

Xi's Inner Circle



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Much of China's decision-making domestically and abroad is filtered through the lens of its larger-than-life leader, President and General Secretary Xi Jinping. Since Xi was named General Secretary in 2012, he has continued to centralize his own power within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and throughout Chinese government institutions. Many lay most of China's actions at the feet of one man, but this viewpoint overlooks the inner workings of a more complex, powerful machine managed by a handful of Xi's top loyalists. This group of elite advisors and officials operate quietly in the shadow of Xi but wield great power in how China functions.

Last October, the CCP announced its new Politburo Standing Committee (PSC)—the most elite governing body with Xi at the top. Four of the seven members are serving their first term, each tasked with carrying out the General Secretary's top domestic and international ambitions. Each individual's expertise, connection to Xi, and personal background highlight what policy areas are top of mind for the Chinese leader. The new Standing Committee differs from previous committees with Xi handpicking its members without consultation from party elders, bypassing certain

qualifications previously expected of committee members, and building out a committee with a stronger background in national security.¹

Equally important are the individuals Xi picked to serve alongside him on the Central Military Commission—China’s national defense service directing the People’s Liberation Army, the People’s Armed Police, and the Militia of China. With how China’s government, party, and military factions meld with one another, selection and service for its members are very deliberate. Positioning in the existing government, upbringing, and various connections and networks play an important role in who makes it into the elite circle of advisors.

Here, we’ll take a look at who makes up Xi’s inner circle and what their selection and background mean for China’s national security strategy going forward.

The Inner Circle

The 20th Party Congress saw Xi build a Standing Committee filled with his allies after two previous members stepped down due to age and term constraints enforced by the CCP when selecting members to the Standing Committee. The deliberately intertwined nature of party and government allows for PSC members to better balance their policy portfolio on the PSC with commitments to their position in the party. While the concept of collective leadership, where PSC members had a more leveled position relative to other members regardless of their rank order, may have taken a hit with Xi’s quest for greater power, there is still a division of policy work that its members are given from foreign affairs to economic reform.²

1. Xi Jinping



Xi Jinping

THE CORE OF THE PARTY

President of the People's Republic of China, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, & Chairman of the Central Military Commission.

CCP Member Since 1974.

The son of Chinese revolutionary leader Xi Zhongxun, Xi Jinping was born in 1953 into the Chinese political elite; however, during his childhood Xi Jinping's father was arrested several times during the Cultural Revolution for committing transgressions against the state resulting in his family's plight and social ostracization. As a teenager, Xi studied in the impoverished northern countryside province of Shaanxi as a member of China's "sent down youth," a 1960–1970's program aimed at re-educating the elite youth class through strenuous agricultural labor. Xi began his affiliation and career with the Chinese Communist Party and state after college serving as the private secretary for Geng Biao, then Vice Premier and Minister of National Defense in Beijing. Xi served in various administrative posts within the party and state across several provinces prior to assuming power as General Secretary of the CCP in 2012 and the Presidency in 2013. Xi's most notable career successes surround environmental cooperation with Taiwan, conservation and sustainable development, and China's financial reconstruction.

Source: Hille, Kathrin. "China's 'sent down' youth." Financial Times, 20 September 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/3d2ba75c-1fdf-11e3-8861-00144feab7de>. Accessed 17 May 2023. Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.thirdway.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRC's-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

Xi's power centralization reversed Chinese political reforms meant to spread power between certain positions within the seven-member Standing Committee and the now 24-member Politburo, lending him even more disproportionate power. Xi's reign as General Secretary began by adopting many reform-minded practices started under former General Secretary, Hu Jintao, like the practice of collective leadership, "aimed at inhibiting the ability of any single member of the leadership collective—and the general secretary, in particular—from asserting dominating power over the rest." But his first term as General Secretary saw this configuration of responsibility shift drastically in his favor. Since Xi may serve as General Secretary for life, the PSC as a collective outside Xi no longer has the same hold on policy control found in previous Standing Committees where power and decision-making were decentralized amongst the members.

The makeup of the 19th Congress included members that did not have longstanding relationships with Xi, something that his consolidation of power allowed him to reverse at the 20th Congress in October 2022. Three of the six members that served alongside Xi on the previous PSC had no connection with him. Xi's selection process could be a result of his quick rise to General Secretary. When he first came into his current position as General Secretary of the CCP in 2013, Xi was without the solid power base that his predecessors had enjoyed with connections being built from their days in the Communist Youth League, an organization weakened during Xi's tenure.

With changes stemming from the 20th Party Congress and Xi's ever-increasing grasp on power in China, Xi's closest advisors will now occupy the remaining six positions on China's Standing Committee. Connections to Xi are found throughout the entirety of his political career from differing levels of government, a potentially deliberate move to balance differing factions to maximize Xi's power share and tamp down potential challengers from within his ranks.

2. Li Qiang



Li Qiang · THE ECONOMIST

Premier of the People's Republic of China & 2nd Ranking Member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee.

CCP Member Since 1983.

A staunch Xi-loyalist, Li serves as Xi Jinping's right-hand man, tasked with crafting Xi's economic legacy.

Li's leadership in Shanghai during the COVID-19 lockdowns brought him widespread favor within the party and his earlier economic platform reflects the policies and values held by Xi Jinping making him the ideal person to usher in Xi's economic agenda.

Source: Lun Tian, Yew, Laurie Chen, and Joe Cash. "Li Qiang, Xi Confidant, takes reins as China's Premier." Reuters, 11 March 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/li-qiang-xi-confidant-takes-reins-chinas-premier-2023-03-11/>. Accessed 17 May 2023. | Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.third-way.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRCs-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

Li Qiang, 63, serves as the 2nd ranking position on the CCP's Standing Committee and was recently named Premier of the People's Republic of China, succeeding Li Keqiang. Li will help uplift Xi's desired economic policies and trade practices. Li's rise to the no. 2 position can be credited to Xi. In 2005, Li was brought on to Xi's provincial Standing Committee when Xi was the Party Secretary of Zhejiang, a large province in eastern China that parallels the East China Sea.³ Li has served alongside Xi in a number of provincial positions in China, including as Governor of Zhejiang, Party Secretary of Jiangsu, a coastal province north of Shanghai, and most recently as Party Secretary of Beijing. While these positions afforded Li the opportunity to still work closely with Xi throughout their rises in government, Li "doesn't have any central government experience," which is usually expected. Instead, Li's path to Premier heavily relied on his close ties to Xi instead of traditional qualifications. Li's most recent work as Party Secretary in Shanghai drew criticisms after he oversaw a two-month lockdown that damaged the local economic situation.⁴ His mismanagement led many to question whether he would be selected for the Standing Committee. However, Li's personal connection to Xi Jinping clearly had more impact on his advancement to the Standing Committee than his previous administrative faux pas.

3. Zhao Leji



Zhao Leji · THE DISCIPLINARIAN

Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Head of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Pilot Reform of the National Surveillance System, & 3rd Ranking Member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee.

CCP Member Since 1975.

One One of the few remaining Politburo members from Xi's original Standing Committee (est. 2012), Zhao Leji oversaw the party's internal disciplinary unit responsible for the appointment, dismissal, and punishment of members from 2012–2017. Following Xi's reelection as President of the PRC in March of 2023, Zhao was appointed to the position of Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, making him China's chief lawmaker.

Source: Cai, Vanessa. "Former anti-graft Chief Zhao Leji Appointed China's Top Lawmaker." South China Morning Post, 10 March 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3213054/former-anti-graft-chief-zhao-leji-appointed-chinas-top-lawmaker>. Accessed 17 May 2023. | Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.thirdway.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRCs-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

A member of the Central Committee since 2002, Zhao, 66, served as Director of the Central Organization Committee of the CCP, the organization solely responsible for personnel appointments and dismissals throughout all major party and state institutions (2012–17), allowing him to serve as the primary custodian of Xi Jinping's widespread anticorruption campaigns.⁵ Zhao also served as Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP from 2017–2022 allowing him to more precisely carryout Xi's anticorruption efforts. Although Zhao's former role was to oversee discipline and order within the party, he now serves as one of Xi's chief economic advisors and confidants. Zhao has used this unique position to urge advisors to invest in cutting-edge national security technologies and e-commerce.⁶ Formerly, Zhao had a lengthy career at the Department of Commerce in the Qinghai province, a rural province primarily supported by its agricultural and industrial sectors with a large population of ethnic minorities. Zhao's administrative and economic successes have resulted in his continued promotion; however, his limited foreign policy experience makes him an unlikely successor to Xi Jinping.

4. Wang Huning



Wang Huning · THE PHILOSOPHER

Chairman of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese Political Consultative Conference. Director of the Office of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), & 4th Ranking Member of the Politburo Standing Committee.

CCP Member Since 1975.

Unlike other PSC members, Wang's rise to power came by way of the academy rather than government leadership or administration. A lawyer, professor of political theory, and leading Chinese scholar, Wang's political career emerged from his leadership within the Central Policy Research Office (CPRO), the CCP's leading internal think tank. Wang's place as the party and Xi's top theoretician has landed him his place on the PSC where he advises on various topics of the CCP's policy agenda.

Source: "20th Party Congress: Wang Huning." Brookings Institution, October 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/20thpartycongress_wang_huning.pdf. Accessed 18 May 2023. Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.thirdway.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRCs-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

One of the two returning members of the previous Standing Committee, Wang, 67, serves a foundational role in how Xi, and as a result, China, operate and formulate the country's broader political strategy. No. 4 in the Standing Committee ranks, Wang has served as the philosophical backbone of not only Xi's regime, but for his previous two predecessors as well. Often cited as the chief architect behind the Belt and Road Initiative and Xi Jinping Thought, Wang's mark on modern China remains an outsized one.⁷ As Xi's tenure continues and the power base he once lacked early in his time as General Secretary is now realized, continuity of trusted partners is imperative. Wang's presence within the Standing Committee can be seen as a stabilizing force and a bridge across multiple factions, an asset Xi would find invaluable in quest to be China's leader for life.⁸

5. Cai Qi



Cai Qi · THE OBEDIENT

First Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP, Director of the CCP General Office, Director of the CCP General Secretary's Office, Chief of Staff of the Office of the President of the People's Republic of China, & 5th Ranking Member of the PSC.

CCP Member Since 1975.

Cai's leadership within the state predates his standing on the CCP's Central Committee; however, his political success and deep-rooted establishment within the party all but ensured his elevation to the Politburo in 2017 and the PSC in 2022. Having previously served in provincial roles within the party and state, Cai's understanding of the party-state system and the party's various censorship mechanisms informs how he implements Xi and the CCP's longstanding agenda throughout China.

Source: Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.third-way.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRC's-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

Cai Qi, 67, is one of four politicians (along with Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi, and Li Qiang) to have been elevated to the Politburo Standing Committee at the 20th National Congress last fall. Following his notable elevation to the PSC, Cai was subsequently appointed in March 2023 to serve as chief of staff for Xi's presidential office this spring. With their relationship dating back to 1985 when they served together for over 15 years in Fujian province, Cai's loyalty and obedience to Xi (and Xi's apparent loyalty to Cai) makes him an ideal member of Xi's inner circle.

Cai served as Party Secretary of Beijing (2017-2022) and as Deputy Director of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, an event that gained praise from national and international audiences. Cai has also served in senior leadership within the Central Committee and Central National Security Commission (2014-2016) where he worked to consolidate the CCP's leadership and deter so-called terrorism, separatism, and forms of religious extremism. Cai's expedited path to senior leadership posts within the party and state highlights the party's potential interest in taking a more hardline approach to dissent.

Since the convening of the National Party Congress late last year, a rise in protests and dissent both in the streets and social media has occurred. Protests regarding the country's stringent COVID policies and Xi's authoritarian rule have required the state to step up its already excessive surveillance and censorship practices. In late 2022, protesters briefly took to dating apps to spread the word and skirt state mandates before the mainland blocked access to both social media and dating applications. Cai's role in crafting the state's censorship agenda is critical to maintaining Xi's grip on power and has immeasurable impacts on the state's ability to reshape the CCP's image in the eyes of everyday citizens in China.

6. Ding Xuexiang



Ding Xuexiang · THE SCIENTIST

Ranking Vice Premier of the PRC, Leader of the Central Leading Group on Hong Kong and Macau Affairs, & 6th Ranking Member of the PSC.

CCP Member Since 1984.

The youngest member of the Politburo Standing Committee, 60-year-old Ding has held administrative positions within the CCP and the state, most notably as Director of the National Security Committee where he oversees the party's policies related to separatism, terrorism, and anticorruption. Ding's background in science and technology aids Xi's broader goals related to Chinese innovation.

Source: Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.third-way.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRCs-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

As Ranking Vice Premier, Ding serves as the chief administrative professional and political guardian for President Xi. Now the 6th ranking Politburo Standing Committee member, Ding is one of Xi's closest allies amongst a crowd of loyalists. Ding's previous experience as a researcher in the science and technology field will undoubtedly aid Xi's ambitions to become a technological superpower. At 60, Ding is the youngest member of the new Standing Committee, but his relationship with Xi dates back to 2007 when Ding served as Xi's personal secretary while Xi was mayor of Shanghai.⁹ Providing a similar asset that Wang Huning has in being able to traverse across differing factions in Chinese political life, Ding's close relationship to Xi and limited connections to Xi's potential rivals makes him a model member of Xi's entourage and significantly decreases his avenues for trying to depose Xi as leader in the future.¹⁰

Ding's loyalty is only one of the reasons why he was elevated to the Standing Committee and the Vice Premiership. He has served in several high priority administrative roles, including as Director of the National Security Committee (2018 – present). Ding is just one of the many experts from the science and technology fields to have risen through the ranks during the 20th Party Congress – officials with expertise in technology now make up over 40% of the new central committee.¹¹ While Ding's broad administrative background is priceless for Xi, whose policy challenges, domestic and foreign, rely on his committee's ability to manage a host of rising economic, political, and security threats, his knowledge of the PRC's role in tech innovation will surely be called upon throughout the leader's next term.

7. Li Xi



Li Xi · THE ENFORCER

Secretary of the CCP Central Commission for Discipline Inspection & 7th Ranking Member of the PSC.

CCP Member Since 1982.

Li's primary role as a member of Xi's inner circle is to oversee and implement discipline and anticorruption policies. Beginning his career at the provincial propaganda department in the Northwest province of Gansu, Li has held multiple positions related to anticorruption, censorship, propaganda production, and discipline, making him the ideal candidate to oversee the party's discipline apparatus.

Source: Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.third-way.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRC's-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

Li, 66, also rose to the Standing Committee and takes over as head of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, an extremely powerful law enforcement unit. Tasked with cracking down on corruption within the party and government ranks, Li holds tremendous weight in Xi's inner circle. His relationship to Xi dates back to the 1980s much like Cai Qi's, when "he served as a personal assistant to a protégé of Mr. Xi's late father, Xi Zhongxun, one of communist China's founders."¹² While Li will be heading the disciplinarian unit, it is also expected that he will head up the state's economic reform portfolio, making him an integral part of Xi's inner circle for at least the next five years until the next Party Congress.

Li has an indisputably challenging task ahead of him. During the past year international concerns surrounding the CCP's human rights practices led to increased scrutiny surrounding the ideological reeducation detention camps in Xinjiang.¹³ By the time the state eased the crackdown the United Nations had released a report concluding that the PRC may have committed numerous crimes against humanity.¹⁴ Now, with protests on the rise, the world watches to see how the country's disciplinary leaders like Li will respond and the potential severity of punishment the leaders may deploy. Following protests in Hong Kong in 2019 and 2020 Beijing charged 47 activists with a "conspiracy to commit subversion," a harsh National Security Law punishable up to life in prison.

Xi's Top Military Allies

Zhang Youxia



Zhang Youxia · THE VETERAN

First Chair of the Central Military Commission.

CCP Member Since 1968.

Having served in the Sino-Vietnamese war, Zhang is the only member of Xi's counsel with actual combat experience. Zhang's military leadership and combat experience is invaluable to Xi as he weighs his options over Taiwan, affording Zhang, who is now past China's mandatory retirement age of 68, evident job security.

Source: Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.third-way.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRC's-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

While not on the Standing Committee, Zhang, 72, retains his position as Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), despite the usual mandatory retirement age of 68.¹⁵ In a similar way that Xi had to rewrite the rules to allow himself a third term as p, an exception was made to keep Zhang. Zhang and Xi's connection runs deep with their fathers both serving in the Red Army in the 1940s (Zhang's father, Zhang Zongxun, was one of the Red Army's founding members alongside Xi's father Xi Zhongxun).¹⁶

Zhang is a Xi loyalist, combat veteran of the Sino-Vietnamese War, and decorated senior military officer. The trust between Zhang and Xi is impenetrable, particularly as Xi's top military advisor. The PRC has not fought in combat since the end of the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979, making Zhang one of the few remaining senior officials with actual combat experience.¹⁷ He heads both the CCP and China's military units under Xi and has worked to modernize the People's Liberation Army and prepare its factions for combat readiness.¹⁸ Zhang's tenure has already seen increased military action in the region, rising tensions between the PRC and Taiwan within the South China Sea, and the state's increasing investment (with the military budget increasing 7.1% between 2021 and 2022; 209.2 billion and 229.6 billion USD respectively) in military revitalization.¹⁹ Xi's support of Zhang remaining on the Politburo and the CMC despite his age shows how invaluable Zhang's combat experience and leadership is to Xi's agenda, particularly as concerns surrounding China's potential military engagement with Taiwan increase.

He Weidong



He Weidong · THE GENERAL

Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, Member of the Central Committee Political Bureau.

CCP Member Since 1968.

Third in command of the Central Military Commission, General He oversees the Eastern Theater Command, a jurisdiction that includes Taiwan and the East China Sea. With decades of service to the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army, He's well situated and prepared to carry out a military invasion of Taiwan.

Source: Jessica Greely and Aaron Clarke. "Xi's Inner Circle: Impact on the PRC's National Security Strategy." <http://www.third-way.org/report/Xis-Inner-Circle-Impact-on-the-PRC's-National-Security-Strategy>. July 2023.

He, 66, now serves as the other Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission and head of Eastern Theater Command, a critical military jurisdiction. He's ties to Xi can be traced to Xi's time in Fujian province (1999-2002) and Zhejiang province (2002-2007) when he was the deputy party secretary and party secretary of those provinces, respectively.²⁰ He's ties to Xi and importance in his inner circle are evident in He's elevation to CMC vice chairman.²¹ He's position on the Central Military Commission could also stem from his previous positions within the People's Liberation Army. As commander of the Eastern Theater Command, He's military jurisdiction encompassed both Taiwan and the East China Sea, two priority areas of China's national security.²² [25] He's experience managing the CMC's Eastern Theater Command paired with Zhang's combat preparedness efforts and overall military modernization point to the state's ambitions to rebalance the state of military power in the region.

Conclusion

At the 20th National Congress in October 2022, the most elite and powerful governing body in China became made up entirely of officials personally loyal to Xi Jinping. Previous detractors were pushed out due to age requirements or forced retirement, and the makeup of the new Standing Committee and CMC leadership highlights the CCP's policy prioritizations for the coming five years. Xi Jinping himself addressed these very commitments during his opening address to the National Congress, outlining several domestic and international policy ambitions, including the revitalization of the Chinese economy, further modernization of the People's Liberation Army, and the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland.

The makeup of the new Politburo shows how committed Xi is to these goals. With members with expertise in combat readiness and military innovation, economic rehabilitation, and disciplinary leadership, Xi has orchestrated an authoritarian's dream team. Xi's reelection to the 5-year term

bearing state position of President of the People's Republic of China in March 2023 reaffirms the party's commitment to the leader and his domestic and international agendas. As Xi Jinping and his comrades continue to march towards their goal to become a true global leader, new challenges are created for countries like the United States whose values and national security interests counter those of the PRC. Understanding the strategic mindsets of Xi's inner circle and the calculated blueprint China aims to follow will afford these parties invaluable insights into China's core objectives.

Inside China's Party State System

Below a list of the institutions and organizations that craft China's party-state system.

The People's Republic of China

The National People's Congress (NPC)

The highest governing body of the People's Republic of China, the National People's Congress is made up of over 3,000 members from across China. Delegates are elected by their local province to serve five-year terms or assigned to service by the People's Liberation Army. Meeting only once a year, the NPC relies on the NPC Standing Committee to carry out more urgent, annual tasks and enact necessary reforms. The NPC elects the President of China and the states most senior leaders.

The State Central Military Commission

Chaired by the state president, the State Central Military Commission works alongside the CCP Central Military Commission to provide administrative guidance to the body including its financial management, personnel appointments, and the development of professional regulations.

The Standing Committee of the NPC

The NPC Standing Committee takes over legislative control when the NPC is not in session. With 175 members, the NPC Standing Committee oversees the election of NPC delegates, interprets the state constitution, and reviews the appointment and dismissal of State Council members, Diplomats, and Judicial Officials. The NPC Standing Committee has the authority to declare war when the NPC is not in session.

The Supreme People's Court

The Supreme People's Court is the premier legal organ of the People's Republic of China. Taking its direction from the 1982 State Constitution and the Organic Law of the People's Courts, the Supreme People's court heads the country's four level court structure. The Supreme People's Court oversees and supervises the judicial systems of local and provincial courts; however, due to the limited

authority and power of the Supreme People's Court, ultimate discretion, and legal oversight rests with the NPC.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate

The Supreme People's Procuratorate conducts and supervises the investigation, persecution, and punishment of dissidents. The Supreme People's Procuratorate reviews cases regarding corruption and supervises criminal investigations, trials, and sentencing.

The State Council

The State Council is headed by the Premier and staffed by the Vice Premier and several departmental ministers and chairmen. Directed by the constitution the State Council works to ensure that laws passed by the NPC and NPC Standing Committee are executed properly. Broken into several ministries, commissions, sub-councils, and agencies, the State Council has enacted major reforms over the past decade to combat corruption with the state and party, centralize power to provide better efficiency of government, and carry out the party's ambitious economic goals.

Local People's Congresses

Operating below the National People's Congress are various local people's congresses that represent and serve local provinces, autonomous regions, and special municipalities that make up the PRC. These local congresses have considerable authority and are tasked with maintaining public safety, crafting additional regulations, and approving and dismissing local officials. These local congresses have grown in popularity due to the widespread concerns regarding corruption at the national level.

The Chinese Communist Party

The National Party Congress

The formal governing body of the Chinese Communist Party, the National Party Congress is made up of just under 3,000 delegates from across China that meet once every five years. Serving five-year terms, delegates with voting power approve the membership of the party's central committee.

Central Committee

The Central Committee is comprised of 205 permanent members and 171 alternates. The Central Committee takes over legislative control following the National Party Congress. Central Committee members elect the party's senior leadership including the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission. The central committee convenes annually to discuss changes to the party's agenda and announce potential leadership changes (retirements, additions, and dismissals).

Politburo

Elected by members of the CCP Central Committee, the Politburo is a 25-member body comprised of the party's most senior members. The Politburo (Political Bureau of the Central Committee on the Communist Party of China) is the leading decision-making body of the CCP. Members of the Politburo hold leadership positions within the party and state, aiding the party's grip on power within the state.

Politburo Standing Committee

The Politburo Standing Committee is a body consisting of the seven senior most members of the Chinese Communist Party. Also elected by the Central Committee, the Politburo serves as the senior governing organ of the Chinese Communist Party when the Politburo and Central Committee are out of session. Due to China's one party system, the Politburo has the highest authority of any body in the party-state system giving its decisions the weight of law.

Central Secretariat

The Central Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party carries out the administrative operations of the party including day to day operations.

Central Military Commission

The Central Military Commission of the Chinese Communist Party of China is the highest authority on issues of national defense overseeing the People's Liberation Army, the People's Armed Police, and the Militia of China. The People's Liberation Army is comprised of five branches: Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force, and Strategic Support Force. The People's Armed Police is the sector of China's national defense focused on internal security related to terrorism, riot and dissent control, disaster response, law enforcement, and maritime rights protection and enforcement. The Militia of China is the reserve force of the People's Republic of China.

National Security Commission

Tasked with providing counsel to the Politburo on matters of national security, managing intergovernmental coordination to prepare, manage, and rebuild during national security events, and overseeing crisis management, the National Security Commission is one of the newer organs of the CCP (est. 2013). Much like the National Security Council in the United States being headed by the President of the United States, the CCP's National Security Commission is headed by the General Secretary of the CCP and the Vice Chairman of the Politburo.

Comprehensively Deepening Reforms Commission

Originally the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms (est. 2013), the Comprehensively Deepening Reforms Commission is tasked with crafting and carrying out the party's domestic policy agenda. The commission is specifically focused on implementing economic, political, and cultural reforms.

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TOPICS

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ENDNOTES

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