

# China Politics Weekly

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## What now?

It is difficult to predict the impact of a Trump presidency on China and the bilateral relationship. Many of candidate Trump's proposals, such as slapping 45% tariffs on all Chinese goods, are so extreme that they stretch credulity. Even if Trump is sincere in such a proposal, one would have to believe that checks and balances in the American system would serve to mitigate against these extremes.

In other areas, including foreign policy, Trump is likewise unpredictable. With respect to the Asia-Pacific, Trump has implied at times that he might abandon US alliances with Japan and Korea and/or encourage them to develop nuclear weapons. Except for a reference to North Korea, Trump does not even mention China, Asia or the Pacific in his campaign platforms on foreign policy and defense. He does promise a larger navy, and the Republican Party platform takes a hard line on China, but Trump has also evinced an isolationist streak that calls into question how willing he would be to expend blood and treasure to protect other countries' claims in the East and South China Seas.

Given Trump's vagaries and inconsistencies on policy, many are eager to see who his key advisers will be. Here as well, the range of possibilities is enormous. On the economy and foreign policy, proposed advisers and cabinet members range from the extreme and inexperienced (i.e. Peter Navarro) to those that would essentially uphold the status quo (i.e. Bob Corker).

But then there's a question of how important advisers and other officials will be in a Trump administration. On the one hand, his ignorance in many policy areas and famous lack of attention means that he may delegate large areas of the job to other officials. On the other hand, Trump seems not to take advice from many outside his inner circle, so it may be more important what Ivanka thinks about China than any potential National Security Adviser or Secretary of State.

## Inauspicious beginnings

The US-China relationship under Trump is already off to an awkward start. Official Chinese media reported that Xi and Trump spoke on Thursday. But in an interview Friday, Trump said he had yet to speak to Xi. Both of these statements cannot be true, so what happened? Three possibilities:

- 1) They did not “talk”; instead Xi sent a written message of congratulations. This seems plausible, but is still strange. Why would Trump want to imply that he had no communication from Xi?
- 2) Trump forgot that he had talked to Xi (or received congratulations from him). Also plausible, given the amount of things going on at Trump HQ. But hardly comforting, given that Trump’s inbox will only get fuller going forward.
- 3) Trump lied. Perhaps Trump didn’t want to admit that he had spoken (or had communication from) Xi? Definitely a worrying scenario as it would imply that Trump is laying the groundwork for a very confrontational relationship.

### People’s Democracy prevails

While the implications of Trump’s election for the economy and foreign policy are unclear, one thing is certain: Trump’s victory has bolstered the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. The Party’s propaganda department has successfully painted Trump’s more extreme comments and the divisiveness of the election more broadly as proof of the dangers of electoral democracy. Furthermore, Trump’s zero-sum, us-versus-them approach to international relations helps to bolster the CCP narrative of an embattled China. In this narrative, CCP rule is necessary to protect the interests of the nation.

The question going forward is what Xi Jinping is able to do with these political gains. Does it make him more likely to follow through with structural reforms? Or does it empower conservatives? Like so much else these days, it is hard to predict what will happen, but the coming months should give us some insight into what the future holds.

## PBSC Week in Review

<b>Xi Jinping</b> <i>Party General Secretary; PRC President; Chairman of Central Military Commission</i>	Nov 11	<b>Xi attended and spoke at a ceremony to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen.</b> <i>Full text of his speech (in Chinese).</i>
	Nov 10	<b>Xi sent a congratulatory letter to the International Museum Forum held in Shenzhen, Guangdong.</b>
	Nov 9	<b>Xi spoke at a Central Military Commission meeting on logistics.</b>  <b>Xi sent a message to United States President-Elect Donald Trump to congratulate him on winning the election.</b>  <b>Xi spoke with two astronauts in the space lab Tiangong-2.</b> <i>The two astronauts were onboard the Shenzhou-11 spacecraft.</i>
	Nov 7	<b>Xi met with representatives of winners of this year’s China News Award and Changjiang Taofen Award.</b>  <b>Xi appointed and dismissed ambassadors.</b> <i>Gabon, Niger, Sierra Leone, Nepal, United Arab Emirates, Macedonia, Finland, Cuba, Dominican Republic.</i>

<b>Li Keqiang</b> <i>Premier</i>	Nov 11	Attended ceremony to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen.
	Nov 9	Li returned to Beijing.
	Nov 8	Li met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, Russia.
	Nov 7	Li and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev held the China-Russia Prime Ministers' Regular Meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia.
	Nov 6	Li and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev held a joint press conference in St. Petersburg, Russia.  Li traveled from Riga, Latvia to St. Petersburg, Russia. Li and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev toured the city.
<b>Zhang Dejiang</b> <i>Chair of the National People's Congress</i>	Nov 8-11	Zhang made an official friendly visit to Vietnam. <i>Met with Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) Central Committee, Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, and held talks with Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, chairwoman of the National Assembly of Vietnam.</i>
	Nov 7	Zhang chaired the closing session of the bi-monthly session of the NPC Standing Committee.  Zhang met with President of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament Ankie Broekers-Knol.
<b>Yu Zhengsheng</b> <i>Chair of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference</i>	Nov 11	Chaired ceremony to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen.
	Nov 10	Yu met with President of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament Ankie Broekers-Knol.
	Nov 8	Yu chaired a biweekly consultation session of the CPPCC. <i>The meeting discussed suggestions on improving special education for the disabled in the country.</i>
	Nov 7	Yu spoke at a Cross-Strait Business Summit in Xiamen, China.
<b>Liu Yunshan</b> <i>Head of Party Secretariat; Head of Propaganda</i>	Nov 11	Attended ceremony to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen.
	Nov 7	Liu met with representatives of winners of this year's China News Award and Changjiang Taofen Award.

<b>Wang Qishan</b> <i>Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection</i>	Nov 11	Attended ceremony to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen.
	Nov 9	<a href="#">Wang met with Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau of Pakistan Qama Zama Chaudhry.</a>
	Nov 8	Wang published an article in <i>People's Daily</i> . <a href="#">Full text of the article (in Chinese).</a>
<b>Zhang Gaoli</b> <i>Executive Vice Premier</i>	Nov 11	Attended ceremony to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen.
	Nov 7-9	<a href="#">Zhang went on an inspection tour to Yunnan, China.</a>

#### 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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