

China Politics Weekly

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Dear friends and colleagues,

Happy Plenum! This being China, we will have pretty much zero visibility into the most important political meeting of the year. Proceedings get underway today and finish Thursday. We are likely to get a communique shortly after the Plenum, with the full set of Decisions likely to be released in the days following. The proceedings will also approve new norms for political life for officials, as well as revised Party supervision regulations.

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Plenum, Party and Policy

It's not very sexy, and there won't be much media coverage, but this year's plenum on Party-building is key to Xi's entire political project, and could very well turn out to be the most important of his first term. When Xi took over as general secretary, he saw a dissolute, undisciplined Party that was not up to the task of governing China and instituting the structural reforms necessary to ensure sustainable economic development- the primary prerequisite for Xi's ultimate goal of making China strong and powerful.

Xi was not wrong in his reading of the situation. Rampant corruption was undermining Party legitimacy in the eyes of the people. And errant local officials often ignored or subverted central government policy, hampering macroeconomic coordination and efficient growth.

So upon taking power Xi immediately instituted his now (in)famous anti-corruption campaign, the longest-lasting, widest-ranging in Party history. Over the past four years he has also seen through the creation and revision of several internal Party regulations governing promotions, discipline, Party groups and codes of conduct. Together, the anti-corruption campaign and the new regulations were meant to strengthen control over lower level officials, enhancing policy transmission and implementation.

Has it worked? There are many examples of officials being afraid to act in the new environment, the calculation being that doing nothing is better than making a mistake. But it is a mistake to conclude that Xi's Party reforms have failed. In many cases, the problem is not that officials do not want to carry out policy, it's that officials don't know what the policy is.

With regards to the economy, the problem is that Xi has to date failed to articulate a clear and coherent vision. As someone who reads a fair amount of Chinese policy documents and speeches by top leaders, my sympathies go out to local officials. Much policy is filled with vague and often conflicting goals. Easily understandable policies with clear objectives (growth targets, capacity reductions) are being carried out. But in general, it's

hard for officials to know how to prioritize deleveraging versus “shoring up weak spots”, all while “letting the market play a decisive role” and “maintaining state ownership as the core” of the economy.

Xi seems to have understood that having a disciplined Party was a necessary prerequisite for successful policy implementation. This week’s plenum looks certain to further consolidate his grip over the Party. Let’s hope he now turns his attention to policy...

Rule maker or rule breaker?

I’d like to point you to a [recent piece by Jude Blanchette](#) that explains why, even if Xi does alter some of the prevailing norms regarding promotion and retirement at the 19th Party Congress, it’s not necessarily the end of the world.

I think what’s important to note in this whole discussion of changing rules and norms is that Xi seeks to *change* rules, not *contravene* them. This is why all the handwringing over Xi undermining Party institutions seems misguided to me. To the contrary, it seems that Xi is extremely aware of the importance of institutions and therefore seeks to work within them. If anything, this Plenum is further proof of that. He is amending old rules and writing some new ones in order to carry out his political program. This is a far cry from charismatic strongman rule. Xi is an institutional authoritarian, not a dictator.

PBSC Week in Review

Xi Jinping <i>Party General Secretary; PRC President; Chairman of Central Military Commission</i>	Oct 21	Xi addressed a gathering to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Long March. <i>Full text of his speech (in Chinese).</i>
	Oct 20	Xi held talks with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. <i>Is Duterte playing a double bluff? Is the goal of all of his posturing actually more American aid? If not, then he made a big mistake by giving away all his leverage by renouncing the US before his Beijing visit.</i>
		Xi met with Dinh The Huynh, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam and executive secretary of the Secretariat of the CPV Central Committee.
	Oct 19	Xi visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation.
		Xi watched a gala commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.
	Oct 18	Xi held talks with Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez. Xi met with chairman of the Mongolian People’s Party and chairman of the State Great Hural Miyegombo Enkhbold.
	Oct 17	Xi returned to Beijing.

Xi sent a message of congratulations on the successful launch of the Shenzhou-11 manned spacecraft.

Oct 16 Xi spoke at the BRICS summit in Goa, India.
Full text of his speech (in Chinese).

Xi attended a dialogue between BRICS and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) leaders on emerging economy cooperation.

Xi met with Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in Goa, India.

Xi met with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena in Goa, India.

Xi sent a written instruction to a meeting that honored organizations and individuals for their outstanding poverty alleviation work.

Oct 15 Xi met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Goa, India.

Xi met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Goa, India.

Xi met with Nepali Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dha in Goa, India.

Xi met with South African President Jacob Zuma in Goa, India.

Xi attended an informal dinner of the BRICS summit in Goa, India.

Xi travelled from Bangladesh to Goa, India.

Xi sent a congratulatory letter to the China Import Export Fair (Canton Fair).

Oct 14 Xi met with with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
The two leaders agreed to upgrade bilateral ties to a strategic partnership of cooperation.

Xi met with Bangladeshi President Abdul Hamid in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Xi met with Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Xi traveled from Cambodia to Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Xi published an article in Bangladeshi newspapers The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

Full text of the article (in Chinese).

Full text of the article (in English).

Xi sent a congratulatory letter on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Central Institute of Socialism.

Oct 13 Xi held talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The two leaders signed 31 new documents covering cooperation in economics, science and technology, energy, marine resources protection, media, inspection, health, irrigation development, physical infrastructure construction, water resources, industry, law enforcement, anti-human trafficking, airport development, electricity, rice export, among others.

Among these signed MOU on the implementation the Belt and Road initiative and the concessional agreement for the development of a new international airport in Cambodia's Siem Reap province.

Xi met with Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Xi visited Cambodian Queen Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Xi and Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen attended an inauguration ceremony for a Chinese studies center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Xi laid a wreath at the Independence Monument in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Xi sent a congratulatory message to newly-elected Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid.

Xi arrived in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Xi congratulated Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa after Portugal's former Prime Minister Antonio Guterres was appointed as the next United Nations Secretary General.

Xi sent a message of condolence to Thai Queen Sirikit after the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Xi congratulated the opening of the China-Latin America Business summit.

Oct 12 Xi and Papua New Guinea Governor-General Michael Ogio exchanged congratulatory messages on the 40th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

Xi published an article in Cambodian newspaper *Rasmei Kampuchea*.

- Oct 11** **Xi chaired a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Overall Reform.**
The meeting approved a series of central documents on issues ranging from disaster relief, senior care, production safety, mobile networks and real-name registration systems.
- Oct 10-11** **Xi attended and spoke at a national meeting on building the role of the Party within SOEs.**
Central SOEs all about “bigger, better, stronger”, but local SOE reforms have been much more differentiated- and market oriented.

Li Keqiang
Premier

- Oct 20** **Li met with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.**

Li met with former U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson.
- Oct 19** **Li met with Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez.**

Li sent a written instruction to a conference on farmland water conservation infrastructure.

Li visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation.

Li watched a gala commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.
- Oct 18** **Li chaired a State Council meeting on the rejuvenation of old industrial bases.**
- Oct 16** **Li sent a written instruction to a meeting that honored organizations and individuals for their outstanding poverty alleviation work.**
- Oct 15** **Li sent a written instruction to the China Import and Export Fair.**
- Oct 14** **Li chaired an executive meeting of the State Council.**
The meeting decided on policy measures to expand domestic consumption and further simplify business registrations.
- Oct 13** **Li sent a message of condolence to Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha after the death of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej.**

Li sent a congratulatory message to Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa after Portugal’s former Prime Minister Antonio Guterres was appointed as the next United Nations Secretary General.
- Oct 12** **Li met with officials in charge of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Macau SAR government as well as from the liaison office of the central government in Macao and heads of major Chinese-funded enterprises.**

Li met with representatives from all walks of life in Macao.

Li returned to Beijing.

Oct 11 Li delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 5th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries in Macao.
Full text of his speech (in English).

Li sent a congratulatory letter to the opening of the China-EU Education Ministers Conference.

Li visited the Macao Museum in Macao.

Oct 10 Li met with Chief Executive of Macao SAR Chui Sai On in Macao.

Li met with Mozambican Premier Carlos Agostinho de Rosario in Macao.

Li met with Cape Verde Premier Ulisses Correia e Silva in Macao.

Li met with Guinea-Bissau Prime Minister Bacirot Dja in Macao.

Li visited the Macao SAR government headquarters and heard a work report of the SAR government.

Li met with Ho Hau Wah, vice chairman of the national Committee of the CPPCC in Macao.

Li arrived in Macao.

Zhang Dejiang

*Chair of the
National People's
Congress*

Oct 20 Zhang met with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

Zhang met with Albanian Parliament Speaker Ilir Meta.

Oct 19 Zhang met with met with Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez.

Zhang visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation.

Zhang watched a gala commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.

Oct 18 Zhang chaired a chairpersons' meeting of the NPC Standing Committee.
The next bi-monthly session will be held Oct 31 to Nov 7. At the upcoming session of the NPC Standing Committee, legislators will continue deliberating draft laws on the film industry and public cultural services, draft general rules

for the civil code, draft amendments to the marine environment protection law and the law on private education, as well as draft revisions to the law on the Red Cross Society. They will also study and discuss proposals to review draft revisions to the law on small and medium-sized enterprises and the law on surveying and mapping, and to review the draft law on nuclear safety, among others. Legislators will also consider a number of reports, including on the enforcement of the exit-entry law, and inspection of environmental protection law enforcement.

Zhang met with chairman of the Mongolian People's Party and chairman of the State Great Hural Miyegombo Enkhbold.

- Oct 14** **Zhang held talks with Speaker of the Sri Lankan parliament Karu Jayasuriya.**
- Oct 13** **Zhang sent a message of condolence to President of the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand Pornpetch Wichitcholchai over the death of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej.**
- Oct 10** **Zhang presided over a symposium on drafting the general rules of China's Civil Code.**

Yu Zhengsheng
*Chair of the
Chinese People's
Political
Consultative
Conference*

- Oct 20** **Yu met with members of the advisory board of Tsinghua University's school of economics and management.**

Yu met with Dinh The Huynh, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam and executive secretary of the Secretariat of the CPV Central Committee.
- Oct 19** **Yu visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation.**

Yu watched a gala commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.
- Oct 18** **Yu met with Albanian Parliament Speaker Ilir Meta.**
- Oct 14** **Yu attended a meeting celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Central Institute of Socialism.**

Yu met with Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament Karu Jayasuriya.
- Oct 13** **Yu chaired a meeting of the CPPCC National Committee.**
The meeting called for better eldercare services, enhancing efforts in promoting home-based and community-based care for the aged and improving services in rural areas, and strengthening the management of eldercare.

	Oct 12	Yu met with a delegation of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.
Liu Yunshan <i>Head of Party Secretariat; Head of Propaganda</i>	Oct 19	Liu visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation. Liu watched a gala commemorating the 80 th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.
	Oct 14	Liu gave a speech at the opening ceremony of the CPC in Dialogue with the World conference in Chongqing, China. Liu met with foreign political leaders attending the CPC in Dialogue with the World conference in Chongqing, China. <i>Representatives from Vanuatu, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives and African regional leaders.</i>
	Oct 11	Liu attended a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Overall Reform.
	Oct 10-11	Liu attended a national meeting on building the role of the Party within SOEs.
	Oct 19	Wang visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation. Wang watched a gala commemorating the 80 th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.
Wang Qishan <i>Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection</i>	Oct 10-11	Wang attended a national meeting on building the role of the Party within SOEs.
Zhang Gaoli <i>Executive Vice Premier</i>	Oct 20	Zhang met with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. Zhang spoke at the Philippines-China Trade and Investment Forum. Zhang met with First Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Rustam Azimov.
	Oct 19	Zhang visited an exhibition on the high-technology achievements resulting from military and civilian cooperation. Zhang watched a gala commemorating the 80 th anniversary of the victory of the Long March.
	Oct 14	Zhang addressed the China Venture Capital Forum. Zhang visited an exhibition on National Mass Innovation and Entrepreneurship Week.

Zhang visited the Thai embassy to mourn late Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Oct 11 **Zhang attended a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Overall Reform.**

Oct 10-11 **Zhang attended a national meeting on building the role of the Party within SOEs.**

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](#).

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