

CHINA'S "NEW ERA" WITH XI JINPING CHARACTERISTICS

ABOUT

The Chinese have long been obsessed with strategic culture, power balances and geopolitical shifts. Academic institutions, think-tanks, journals and web-based debates are growing in number and quality, giving China's foreign policy breadth and depth.

China Analysis introduces European audiences to these debates inside China's expert and think-tank world and helps the European policy community understand how China's leadership thinks about domestic and foreign policy issues. While freedom of expression and information remain restricted in China's media, these published sources and debates provide an important way of understanding emerging trends within China.

Each issue of *China Analysis* focuses on a specific theme and draws mainly on Chinese mainland sources. However, it also monitors content in Chinese-language publications from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which occasionally include news and analysis that is not published in the mainland and reflects the diversity of Chinese thinking.

Introduction

by Angela Stanzel

For China-watchers, the congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is a vital window into what will guide the CCP over the following five years. As the party's highest-level meeting, it provides the floor for a game of musical chairs that decides who stays, who leaves, and who enters the topmost ranks of the party, right up to the Politburo Standing Committee. The general secretary, who normally is also the Chinese president, now Xi Jinping, is usually reappointed for a second term; but successors also begin to be put in place. However, this time was different. The "new" Politburo Standing Committee, which comprises seven members, will be too old in 2022 to continue, at least if customary retirement rules are followed.

China was in full preparation mode for the congress from November 2016 onwards. The line-up for the Politburo and the question of the succession to Xi – including whether he will stay on past 2022, the date which would mark the end of his constitutional two five-year terms – were topics generating much speculation within and outside China. And this party congress prompted particular interest because it would reveal how much power Xi actually has and how successful his policy, and even ideological course, have been.

As expected, Xi succeeded in further cementing his position by appointing personal allies to the Politburo. He avoided contravening any rules around age. And he retained some top talent while clearly establishing his own dominance

over the various factions, which compete for power.¹ Xi is now central, and he has also already succeeded in ensuring his future ideological heritage: at the congress, the CCP enshrined his name and ideas – more precisely, the “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” – into the party constitution.

This is the focus of the present issue of *China Analysis*. In the past five years, since his rise to become paramount leader, Xi has sought to strengthen the CCP’s legitimacy by tightening ideological control and reviving Maoist and Marxist principles within China. Last year, for instance, Xi called on his fellow party members to apply Marxist principles and to strengthen their belief in communism and “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”² This ideological tightening has since been reflected in research and academic institutions, media, and civil society. Now, it will also include Xi’s “Thought”.

This development has prompted many observers to speculate whether the revived ideology with Xi Jinping characteristics is truly so embedded across Chinese society. In this issue, the authors offer their insights into what the 19th party congress means in terms of ideology and China’s domestic and foreign policy.

Heike Holbig introduces the “Xi Jinping Thought” and analyses its wider ideological meaning as well as the domestic and international implications deriving from it. She explains what events at the 19th party congress tell us about Xi’s personal power and China’s ambition to shape the global order according to its national interests. Holbig also sheds light on why the amendment of the CCP’s constitution to enshrine Xi’s newest ideology was still not quite what many analysts had expected.

Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt focuses on another element of the “thought”, the “new era” for China, and puts into perspective what this concept means for China’s ideological course. In his view, the key aspect of the “new era” theme is to give equal weight to two previous eras – that of Maoism and that of the post-1976 reform era. He outlines how the “new era” concept is set to have a significant impact on China’s policymaking.

Yevgen Sautin examines the implications of the congress for China’s foreign policy orientation and Xi’s turn away from China’s traditional low-profile foreign policy towards a more assertive approach. Sautin focuses in particular on Chinese debates about the new US administration and China’s ambition to establish a “new type of great power relations”. He points out, however, that these debates are not new. The party congress was in continuity with

preceding trends, and did not constitute a turning point for China’s foreign policy.

Finally, Jérôme Doyon analyses the impact of the CCP’s tightening ideological control on China’s younger population, focusing in particular on the party’s increasing efforts within universities and in the Communist Youth League. The bid to bring the younger generation into line with the party’s ideology is now to include education dedicated to the “Xi Jinping Thought”.

Xi’s China has been gradually changing; its domestic policy is drifting from authoritarianism to a totalitarian approach. Foreign policy is steadily becoming more assertive. In many ways the 19th party congress solidified Xi’s domestic and foreign policy trajectory of the past five years. The key question arising from the congress, however, appears to be whether Xi is also changing China in a more thoroughgoing way. Xi’s ideological campaigns seek increased control over Chinese society. And indeed, Chinese society appears to be more and more muted. The question remains of whether that silence is the product of trust in the CCP and its leaders, or whether it is the product of fear.

¹ See also: François Godement, “China: All the President’s men”, European Council on Foreign Relations, 26 October 2017, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_china_all_the_presidents_men.

² “China urges innovative application of Marxism”, *Xinhua*, 1 July 2016, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/01/c_135481734.htm.

The 19th party congress: Its place in history

Heike Holbig

The 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which convened between 18-25 October 2017, made headlines in the international press for enshrining “Xi Jinping Thought” in the party’s constitution. The move has been widely interpreted as a manifestation of the personal power that Xi Jinping has amassed after only five years as China’s paramount leader, putting him on a par with Deng Xiaoping or even Mao Zedong. While this personal power dimension is important, a close reading of official documents published in the lead-up to, and emanating from, the 19th party congress reveals broader ideological messages, as well as the domestic and international implications for the next five years and beyond. With its elevation of Xi’s new guiding ideology, the CCP leadership signalled an end to the reform era as we knew it, proclaiming the advancement of a “strong” China that would strive to shape the global order in accordance with the national interest and its vision.

A “strong” China: Xi Jinping’s political report

Delivered over three and a half hours on 18 October, Xi’s report to the 19th party congress was not only significantly longer than those given by his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao – in 2002, 2007, and 2012 – but it was also more ambitious in its agenda.¹ After reviewing the work of the outgoing Central Committee (section 1), Xi summarised the party’s prevailing doctrinal principles and new ideological orientation in two separate sections: the first, relatively brief, section established the CCP’s “historic mission” in a “new era” (section 2); the second, on the “Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the Basic Policy”, covered the “major theoretical innovations” of the past five years and their practical implications for 14 areas of policy (section 3).

Xi also extended the subsequent section of the speech (section 4) – which would normally introduce the party’s work plan for the next five years – to cover the next 33 years. Within this period, 2020, 2035, and 2050 serve as milestones. The CCP aims to secure “a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society” by 2020, and to develop China into a “great (强 qiang) modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong (强 qiang), democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and

beautiful” by 2050.² These formulations are largely consistent with those of previous congresses, which often referenced the centenary of the CCP, 2021, and of the People’s Republic of China, 1949. However, the intermediate target of 2035 – which envisages the “basic realisation of socialist modernisation” – is Xi’s innovation, with a view to breaking down the abstract vision of the “two centenary goals” into a more concrete, feasible work plan.

The rest of the report conforms to those of previous congresses, detailing the envisaged economic, political, cultural, social, environmental, defence, “one country, two systems”, foreign policy, and party-building policy (sections 5-13; analogous to sections 4-12 in Hu Jintao’s 2012 report). Yet Xi’s foreign and security policy goals were far more ambitious and detailed than those of previous leaders. They included the “dream of building a powerful military” (强军梦 qiang jun meng); the aspiration to build a “community with a shared destiny for mankind” (人类命运共同体 renlei mingyun gongtongti); and the objective of ensuring that “China will continue to play its part as a major and responsible country, take an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system, and keep contributing Chinese wisdom and strength to global governance”.³

Refurbishing the CCP’s guiding ideology: amendments to the party constitution

Although the Central Committee’s decision to enshrine Xi’s guiding ideology in the party constitution was striking, its precise formulation – “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想 Xi Jinping xin shidai Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi sixiang) – did not fulfil the expectations of many analysts, who had anticipated a more compact formula such as “Xi Jinping Theory” (理论 lilun) or even “Xi Jinping Thought” (思想 sixiang).⁴ These observers expected Xi’s status in the party constitution to equal that of Deng or Mao, both of whose contributions gained these labels only after their retirement and death respectively. In fact, the formulation appeared to have developed significantly since early 2017, when there were the first indications that Xi’s name might be enshrined in party statutes.

After months of speculation inspired by his acquisition in October 2016 of the title “core” (核心 hexin) leader, the CCP

¹ Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (决胜全面建成小康社会夺取新时代中国特色社会主义伟大胜利) (hereafter, Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era”), speech delivered at the 19th National Congress, 18 October 2017, Renmin Chubanshe, October 2017; an English translation of the speech is available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2017-11/03/c_136725942.htm.

² The Chinese original uses the word “strong” here, but to avoid repetition, official English translators have used “great”. Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era”.

³ Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era”, sections 10-12.

⁴ “Resolution of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on the Revised Constitution of the Communist Party of China” (中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会关于中国共产党章程修正案的决议), Chinese Communist Party, 24 October 2017 (hereafter, CCP, “Resolution of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on the Revised Constitution of the Communist Party of China”). An English translation of the full text of the resolution is available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/24/c_136702726.htm.

China's "New Era": Between continuity and disruption

Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt

In his report to the 19th party congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CCP and China's president, stated that "with decades of hard work, socialism with Chinese characteristics has crossed the threshold into a new era".¹ In a prominent article in the People's Daily, former Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) member Liu Yunshan argued that the "new era" marks a new start for China.² The eight "make clear" (明确 *mingque*), meaning a clear process to build a system with Chinese characteristics, and 14 "ensuring" (坚持 *jianchi*), guidelines ensuring a clear process, set the definition and basic policy of the new era respectively. Together, they resolve questions relating to several issues: firstly, the logic of Chinese history, where China stands, and where the country should go; secondly, the practical theme of this era and its historical tasks, as well as the framework of strategic management; thirdly, the type of development thinking that will be implemented; fourthly, the necessary spiritual attitude; and fifthly, the nature of China as a world power and of its contribution to humanity.³ As an ideology, the new era concept provides an ontological foundation and a terminological starting point for the Chinese polity. Having been written into the CCP constitution, the new era ideology has far-reaching implications for China's mode of governance, economy, society, and foreign policy.

The "principal contradiction" as *modus operandi*

While the eight "make clear" and 14 "ensuring" frame it, the "principal contradiction" (主要矛盾 *zhuyao maodun*) defines the *modus operandi* of the CCP and the state in the new era.⁴ The principal contradiction has changed four times in the history of the CCP – in 1956, 1969, 1981, and 2017. As Renmin University professor Tao Wenzhao notes, since the characteristics of each era change, its principal

contradiction must be modified, and with it the work method of the party and the state.⁵ Thus – as Xu Yaotong of China's National School of Administration has pointed out – the new era is the latest period in a long process that started with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.⁶ The era can be distinguished from other periods by its principal contradiction and the corresponding change in governance methods. Hence, the president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Wang Weiguang, argues that at the core of the new era is a change in the principal contradiction.⁷ Jin Mingqing, vice-president of CASS's Academy of Marxism, echoes Wang, stating that the change of the principal contradiction reflects an essential judgement that is at the root of the new era.⁸ As such, an ideological judgement is the basis for the implementation and establishment of the party's and the state's policies, as well as their long-term strategy.⁹

The 19th party congress concluded that the main contradiction of the new era was "between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life".¹⁰ Unbalanced and inadequate development is said to be at the root of social conflict and other problems that limit China's future development.¹¹ From the perspective of social demand and production, China will soon reach its aim of achieving a "moderately prosperous society".¹² However, simply satisfying the population's "need for a material culture" has become insufficient. The most salient challenges are the regional imbalances and structural flaws in development, as well as the people's increasing "demands for democracy, the rule of law, fairness and justice, security, and a better environment".

1 "Full Text of Xi Jinping's Report at 19th CPC National Congress", *China Daily*, 2017, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm.

2 Liu Yunshan, "Deeply Studying and Implementing Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想), 6 November 2017, available at http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-11/06/nw.D110000renmrb_20171106_1-02.htm.

3 Party Building Online Micro-Platform (党建网微平台), "What Is the New Era? (什么是新时代?)", 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MzA4OTQ1OTgwNQ==&mid=2680389013&idx=2&sn=3e00e4d47a997be3a660d449d403d8ca&chksm=8a2d40a7bd5ac9b1f883503b4e0ea7eee816a2d9ed13f93e82fb5ce2ffe0e55349e57390e7ee&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=1105Ll3dyDusEddCDFA4ajEE&pass_ticket=tZM16MtQNpmBso9UqXkXRtKjHaNx7TWgaMYidJXlS3NnosWD%2BnAVRPSME7AMzIu#rd.

4 Chen Jin, "Shenke Lijie Zhongguo Tese Shehuizhuyi Jinru Xin Shidai" (深刻理解中国特色社会主义进入新时代), *People's Daily*, 8 November 2017, available at http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-11/08/nw.D110000renmrb_20171108_1-07.htm.

5 Tao Wenzhao, "New Era: The New Historical Position of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" (新时代: 中国特色社会主义新的历史方位), *Beijing Daily*, 23 October 2017, available at http://ex.cssn.cn/zx/201710/t20171023_3676327.shtml.

6 "The Rich Meaning of the New Thinking in the New Era" (新时代新思想的丰富内涵), Explaining to the Family Web (宣讲家网), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MzA4NTMzNzEzMg==&mid=2652817610&idx=1&sn=6eb14f992642db8997ffed2993725f3f&chksm=84331d89b344949f3179300bcb1e2695bed7dc33c141d90b7aa526ef3efae7fd81609ab70378&mpshare=1&srcid=1031bp1scLH4dJL8mKcWPDVj&scene=21#wechat_redirect.

7 Wang Weiguang, "The Action Program to Wrest a Great Victory in the New Era" (王伟光: 夺取新时代伟大胜利的纲领), *Torch of Thought* (思想火炬), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=Mz-I4MDExNzg3Nw==&mid=2659100402&idx=1&sn=dfe83cbf866b355bb2ec929e811f67b20&chksm=f03751e8c740d8fe1c652d58c517ea2fc6d6dce44d35d545536c2414ca18c0b9e90195b165cb&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=1103kON3Ss6M7gP5hmNjzPo&pass_ticket=36WqxVoGzQCpuqY1%2BgaIuOfpmzgV03iVCRpCCvOFwtuZm4wdmyBFvDWR6TT2HI1V#rd.

8 Jin Mingqing, "In a New Era Preserve and Develop the Action Guide of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (新时代坚持和发展中国特色社会主义的行动指南), *Guangxi Daily*, 24 October 2017, available at http://gxrb.gxrb.com.cn/html/2017-10/24/content_1442386.htm.

9 Xin Ming, "Correctly Understanding the Change of the Principal Contradiction in Our Nation's Society" (正确认识我国社会主要矛盾的变化), *People's Daily*, 3 November 2017, available at http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-11/03/nw.D110000renmrb_20171103_2-07.htm.

10 "Full Text of Xi Jinping's Report at 19th CPC National Congress", *China Daily*.

11 Writing Group, *One Hundred Questions for Study and Tutoring on the 19th National Party Congress Report* (党的十九大报告学习辅导百问) (Beijing: Party-building Reading Materials Press, 2017), p. 23.

12 "What Is the New Era? (什么是新时代?)", Party Building Online Micro-Platform (党建网微平台).

Hence, the change of the principal contradiction mirrors the leadership's acknowledgment of the fact that society has become more diverse and fractured, demanding a set of public goods that are more difficult to measure and produce than those of the past. As the director of the CCP Central Committee's Party Literature Research Centre, Leng Rong, argues, this has major policy implications for the party and the state.¹³

For example, in social governance, legal scholars Jiang Ming'an and Yang Jianshun have elaborated on the report's idea of "together constructing, governing, and sharing".¹⁴ They explain that the concept of the principal contradiction is based on the idea that society is divided into diverse communities that have a wide variety of interests and needs. Social governance innovation therefore stresses the need for communities to construct and govern themselves, while the government provides them with guidance and public goods such as policing and healthcare. The change of the principal contradiction also influences the legal system.¹⁵ A variety of legal scholars argue that the new era requires a novel approach to the law: knowledge of the law is no longer enough; "belief in the rule of law" is also needed. The report expressed this idea using the phrase "rule of law cultivation". The aim is not only for people to passively obey laws, but also to actively deploy and consciously protect them. Thus, legal scholars argue that the task of the newly established leading group for advancing law-based governance is to coordinate the propagation of the law, the education of citizens, and legal work. Another example comes from education policy.¹⁶ Striving to "see that each and every child has fair access to good education" entails a shift from "having a school" to "having a good school", thereby ensuring that nobody is left behind and that all children have equal opportunities. The need for a better spiritual life is also addressed: former Politburo member and minister of propaganda Liu Qibao argues that people are demanding better movies, television shows, books, and plays.¹⁷

In various areas, the change of the principal contradiction implies a relative shift from quantity to quality; from the external to internal; and from broadening to deepening. However, it would be misleading to present the practical implications of the shift as being a direct result of the new era slogan.

Between continuity and disruption

While the new era does not create anything truly new, it is novel in establishing an official interpretation of the status quo centred on Xi Jinping. As Feng Pengzhi of the Central Party School's Centre for Socialism with Chinese Characteristics maintains, practice is the source of theory. He argues that "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", reflects the courage of the party to create a theory based on prevailing practices, thereby identifying the type of socialism that should be developed, and how.¹⁸ As a newly appointed PBSC member, Li Zhanshu notes in an essay that the new era is not as much a true break with the past as a summary of the governance ideas Xi has developed in his speeches and transmitted to institutions since the 18th party congress, in 2012.¹⁹ While the concept is new, its content, associated meanings, and institutions are based on existing structures and precepts. The reality of a changing society resulted in policy adjustments, peaking in the change of the principal contradiction during the recent party congress. As practices gave rise to the new era and a change of the principal contradiction, they started to serve as evidence and a justification for future developments. From this perspective, the new era is rooted in existing practices and stresses the importance of continuity.

Nonetheless, the new era ideology represents a shift that should not be underestimated. Firstly, Wang Tingyou notes that the report is not just a political proclamation but also a manual for action designed to unite the party and lead the people.²⁰ The idea of a new era in the report and the party constitution is thus as much a summary of the last five years as it is the party's blueprint for the future.²¹ Thus,

13 Leng Rong, "Correctly Mastering the Change of the Principal Contradiction in Our Nation's Society" (正确把握我国社会主要矛盾的变化), in Writing Group (ed.), The 19th National Party Congress Report: Tutoring Book (党的十九大报告: 辅导读本) (Beijing: People's Publishing Press, 2017).

14 Jiang Ming'an and Yang Jianshun, "Jiang Ming'an and Yang Jianshun: How to Produce a Governance Structure of Together Constructing, Governing, and Sharing" (姜明安杨建顺: 新时代如何打造共建共治共享社会治理格局), China Constitutionalism Net (中国宪政网), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI4MDMyODMwMw==&mid=2247487197&idx=1&sn=70bebd6972de51f683d3de0975772727&chksm=ebbb6fddccc6cb64d98113578f197a8ccob6c84608aa3240a782acd2025-8f3b7e0a2dd9af8&scene=0#rd.

15 Wang Doudou, "Rooting Rule of Law Belief Deep within the Soul" (让法治信仰植根于灵魂深处), *Legal Daily*, 23 October 2017, available at <http://epaper.legaldaily.com.cn/fzrb/content/20171023/Article10102GN.htm>.

16 "Delegates of the 19th National Party Congress Heatedly Discuss Fair and Quality Education" (十九大代表热议公平而有质量的教育), *Xinhua*, 2017, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/2017-10/22/c_1121838985.htm.

17 Liu Qibao, "Pushing Forward the Prosperous and Flourishing Socialist Culture" (推动社会主义文化繁荣兴盛), in Writing Group (ed.), The 19th National Party Congress Report: Tutoring Book (党的十九大报告: 辅导读本) (Beijing: People's Publishing Press, 2017).

18 Feng Pengzhi, "Have Theory Always Keep up with the Era" (让理论永远跟上时代), *People's Daily*, 25 October 2017, available at http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-10/25/nw.D110000renmrb_20171025_1-14.htm.

19 Li Zhanshu, "Comprehensively Mastering Socialism with Chinese Characteristics Entering a New Era" (全面把握中国特色社会主义进入新时代), *People's Daily*, 9 November, available at http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-11/09/nw.D110000renmrb_20171109_1-02.htm.

20 Wang Tingyou, "Xi Jinping's Thinking of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era Is a Great Banner for Guiding a New Journey" (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想是指引新征程的伟大旗帜), *Torch of Thought* (思想火炬), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI4MDExNzg3Nw==&mid=2659100147&idx=3&sn=d0e456c563fafd5b1d2e8fb19120674a&chksm=f03752e9c740dbff164195ba2dd2cef2a5e305aa9ba87ceeo65a76937321-763a96ca4fae87b&scene=0#rd.

21 "Head of the Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party's 19th National Congress Answers Reporter Questions Regarding the Passage of "Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (Revised Draft)" (中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会秘书处负责人就党的十九大通过的《中国共产党章程(修正案)》答记者), *Qiushi*, 2017, available at http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2017-11/01/c_1121886202.htm.

the term “new era” is a linguistic device intended to provide a common terminological starting point. As discussed above, policymakers, local governments, social groups, and individuals are already reimagining this plan and deploying its language to frame and legitimate their past and future actions. New era terms are already being used to restructure the party’s history.²²

Secondly, the new era is centred on Xi. While its solidification within the party constitution highlights its importance as a manual for action for the whole party, concerted action assumes a united understanding of the tasks at hand. Vice-minister for propaganda Wang Xiaohui argues that, while socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era reflects the wisdom of the whole party and summarises the people’s practices and experiences, Xi played a crucial role in its creation.²³ Wang Tingyou contends that this is an important accomplishment, since countries often fail to modernise due to their lack of a leadership core.²⁴ A signal to both cadres and society, the meaning of the new era is tied to Xi, rooted in China’s achievements of the last five years, and cemented in the party constitution.²⁵ In light of this, the significance of studying the party constitution is to build unity around Xi’s thinking and to integrate this thinking into the process of modernising socialism.²⁶

It would be a mistake to dismiss the new era as just an empty phrase. The new era should be conceived of within the framework of its inception, underlying past practices, and the vision it serves. Formalised during the 19th party congress, the ideology of the new era will have a considerable impact on policymaking in areas ranging from economics, social governance, and judicial reform to party-building and other areas.

22 Li Qinggang, “The Focal Point of Deepening Party History Research” (深化党史研究的着力点), Study Times, 17 November 2017, available at <http://dzb.studytimes.cn/shtml/xssb/20171117/30252.shtml>.

23 “Authoritative Explanation: Why Does the New Thought Bear Xi Jinping’s Name?” (权威解读：新思想为何以习近平的名字命名？), Party Building Online Micro-Platform (党建网微平台), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?_biz=MzA4OTQ1OTgwNQ==&mid=2680388738&idx=3&sn=6afb4e355702fa0f91452c091b5151d7&chksm=8a2d411b0bd5ac8a637b5365edd42e37124959c32770555b77a5e514e060a6db309a73eafd623&scene=0#rd.

24 Wang Tingyou, “Wang Tingyou: Writing the Leadership Core into the Party Constitution Is the Requirement of the Era and the People” (汪亭友：领导核心写入党章是时代和人民的需要), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?_biz=MzI4MDExNzgzNw==&mid=2659100246&idx=4&sn=c57611ac74712e895118ccf9ed72f90e&chksm=f037514cc740d85adc6af0129e3a828eaf552a5842085cc3643b37d8ef0d960fd7977f4339b&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=1103z384gaOLAS41dv6sm8Tp&pass_ticket=yCu9YqteCl4wuYbod%2B4CUS2MV4mKdLwVKRUDJClDpw5KGlkzMufxOHRWQtfpLQ%2B#rd.

25 “Birth Record of the New Party Constitution” (新党章诞生记), Party Member (共产党员), 2017, available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?_biz=MzA4ODUzNjAxOA==&mid=2671062117&idx=3&sn=6fb8fccc7c02c3eda176c453da6940e2&chksm=8ae92ad8bd9ea3ce063e1b723092fe35aea9161f57c427418e86d0f8423909d7f9703c02674d&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=1103xF27mHEGzB6bQtKYv6qn&pass_ticket=NumMXpq%2FZ2HE5xIUhoLsiPOsZNq3TjwMqxJ4GHYgEifWdZyXJqKYhP7ULehJzDDt#rd.

26 “Decision Regarding the “Chinese Communist Party Constitution (Revised Draft)” of the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party” (中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会关于《中国共产党章程（修正案）》的决议), *Xinhua*, 2017, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/2017-10/24/c_1121850042.htm.

A “new type of great power relations” revisited

Yevgen Sautin

Western commentary in the wake of the 19th party congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been quick to crown Xi Jinping as China’s most powerful leader since Mao Zedong. Xi’s ascent and apparent ability to push through “historic changes”, as Chinese media describe it, has invited the obvious comparison to Donald Trump’s difficulties in accomplishing his own legislative and diplomatic agenda.¹ When it comes to Chinese grand strategy, there is speculation that China will abandon the informal guiding principle in place since Deng Xiaoping of “avoiding brightness, cherishing obscurity” (韬光养晦 taoguang yanghui), meaning a low-profile foreign policy. It may now turn to favour a more visible and activist posture.

This chapter surveys several senior Chinese academics and think-tank researchers at China’s most prominent institutions. While by no means exhaustive, the selected authors carry influential voices and represent research centres that are often asked to inform and communicate the CCP’s latest foreign policy thinking. These Chinese authors generally do not consider the 19th party congress to be a watershed moment for the party’s approach to foreign policy, but rather to be another milestone on the long path of China’s “rejuvenation” and its creation of a “new type of great power relations.”²

Feng Zhongping, deputy director of the prominent China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), argues that the overarching foreign policy goal of the Xi era continues to be establishing the aforementioned new type of big power relations.³ When it comes to the United States, in order to avoid the so-called Thucydides Trap, China has agreed to unconventional diplomatic formats such as the Mar-a-Lago Trump-Xi summit and the earlier Obama-Xi summit at Sunnylands in California.⁴ Feng sees these summits as evidence that Chinese foreign policy is willing to be creative, breaking out of traditional diplomatic constraints.

1 “Historic changes” as found in the *Global Times*, for instance, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1070429.shtml>.

2 “New type of great power relations” has been explicitly championed by Xi Jinping, starting in late 2013. For more information, see: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinese-enthusiasm-and-american-cynicism-over-the-new-type-of-great-power-relations/>.

3 Feng Zhongping (冯仲平), “The Heavy Burden of China’s Foreign Policy in the New Era” (新时期中国外交任重道远. Xinshiqi zhongguo waijiao renzhongdaoyuan), CICIR Xiandai Guoji Guanxi, August 2017. Hereafter, “The Heavy Burden of China’s Foreign Policy in the New Era”.

4 For a critique of the term “Thucydides Trap” and the limits of its applicability to Sino-US relations, see Arthur Waldron’s article, available at <http://supchina.com/2017/06/12/no-thucydides-trap/>.

Beijing's support for a "new type of great power relations" is not new, but in the lead-up to the 19th party congress new keywords emerged. Feng sees Sino-US relations in the future as guided by mutual respect, respect for territorial integrity, and respect for different development models. Chen Xulong, director of the foreign ministry-affiliated China Institute on International Studies, speaking to a Xinhua reporter, also emphasises the importance of "mutual respect" and "fair treatment" as the foundation for great power relations.⁵

Li Zhiye, director of CICIR, presents a historical overview of how China's foreign policy has arrived at what Xi came to call a "new type of great power relations".⁶ Li stresses that policy changes enacted by the CCP leadership, such as the signing of the Sino-Soviet friendship treaty in the 1950s, subsequent Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, normalisation of relations with the US in the 1970s, or reform and opening under Deng in the 1980s, all served concrete national interests such as state consolidation, economic development, or a chance to improve China's international standing. The upshot of Li's commentary is that the Chinese leadership attaches much greater importance to concrete gains over the far less tangible good interpersonal relations between foreign leaders. This appears to be exactly the opposite of Trump's view that good personal relations with Xi are crucial to solving a litany of problems facing US-China relations.

China's global role and limitations

Xi's remarks at the 19th party congress stressed that China is committed to globalisation and further opening. The Chinese authors surveyed all emphasised that global problems cannot be solved unilaterally, with Chen Xulong stressing in particular that in the 21st century no country can be an "isolated island."⁷ To that end, Chen Xulong underscored that China already protects the world order, and that it will now become a creator of peace and order (以前和平维护者, 现在和平建设者 yiqian heping weihuzhe, xianzai heping jianshezhe).

China portrays the "Belt and Road (一带一路 yidai yilu)" Initiative (BRI) as China's signature contribution to international openness and development. As with most writing on BRI, there is not much detail on specific projects, but there is an unmistakable change in tone from earlier commentary on BRI, stressing that China's development

⁵ Chen Xulong (陈须隆), "On Chinese Foreign Policy, the 19th Party Congress Report Clearly Promotes two Constructs (十九大报告中国外交部分最大亮点是明确提出推动两个构建 Shijiuda baogao zhongguo waijiao bufen zuida liangdian shi mingque tichu tuidong liang ge goujian)", China Institute of International Studies, 23 October 2017, available at http://www.ciis.org.cn/chinese/2017-10/23/content_40047927.htm.

⁶ Li Zhiye (李志业), "China's Foreign Policy needs to Play to its Strengths to Compensate for its Weaknesses" (中国对外战略布局需扬长补短 zhongguo duiwai zhanlue buju xu yangchangbuduan), CICIR Xiandai Guoji Guanxi, August 2017. Hereafter, "China's Foreign Policy needs to Play to its Strengths to Compensate for its Weaknesses".

⁷ "On Chinese Foreign Policy, the 19th Party Congress Report Clearly Promotes two Constructs".

model and experience is useful not only for developing countries but developed states as well. This points to China's growing confidence in promoting its development model internationally. Despite an eagerness on China's part to assume greater global responsibility, Li Zhiye points out that the country still lacks the abilities to meet all its international aspirations. He says that, although China's efforts have brought results through the Shanghai Security Organisation and cooperation on piracy and terrorism, there is still a lot of work to be done to make China a true global power.

Li identifies one of the weaknesses of China's foreign policy as a lack of soft power. In his view, however, the West's soft power rests solely on the foundations of hard power. Thus China first has to strengthen its hard power before it can have "Chinese style soft power (中式软实力 zhongshi ruanshili)." Such thinking highlights that for all the official talk of forging "win-win" relations with neighbours and strategic partners such as the European Union, Chinese foreign policy experts actually continue to view the world in starkly realist terms.

Discussions of Trump and the US figure prominently in Chinese debates among international relations scholars. Feng Zhongping believes that, while Trump has called for an "America First" policy, US policy towards China has not changed significantly. There is also vocal frustration with the EU, which might not have an "American-style strategic competition mindset" vis-à-vis China, but individual member states persist in bringing up "values" issues with China that are both deep-seated and unfavourable towards the Chinese people.⁸ Nevertheless, commentaries describe the EU as a force for global peace (they do not so of the US) and they express a desire to forge a strategic partnership with the EU.

Feng also believes that the US, the EU, India, and Japan are not willing to accept and adjust to China's rise to prominence (崛起 jueqi). Several publications single out relations with India and Japan as being particularly thorny, but there is hope that both New Delhi and Tokyo will come around to Beijing's point of view. Japan's participation at the latest BRI summit in Beijing was seen as somewhat encouraging.

The Korean peninsula

Although the US has clearly communicated to China that the North Korean nuclear and missile programmes are the most pressing issue for Washington in the Asia-Pacific region, Chinese authors have generally not attached a similar level of importance to the stand-off. In regard to the Korean nuclear impasse, hardline voices in China see a strong, nuclear-armed North Korea as a net positive for China. They believe that North Korea could help contain both the US and Japan. Wei Da, a more liberal-minded

⁸ "The Heavy Burden of China's Foreign Policy in the New Era".

scholar, on the other hand, believes that such a position is dangerously irresponsible, and that in fact North Korean nuclear provocations aid US and Japanese goals.⁹ In Wei Da's view, China has limited room for manoeuvre. Further provocation by North Korea, such as testing a hydrogen bomb above ground, Wei Da believes, will pose a difficult choice for China, between implementing sanctions, which could truly cripple the North Korean regime, or considering a military "resolution" to the crisis.

Taiwan

Most Chinese analysts continue to see Taiwan as a major problem for Beijing. The standard view is that third parties (the US or Japan) are using differences in cross-strait relations as a means to put pressure on China.¹⁰ Wei Da offers a more nuanced argument on Taiwan.¹¹ The author believes that in the next five years there is the possibility of a military conflict over Taiwan but only if the US disengages from cross-strait relations. He identifies China's growing overall strength and the complete paralysis in cross-strait relations as possible factors. However, the potential scenario where military use of force is most likely would involve the US becoming a completely disinterested, neutral party to the conflict. The author Wei Da concludes that as long as the status quo persists, Beijing will continue to support a peaceful unification.

Russia

Sino-Russian relations have received more attention in the Western press following the growing international isolation of Russia. Feng Zhongping too makes a special note of Russia and Vladimir Putin, whom Xi has met 22 times according to the author. China and Russia have formed a strategic partnership, but the framework for the partnership is "no alliance, no confrontation, not directed at a third party" (不结盟, 不对抗, 不针对第三国 bujiemeng, buduikang, buzhendui disanguo). Beijing welcomes more cooperation, especially on economic matters, but there is no desire for an alliance with Moscow. Wang Honggang, a researcher from CICIR, urges China to study closely the recent deterioration of relations between Moscow and Washington, suggesting that China is not interested in openly challenging the US in a Putinesque fashion.¹²

Feng Shaolei, a professor at East China Normal University, believes that China has to tread delicately with Russia due to the latter's sensitivities about its economic disparity with China.¹³ Feng also believes that conflict between the US and Russia is not necessarily in China's interest as some Chinese Russia-watchers argue. China relies on global stability and markets and would be adversely affected by further escalation.

Out with the old, in with the ... old?

In the era of Trump and Brexit, the Chinese authors surveyed are not shy about criticising Western countries for their volte-face on free trade or the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change. There is also undeniably a growing confidence that China can assume a leading global role and serve as an example not just for developing countries but for the entire world. Despite the buoyed expectations of the Xi era, Chinese experts nevertheless admit that China is still lacking the means to fully realise its ambitious goals, something which is particularly true in defence and diplomacy. For the past two decades, the overarching theme of reporting on China has been that of China's rise. It appears that China has already risen – but can China now provide international leadership beyond just rhetoric? Beijing's rigid South China Sea stance, border tensions with India, and growing criticism of the EU and US suggest that the "new type of great power relations" proposed by China looks a lot like the old one.

9 Wei Da (伟达) "After the 19th Party Congress, three (Chinese Foreign Policy) Tendencies" (十九大后三套关系走向 shijiuda hou santao guanxi zouxian), *Lianhe Zaobao*, 5 October 2017, available at <http://www.chinaelections.org/article/1970/246940.html>. Hereafter, "After the 19th Party Congress, three (Chinese Foreign Policy) Tendencies".

10 "China's Foreign Policy needs to Play to its Strengths to Compensate for its Weaknesses".

11 "After the 19th Party Congress, three (Chinese Foreign Policy) Tendencies".

12 Wang Honggang (王鸿刚), "Seeking New Type of Strategic Opportunities" (寻求新型战略机遇 xunqiu xinxing zhanlue jiyu), CICIR *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, August 2017.

13 Feng Shaolei (冯绍雷), "Dealing with Russia, China doesn't Flaunt its Position" (面对俄罗斯, 中国一点都不摆阔 miandui eluosi, zhongguo yidian dou bu baikuo) *quanqiuhua de weilai: zhongguo de mianlin de tiaozhan yu juese zhuanhuan*, 2 November 2017, available at <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/rpCgvXNNQhc6VVjiYDHGgw>.

Xi Jinping Thought and China's youth

Jérôme Doyon

At the 19th party congress in October 2017, Chinese president Xi Jinping's report on the guiding principles for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) introduced the "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", which was incorporated into the party constitution. In the days that followed more than 20 Chinese universities announced the creation of research institutes dedicated to this new "Xi Jinping Thought".¹ This strengthened ideological work on campuses is part of a broader tendency, which started before the 19th Congress, to bring the party-state closer to the younger generation.

In the run-up to the Congress a "Compilation of Xi Jinping's remarks on youth and the work of the Communist Youth League" was published, emphasising the necessity of a close relationship between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and China's youth.² Xi called in particular for the party to focus on specific groups that could become a "negative force" (负能量, fu nengliang) if not managed properly, including: actors of the new economy, young migrant workers, artists, or the so-called "ant-tribe" (蚁族, yizu), which refers to young graduates having a hard time finding jobs in large Chinese cities. From the party-state's perspective strengthening ideological education is seen as the way to funnel these groups and youth more broadly in a positive direction. Reflecting this direction, the first priority of the party-state's "Mid- to long-term plan for the development of youth", published in April 2017, is the ideological and moral training of young people, coming before the improvement of their economic situation or health. Achieving this is to involve a strengthening of political education, diffusion of socialist approaches, better control over schools, and better supervision of online content.³

To examine this overall trend, this article will focus on two recent reforms that aim to strengthen the CCP's supervision over youth: reform of university management and reform of the Communist Youth League. In both cases the party tries to control young people's lives more effectively by getting closer to the groups it is targeting.

1 "Chinese universities race to embrace Xi Jinping's theories", *Financial Times*, 30 October 2017, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/7002d916-bd47-11e7-b8a3-38a6e068f464>.

2 "Compilation of Xi Jinping's remarks on youth and the work of the Communist Youth League" (习近平关于青少年和共青团工作论述摘编, Xi Jinping guanyu qingshaonian he gongqingtuan gongzuo lunshu zhaibian), Beijing, Central Party Literature Press, 2017.

3 "Mid- to long-term plan for the development of youth" (中长期青年发展规划 2016—2025 年, zhongchangqi qingnian fazhan guihua 2016-2015 nian), Chinese Communist Party, 13 April 2017, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-04/14/c_1120806695.htm.

Universities under CCP leadership

In December 2016, Xi chaired the "National meeting on political thought work in universities". The president detailed the leadership's vision of the country's university system, emphasising its function of training the "socialist successors".⁴ In line with the campaign of the "seven don't speak" launched by the CCP in 2013 to counter the influence of Western values, this event set out the role universities were henceforth to play in preserving Chinese historical and cultural exceptionalism.⁵

In addition to the content of university teaching, the December meeting also pushed for the strengthening of party organisations on campuses. Party committees should develop CCP grassroots organisations, in the various classes and departments, and recruit more members among students. It also calls for further integration of the traditional political supervision methods of the party branches by using new technologies in order to be more present on social media and to supervise online public opinion.⁶

The goal is to solve the issues within universities highlighted recently by the CCP's disciplinary organ. After an inquiry lasting many months, taking place within 29 universities, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) published "rectification reports" criticising the under-development of the party's presence on campuses.⁷ It describes party cells that are often empty and do not organise any activities. It calls for more supervision of university party committees over lower-level party cells and cadres. In some institutions, including the prestigious Tsinghua University, the CCDI cited highlighted what it considered to be insufficient respect paid to the "Eight-point regulation", whose aim is to promote frugality among cadres.⁸

4 "Xi Jinping: The Work on Political Thought should run through the entire education process" (习近平: 把思想政治工作贯穿教育教学全过程, Xi Jinping: ba sixian zhengzhi gongzuo guanchuan jiaoyu jiaoxue quan guocheng), *Xinhua*, 8 December 2016, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-12/08/c_1120082577.htm. Hereafter, "Xi Jinping: The Work on Political Thought should run through the entire education process".

5 The "seven don't speak" (七不讲, qibujiang) campaign was launched in 2013 in order to resist the influence of Western values. The campaign listed a number of topics, which were not to be raised in public discussions, including, for example, "universal values" or "press freedom".

6 "Xi Jinping: The Work on Political Thought should run through the entire education process".

7 "Public report for the 12th round of inspections of the 18th Congress" (十八届中央第十二轮巡视公布, shiba jie zhongyang di shi'er lun xunshi gongbu), CCDI, 16 June 2017, available at http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/xwt/201706/t20170615_101124.html.

8 The "Eight-point Regulation" (中央八项规定, zhongyang ba xiang guiding) was announced in December 2012. It aims to discipline party members and cadres, and to ensure that the organisation remains close to the masses. For more details on this issue see: Jérôme Doyon, "The End of the Road for Xi's Mass Line Campaign: An Assessment," *China Brief*, 23 October 2014, available at <https://jamestown.org/program/the-end-of-the-road-for-xis-mass-line-campaign-an-assessment/>.

In addition, the CCDI appears to have gone beyond its core mission of supervising party cadres, as the reports also criticise an alleged lack of morality among faculty members, in particular at Beijing Normal University. In fact, this move precedes the introduction of new supervision committees – under the leadership of the CCDI – which will expand the scope of its disciplinary efforts beyond the party itself, so as to include all state employees, such as academics.⁹

In line with these criticisms, and coming a few months after the “National meeting on political thought work in universities”, the ministry of education released a new official document targeting university management.¹⁰ It aims to transform university management so as to develop a world-class higher education system in China. According to Guan Peijun, deputy chair of China Association for Higher Education, reaching this goal requires going beyond “empty talk” on university autonomy and realising that this autonomy is not a counterweight to state intervention, if it is well managed.¹¹ Guan states that the party-state’s intervention should be rethought in order to be more effective.

Contradicting each other somewhat, several Chinese commentators argue that academics ought to have more autonomy to manage their own affairs, for instance pursuing their own, independent, research, but at the same time making sure that internal supervision is strengthened.¹² Zhong Binglin is chair of China Association for Higher Education and professor at Beijing Normal University. He notes that Chinese universities are too dependent on state funding while at the same time they lack the necessary internal control and “self-constraints” to manage themselves.¹³

The new document hence calls for more standardisation of universities’ supervision, especially when it comes to diplomas and human resources, so as to prevent corruption and “amoral behaviour”. It emphasises the need for

simplification of administrative control but also increasing internal controls, through strengthened party cells, in both public and private universities.¹⁴ In this configuration the party sits at the centre, supervising both the administrative and academic work of the universities. According to recent Chinese media the CCP’s centralisation efforts also now apply to foreign-funded universities.¹⁵

For Zhang Lifan, a famous historian who regularly intervenes in both Chinese and foreign media, this “partyfication” (党化, danghua) of universities follows a “two-track system” of capitalist financing on the one hand, as the universities have to be active in fundraising, and communist-type political control on the other. For Zhang, this is contrary to the spirit of an academic institution, running the risk of universities all becoming “party schools.”¹⁶

Reaching youth beyond campus

The strengthening of party-state control over Chinese youth is not, however, limited to universities. In the last few years, the party has launched a massive overhaul of its youth organisation, the Communist Youth League (CYL), to improve its performance in reaching and mobilising young people.

As early as 2015, investigation teams were sent to the central CYL as part of Xi’s anti-corruption campaign launched in 2013. The CYL was accused of “becoming more and more bureaucratic, administrative, aristocratic and entertainment-oriented.”¹⁷ This led to a reform proposal for the League, which was adopted by the CCP Politburo Standing Committee in August 2016. The “Proposal on the Reform of the Central Youth League” emphasises the Party’s control over the League and reforms of its leadership organs. It noted that the CYL was getting farther away from young people and that, to reverse this trend, the organisation’s grassroots units had to be strengthened. Hence a key element of this proposal is: “shrinkage at the top and replenishment below” (减上补下, jianshangbuxia). It means that the upper echelon of the organisation, the most “bureaucratic and aristocratic ones”, according to the proposal, are to be streamlined,

9 The establishment of this new supervision commission was announced in late 2016. For more details on this issue see: “Discipline and punish: Party power under Xi”, European Council on Foreign Relations, March 2017, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/china_analysis_discipline_and_punish_party_power_under_xi_7205.

10 “Opinions of the ministry of education and five other ministries as to deepening the reform towards streamlining administration, delegation of power, strengthening regulations and improving service within universities” (教育部等五部门关于深化高等教育领域简政放权放管结合优化服务改革的若干意见), Ministry of education et al, 31 March 2017.

11 “Innovation of the internal management structure in higher education: theory and practice” (高校内部治理体系创新:理论与实践, gaoxiao neibu zhili tixi chuangxin: lilun yu shijian), Exploration and Free Views, Vol. 8 2017.

12 “Innovation of the internal management structure in higher education: theory and practice”; “The academic problem and the administrative problem in university management” (大学治理中的学术问题和行政问题, daxue zhili zhong de xueshu wenti he xingzheng wenti), *Caixin*, 18 December 2016, available at <http://china.caixin.com/2016-12-18/101028156.html>. Hereafter, “Innovation of the internal management structure in higher education: theory and practice”.

13 “Innovation of the internal management structure in higher education: theory and practice”.

14 “Opinions of the ministry of education and five other ministries as to deepening the reform towards streamlining administration, delegation of power, strengthening regulations and improving service within universities.”

15 “Beijing vies for greater control of foreign universities in China”, *Financial Times*, 19 November 2017, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/09ecaae2-ccd0-11e7-b781-794ce08b24dc?segmentid=acee4131-99c2-09d3-a635-873e61754ec6>.

16 “Strengthening ideological control over universities, what does Xi Jinping actually fear?” (加强高校意识形态管控, 习近平到底怕什么?, jiaqiang gaoxiao yishi xingtao guankong, Xi Jinping daodi pa shenmen?), *Voice of America in Chinese*, 20 December 2016, available at <https://www.voachinese.com/a/io-20161219-china-higher-education-brainwash/3641857.html>.

17 “The 2nd Central Inspection Team Gives Feedback Regarding the Circumstances of the Special Inspection of the Central Communist Youth League,” Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, 4 February 2016, available at http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yw/201602/t20160203_73930.html, accessed on 20 February 2016.

while more emphasis is to be given, personnel and budget-wise, to the cells at the county level and below, where most activities are organised.¹⁸

The working style of the organisation is also to be transformed. As noted by Xi, the CYL cadres should be the “friends” of young people rather than their “cadres”. This change of style also implies an increased and more effective online presence of the CYL, which for Xi is a “battlefield” that cannot be ignored.¹⁹ This new working style is now visible in the increasing use of pop culture in CYL propaganda, including rap music, or cartoon videos.²⁰

Overall, the party-state appears deeply concerned that it might lose contact with the new generation, as happened in the past, notes Zhang Lifan. Hence, while the centrality of the party itself and its youth organisations as control tools is never questioned, the party-state increasingly mixes classical political control with new means and methods to reach young people both online and offline.

18 “Proposal on the Reform of the Central Youth League” (共青团中央改革方案, gongqingtuan zhongyang gaige fang’an), Central CYL, 2 August 2016.

19 Compilation of Xi Jinping’s remarks on youth and the work of the Communist Youth League.

20 “Insight: Rap and the Party: China taps youth culture to hook millennial cadres”, *Reuters*, 16 October 2017, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-congress-entertainment/insight-rap-and-the-party-china-taps-youth-culture-to-hook-millennial-cadres-idUSKCN1CooHC>.

Notes

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