli <i>Executive Vice Premier</i>	July 12	Zhang met with Kazakhstan First Deputy Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev.

About CPW

China Politics Weekly aims to keep business leaders, investors, diplomats, scholars and other China hands up to date on important trends in China. It is produced by Trey McArver, a London-based consultant providing advice and intelligence to firms and investors engaged in China and the region. You can find out more about Trey and CPW in [this interview](#).

Want to help? Please tell us how we can make this newsletter more useful to you. Feedback on both form and content are always welcome, as are suggestions for topics to be covered. Please contact us at info@chinapoliticsweekly.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

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