

'INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF XI JINPING'S WORK REPORT AT 19TH PARTY CONGRESS'

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The 19th Party Congress, crucial for Xi Jinping achieving his agenda for 'national rejuvenation', opened on October 18, 2017, amidst stringent security in Beijing and other major Chinese cities including the autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.

- Xi Jinping, who holds fourteen formal positions – more than any other Chinese communist leader till now – has positioned himself to emerge stronger from the Congress. His sustained anti-corruption campaign has eliminated opposition in the Party and military and drastically reduced the influence wielded by Jiang Zemin. In September 2017, China's official media publicised that more than 176 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres equivalent to the rank of central Vice Minister and above had been dismissed and arrested for corruption and that more than 14,000 officers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had been similarly dismissed, including more than 86 officers of and above the rank of Major General.
- Just weeks before the Congress, Xi Jinping publicly demonstrated his authority by arresting two top Generals, appointing 20 Generals to command thirteen new Group Armies and promoting close associates to head the PLA Army (ground forces) and PLA Air Force. Politburo member and Chongqing Party Secretary Sun Zhengcai, viewed a likely candidate for the PBSC, was suddenly dismissed on charges of graft.
- Xi Jinping's 32,000-character Work Report outlined a confident, bold two-stage plan for goals to be achieved by China by 2050. He for the first time set timelines and declared that by the end of the first phase (2020-2035) China will be an innovative, technologically advanced, large, middle-income country ranking among the top nations in the world. By completion of the second stage (2035-2050), China should be a nation with "pioneering global influence". Implicit is that China will rival or surpass the US in strength and be proactive in international affairs to promote its interests.
- He directly linked military modernisation to the 'China Dream' and China's becoming a nation with "pioneering global influence". He said mechanization will be basically achieved by 2020 and modernization of national defense and armed forces should be completed by 2035. Xi Jinping asserted the goal is to make the PLA a "world class force" by 2050.
- There was pronounced emphasis in the Work Report on "the Party exercising leadership over all areas of endeavour in every part of the country", clearly indicating that Party controls will be expanded and ideology will remain predominant. The Work Report included 331 references to the 'Party', many more than in the Work Reports of the past eight Congresses.
- A significant achievement for Xi Jinping was inclusion of the 'Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era', already being headlined throughout the Chinese media as "Xi Jinping's Thought." This will be incorporated in the Party Constitution. An entire section of the Work Report defined this 'Thought'.
- The references to Hongkong, Macau and Taiwan were uncompromising. With regard to Taiwan, Xi Jinping said "we have the resolve, the confidence and the ability to defeat separatist attempts for "Taiwan independence" in any form. We will never allow anyone,

any organisation or any political party, at any time or in any form, to separate any part of Chinese territory from China”.

- There was no direct reference to the Dalai Lama or India in the Work Report. But Xi Jinping did state: “we will fully implement the Party’s policy on religious affairs, uphold the principle that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation ... and adapt to socialist society”. The section on National Security indicated Xi Jinping’s policy when he said “we must rigorously protest against and take resolute measures to combat all acts of infiltration, subversion, and sabotage, as well as violent and terrorist activities, ethnic separatist activities and religious extremist activities”.
- At a press conference on the sidelines of the Party Congress on October 21, the Executive Deputy Head and Vice Minister of the CCP CC's United Front Work Department, Zhang Yijiong was more direct when he said "The 14th Dalai Lama is not only a religious figure, but also a political one."
- In a remark with implications for India, he asserted that the Dalai Lama “ ... established a so-called government-in-exile, whose goal and core agenda is the independence of Tibet and to separate (from) China”. He added “Any country, or any organisation of anyone, accepting to meet with the Dalai Lama, in our view, is a major offence to the sentiment of the Chinese people. ... We consider such visit as a severe insult to the feelings of the Chinese people and a deviation from their commitment to recognizing the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government representing the whole of China." Zhang Yijiong also said that Tibetan Buddhism was a special religion “born in our ancient China”. “It’s a Chinese religion. It didn’t come in from the outside.”
- 74 senior veteran Party cadres attended, including 102-year old Song Ping, who was the most senior, and Xi Jinping’s immediate predecessors Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin who are 75 years and 91 years old respectively; former Premiers Wen Jiabao and Zhu Rongji; former Chinese Vice President Zeng Qinghong; and former Politburo Standing Committee members Li Ruihuan and Jia Qinglin.
