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**'CHINA'S 19<sup>th</sup> PARTY CONGRESS: NEW LEADERS TO STEER CHINA TO THE CHINA DREAM'**

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The week long (October 18-24, 2017) 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was held in Beijing, concluded as anticipated with Xi Jinping emerging considerably stronger. His contribution to Chinese communist ideology was recognised and unanimously approved for incorporation into the Party Constitution as 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era'. He is the first CCP leader to have his contribution, attached to his name, enshrined in the Party Constitution while still alive. This places it next in heft to those of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, especially with the Chinese media already having begun to headline it as "Xi Jinping Thought"!

The approval by the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress to the appointment of many Xi Jinping loyalists, who now constitute the majority of the membership of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), Politburo (PB), CCP Central Committee (CC)'s Secretariat and the Central Military Commission (CMC), underscores the unmistakable -- and anticipated -- enhancement of Xi Jinping's authority and influence. Pertinent in this context are the revelations by China's official media in the weeks before the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the successes achieved by the campaign against corruption and, on the sidelines of the Congress on October 20, by Liu Shiyu, Chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, who said 'Xi Jinping had saved socialism by bringing down high-ranking officials who intended to "usurp the party leadership and seize state power" and described Xi Jinping as a saviour of the Communist Party'. Liu Shiyu has since been promoted to the CCP CC!

Interesting are the affiliations of the new leaders appointed to the PBSC, whose number remains at seven. The composition of the new PBSC shows that while Xi Jinping has followed the Party's informal rules and convention regarding retirement age of senior echelon cadres, he has avoided inducting younger cadres who could be potential successors in the PBSC. The field for advancement to the next PBSC and as successors to Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang have, therefore, been left wide open for the younger cadres now in the PB. The field is open too for Xi Jinping to continue in office as, which some of his acolytes have been saying since 2013, China enters a new thirty year era like those of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping earlier!

Apart from the seven PBSC members, among the remaining 17 PB members also Xi Jinping has a clear majority. At least 12 of them are long-time Xi Jinping loyalists not including the two Vice Chairmen of the Central Military Commission (CMC) who are also very close and long time associates of Xi Jinping. Some of the PB members are poised to take over as heads of Central Party organisations. They all owe their rise to him.

Equally important is the CCP CC Secretariat, which has in the past five years under Xi Jinping become a powerful body. It reports directly to Xi Jinping. Xi Jinping has packed the important new 7-member CCP CC Secretariat with loyalists and Wang Huning is its senior-most member. The previous 18<sup>th</sup> CCP CC Secretariat was headed by Liu Yunshan who also, like Wang Huning is now, was in charge of ideology, the propaganda apparatus and Party organisation. Three of the Secretariat's members are persons with a background in security or the military namely, Yang Xiaodu, Guo Shengkun and Huang Kunming. The indication is that Party controls on these sectors will continue to become progressively tougher.

At least two members of the new CCP CC Secretariat have a background in Tibet affairs. In addition to Wang Huning, who has in the past been a member of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) delegations to the National People's Congress (NPC), these are Yang Xiaodu, a 'sent down youth in the Cultural Revolution' and till recently Minister of Supervision who served in the TAR from 1976-2001, and Guo Shengkun who as the Minister of Public Security (MPS) attended meetings of the Leading Small Work Group on Tibet. Huang Kunming, another member of the Secretariat has served in the PLA.

As anticipated, TAR Party Secretary Wu Yingjie has been promoted to the new 19<sup>th</sup> CC as a Full member. In addition, this time there are two ethnic Tibetans, Qi Zhala and Luosang Jiangcun, as Full members of the CC, or one more than in the previous CC. Sun Chunlan (f) who was head of the CCP CC United Front Work Department and handling Tibet affairs, continues as the solitary woman in the PB despite being 67 years of age which actually puts her in the retirement zone. Interestingly Zhang Qingli, who was born in 1951 and earned a reputation as a hard-line TAR Party Secretary for his derogatory comments about the Dalai Lama, continues as a Full member of the 19<sup>th</sup> CC. Zhang Yijiong, present Executive Deputy Head of the UFWD and Vice Minister who on the sidelines of the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress outlined China's new strong policy towards the Dalai Lama, has been promoted from alternate member of the 18<sup>th</sup> CC to Full member of the 19<sup>th</sup> CC. Both of them will have a strong say in Tibet policy.

The new CMC consists of military officials who are all solid supporters of Xi Jinping. The composition and size of the new Central Military Commission (CMC) has also changed. It for the present comprises only four members and does not include the heads of the different services like the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), PLA Navy (PLAN) etc. The two CMC Vice Chairmen, former PLAAF Commander Xu Qiliang and PLA General Zhang Youxia, are both 'princelings' with long-time association with Xi Jinping. The new CMC Vice Chairman, Zhang Youxia's father Zhang Zongxun fought alongside Xi Jinping's father and they were called 'partners in blood'. Zhang Youxia has fought in the Sino-Vietnam war in 1979.

The presence of Xu Qiliang, Zhang Youxia and PLA Rocket Force Commander Wei Fenghe in the CMC point to an emphasis on the development and acquisition of modern, advanced defence technology. The induction of General Li Zuocheng, head of the Joint Staff Department under the CMC, and Lt. General Zhang Shengmin, Secretary of the PLA Discipline Inspection Commission, indicate that Xi Jinping will maintain the stress on a 'clean' and corruption free armed forces. Zhang Shengmin, incidentally, previously served in the 52th, 55th and 56th Bases of the Second Artillery in the Lanzhou Military Region and was Political Commissar of the Second Artillery Command College between 2012 and 2013. General Miao Hua as head of the Political Work department under the CMC will further Xi Jinping's agenda of expanding Party control and supervision over China's armed forces ensuring that the personnel are 'red and expert'.

The new appointments in the CCP's top bodies will allow Xi Jinping to pursue his ambitious agenda with little restraint.

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