



National Congress of the Communist Party

BACKGROUNDER - October 2017



Summary

- The NCCPC is held in Beijing every 5 years in October or November.
- It consists of approximately 2,300 delegates.
- Primarily, it serves to:
 - Reshuffle of the Political positions in China
 - Amend the Constitution
 - Set the Chinese policy agenda
- This year, President Xi Jinping's political philosophy will be added to the party constitution.
- Xi is also expected to retain his position as the General Secretary of the CPC.
- Also, female representation increased from 18% at the last congress to 24%.
- The number of delegates from ethnic minorities also increased by 3.2 percentage points and account for nearly 12% of delegates.

Introduction to the NCCPC

The National Congress of the Communist Party of China (NCCPC), or the CPC National Congress (中国共产党全国代表大会) is the highest authority of the Communist Party of China. The People's Republic of China (PRC) sets its mandate, along with its leadership selection based on the decisions from the Party Congress.

The event lasts roughly 7 days and is widely covered by international media due the change of state leadership and policy. This event is not to be confused with the National People's Congress (NPC), which is an annual legislative congress.

On August 27, 2017, China's state media¹ released the date for the 19th NCCPC. The 25 members of the Politburo decided that the NCCPC will be held on the 18th of October 2017.

Expectations this year

This year, 5 of the 7 current PBSC members should retire. Only Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang are eligible for a second mandate. Furthermore, this means that 11 of the 25 members of the Politburo will remain.²

Hence, following the convention of age restrictions, there is a number of major leadership seats at the national and provincial levels

that will become vacant.

However, there are speculations that President Xi Jinping may bend the age convention in order to retain powerful allies such as Wang Qishan currently the Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and who turned 69 last July.³

An amendment to the Party Constitution is to be expected with the addition of Xi Jinping's political philosophy. Introducing Xi's political philosophy is perceived to place him alongside leaders such as Mao Zedong (毛澤東) and Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平).⁴

NCCPC's Purpose

Officially, the NCCPC serves three purposes:

1. A forum in which policies are voted on,
2. a meeting where the party's charter can be revised,
3. to replace the senior leaders from:
 - the Party Central Committee (around 200 full members and around 100 alternate members),
 - members of the Politburo (25 officials from major's cities, provinces, PLA, governing organs, and members of top leadership institutions such as the Politburo Standing Committee),
 - Member of the anti-corruption watchdog of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI),
 - General Secretary of the Communist Party.

Elective Process of the Core Bodies of the CPC

The CPC National Congress is of high importance since it helps determine the successive leader of the PRC.

The election process follows a specific process among communist regimes which is as follows:

The 2,287 CPC National Congress delegates will elect members to the Party Central Com-



Figure 1: General Secretary Xi addresses the 19th NCCPC

mittee. The permanent members of the Party Central Committee approve members of the Politburo (20-25 members) and 7 to 9 members for the Politburo Standing Committee. The real power in the PRC lies within the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee. The Politburo is the top leadership body of the Party and the Politburo Standing Committee is the leading nucleus of the entire body.

Politburo Term Length Regulations

The Party Constitution does not limit the number of terms that can be taken, but restricts the length of a single term to 5-years. However, the number of terms for the state leader role is limited to two in the PRC Constitution.

There are some questions of whether the age limit will be raised since the average age of delegates currently is 51.8.⁵



Composition of the NCCPC

The 19th NCCPC will involve 2,287 elected party delegates, many of whom are state leaders, top executives and military generals. Originally, the 19th NCCPC was supposed to see 2,300 representatives but 13 delegates from Chongqing were removed from the Party and the CPC Congress due to corruption charges. Nevertheless, this is 17 more delegates than during the 18th National Congress in 2012, which had 2,270. State media announced that 2,287 delegates have been elected for the upcoming Congress.

The delegates are to be elected by 40 electoral units all over the country.⁶ There are 7 types of units:

1. Provincial and autonomous region units,
2. Central government agencies,
3. Departments directly under the CPC Central Committee unit,
4. Centrally administered state-owned enterprises (SOEs) unit,
5. Financial sector unit,
6. People's Liberation Army unit (PLA), and
7. Armed police force unit.⁷

The number of delegates per province/autonomous region are established by the number of the CPC members in those units.

Provincial and Autonomous Region Units

Under customary rule, the members of the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) are delegates to the 19th CPC Congress. The PBSC's members represent the following provincial units: Xi Jinping is the delegate from Guizhou, Li Keqiang (李克强) from Guangxi, Zhang Dejiang (张德江) from Inner Mongolia, Yu Zhengsheng (俞正声) from Xinjiang, Liu Yunshan (刘云山) represents Yunnan, Wang Qishan (王岐山) is the Delegate from Hunan, and Zhang Gaoli (张高丽) from Shaanxi.⁸

The provincial and autonomous region units combined are the largest unit accounting for about 1,500 delegates. In large areas (e.g. Shandong and Sichuan), there are more than

70 delegates. In smaller provinces and autonomous regions (e.g. Hainan and Xizang/Tibet) have no more than 30 delegates.⁹

Under the supervision of the central authority, the number of delegates is decided upon the proportionality the Party members in the of each province, autonomous region and municipality.¹⁰ This year, the provincial units who have sent the greatest number of delegates are Sichuan, Shandong, Shanghai, and Guangdong who have each sent more than 70 delegates.

Becoming a Candidate

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China state in their guidelines that the number of candidates for the 19th CPC Congress should exceed, by 15%, the total number of delegate positions available.¹¹

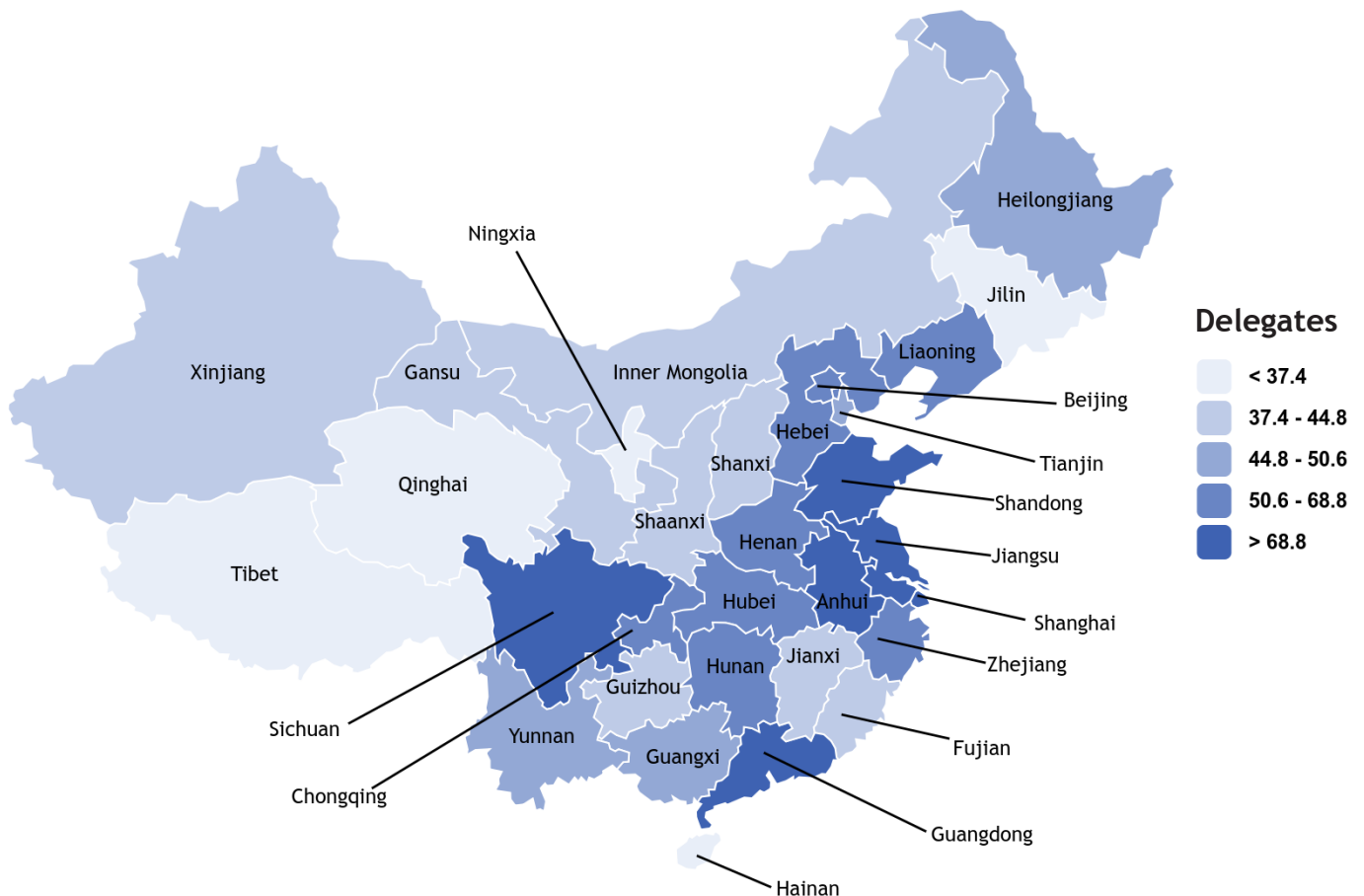
In order to become a candidate, loyalty to the party and a criminal record free of corruption charges are key factors. This has led to a stricter screening of potential candidates based on their commitment to the CPC and Xi's anti-corruption scheme.

There are 5-steps to become a delegate at the NCCPC:

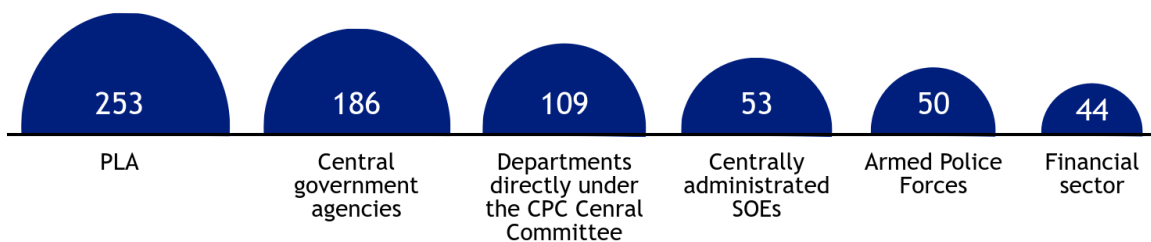
1. Candidates are nominated by Party members,
2. nominees are reviewed,
3. the public is notified of the candidates for feedback,
4. candidates are short listed,
5. a final vote through secret ballots is cast by local CCP members.¹²

The selection of representatives is also impacted by other factors such as the industries, professions, ethnic groups and genders of candidates. This ensures for a more broad representation of candidates.

Provincial/Autonomous Region Delegates of the 19th Communist Party of China Congress



Governmental/Private Sector Delegates of the 19th Communist Party of China Congress





Composition of Delegate Groups

Ethnic minority delegates

Out of the 1,576 Party representatives from provinces, municipalities and regions, 229 are from ethnic groups.¹³ The proportion of the ethnic minority groups are estimated to be roughly 14% of the delegates within the provincial units. Tibet has about 66% of its delegates from an ethnic minority group, among which the Tibetan ethnic group account for about 69% of the delegates in the Tibetan unit.

In the case of Xinjiang, the Uighur ethnic minority represents approximately 21% of the delegates from their unit. Aggregately, ethnic minorities account for 11.5%¹⁴ or 261 individuals of the total delegates elected to attend the 19th CPC Congress.

Female Delegates

The number of female representatives at the NCCPC has increased over time. Their participation grew from 382 female delegates in 2002 (15th NCCPC) to 521 participants in 2012 (18th NCCPC).¹⁵ This year, there are 448 women among the 1,576 Party representatives that have been chosen from provinces, municipalities and regions.

The gender balance within the ethnic minority delegates from the provincial and autonomous region units is more evenly balanced than other delegate groups with 54% men and 46% women. Taking all units into account, there are 550 women among which 113 are from ethnic minorities.

People's Liberation Army Delegates

This year, the second-biggest unit to provide delegates is the PLA with 253 delegates. On September 9, 2017, the PLA declared that they were to elect 253 delegates for the 19th CPC Congress. Whilst, for the 18th CPC Congress in 2012, the PLA sent 300 representatives. The delegation includes 3 ethnic Tibetans, while during the last Party Congress there was only one. Furthermore, it is estimated that 90% of

the delegates for the PLA will be the first-time attendees, for whom their ascension is linked to President Xi's rise.

18th National Party Congress

The 18th CPC Congress was key in introducing Xi Jinping (习近平) as the new leader of the party and the PRC. This was marked by the downfall of Bo Xilai (薄熙来) from the Chongqing province, who was perceived as a solid rival to Xi Jinping for the seat of the CPC's leadership.

This Congress also saw the addition of Hu Jintao's (胡锦涛) political philosophy within the Party Constitution under the name of Scientific Outlook on Development. In addition, the idea of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristic" and "construction of ecological civilization" were also incorporated with the Party Constitution.

Endnotes

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² USBC. "China's 2017 Communist Party Leadership Structure & Transition." *US-China Business Council Report*, (June 2017): 4-6, <https://www.uschina.org/sites/default/files/LeadershipReport.pdf>.

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⁵ He, Dan, and Zhu, Zhe. "Women assume bigger role in Party." *China Daily*, last modified November 8, 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012cpc/2012-11/08/content_15891153.htm.

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⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Xinhua. "CPC issues rule to elect congress delegates." *China Daily Asia*, last modified November 9, 2016, http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2016-11/09/content_15523389.html.

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¹³ Sheng, Yang. "Delegates elected for the CPC national congress." *Global Times*, last modified July 19, 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1056969.shtml>.

¹⁴ Xinhua. "How are 19th CPC National Congress delegates elected?" *China Daily*, last modified October 3, 2017, <http://www.chinadailyasia.com/articles/17/150/187/1507012859493.html>.

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Data for diagrams is from:

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