

# IPCS Special Report

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## Communist Party of China @ 90

### **An Analysis**

*Report of the IPCS Discussion held on 8 July 2011*



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## Communist Party of China @ 90 An Analysis

*Report based on an IPCS discussion (led by Prof Srikanth Kondapalli and Mr Jayadev Ranade) held at the IPCS Conference Room, on 8 July 2011, on the 90th year celebrations of Communist Party of China.*

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### Summary

- The main thrust of Hu Jintao in his speech at the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CCP) was to fight corruption and of putting people first and govern for them. He stressed on the need to continue reforms and scientific development for the holistic growth of China in the future.
- The basic structure of CCP has changed over the years with more educated and careerists joining the party rather than the peasants and workers.
- With the rise in the protests from both the minorities and migrant laborers the CCP needs to find ways to appease this growing social unrest inside China.
- On the international front with the growing US influence in Southeast Asian region and the South China Sea, CCP needs to introduce major change in their policy as China has an independent foreign policy which is against any military alliance.
- CCP has adapted itself well to changes over the years, however, now it will be interesting to watch how the party will adapt to the changing circumstances in the next thirty years.

## Mr Jayadev Ranade

The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) celebrating its 90th anniversary is the largest organisation in China, with over 90,000 party cells across the country. Its strong grip over all aspects of life has not loosened and it has steered China successfully despite many hiccups like the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. It is a monolith and has learnt its lessons, changing its structure and outlook especially after the reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. The economy has improved tremendously as evident from the growth of its GDP from Rmb362.4 billion in 1978, at the start of the reform period to Rmb30 trillion in 2008. The composition of the party has also changed over the years with more educated people and entrepreneurs being absorbed to party circles.

Hu Jintao's speech at the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party highlighted the achievements of the party. He praised Mao referring to his era as the good old days. He also acknowledged the social turmoil in China. His repetitive mention of the word stability indicates the rising concern within the party towards growing social unrest in China.

In the recent years peasant unrest had grown and to counter this rural health and social schemes were started. This has given a major boost to the CPC in rural areas. However, real progress on the ground is not much. The coming ten years will be very crucial for the party, the major challenges being minority issues, spread of the internet as a tool of non-violent protest and also the growing social instability.

## Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli

Hu Jintao's speech on July 1, mapped seven major points which the party needs to focus in future so as to strengthen itself and the country.

- Free up minds, seek truth from facts, advance with the times
- Recruit people on merits without regard to their origins
- Putting people first and governing for the people, and maintain close ties between the Party and the people.
- Follow the principle of fighting corruption in a comprehensive way, addressing both its symptoms and root causes, and combining punishment with prevention with emphasis on prevention.
- Place power, Party affairs, and Party members under institutional safeguards and improv-



- ing democratic centralism
- Appreciating the reform and opening up that made China develop rapidly in the past 30 plus years, we must promote China's future development by continuing to carry out reform and opening up.
- To firmly carry out the central task of economic development and stay committed to pursuing scientific development.

### **Changes in the structure of the CPC**

With 80 million members, the CPC is the largest political party of the world and has undergone structural changes since its inception in a boat in 1921. The flag of the CPC has one big star symbolizing the CPC and five small stars representing peasants, workers, petit bourgeois, professionals and national capitalists. From 1921 to 27 workers were the main bases of the CPC but this strategy failed. Thus, 1927 onwards peasants were given precedence in the party which worked in its favour. After the formation of the PRC in 1949, the party has undergone many crucial structural changes. After opening up in 1978, the CPC shifted its base from peasants and workers to more educated people. Almost 17% of the total members belong to professional groups.

Thus, in the last 30 years the last two stars are shining more than the first two stars. Women members have also increased in the party but the main concern is that a large number of members are above 45 indicating that younger people are not joining the party cadre. With almost 19 members out of the 25 members of the Politburo retiring soon, it is a major concern for the party to nurture young leaders soon.

### **Major Challenges before the Communist Party**

The main challenge before the communist party on the domestic front is to find ways to address minority concerns. The rising demonstrations against authorities in Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia are becoming major concerns for the party. Rising corruption, unemployment despite a booming economy, uneven economic growth and a change in the demographic pattern are all areas of unease for the party. With the rise in the numbers of urban poor, demonstrations for pay hikes, residential permits and demands for equal treatment have risen by leaps and bounds over the years. The CPC needs to find ways to deal with all these problems at the domestic front to avoid these sparks from turning into a major fire.

In the international sphere, with the US trying to make a comeback in the Southeast Asian region by interfering in Subic Bay (the former US naval base) and the South China Sea, both these regions have become a crucial point of contention between China and the US (private US military contractor Blackwater has begun training Filipinos in energy exploration security—that is, the military protection of oil drilling interests—at the former US naval base at Subic Bay). Also, the developments in Gwadar where China is planning to establish its naval base will call for a major change in communist party thinking because China has a policy against any military alliances. So to establish a naval base they will have to amend the constitution, which is a cumbersome process.

All these factors are major concerns for the party and it needs to adapt itself to changing circumstances. Looking at the past history of the CPC, one can see that it has adapted to the changing circumstances such as the way it faced and adapted to the Kuomintang challenge and also to the problem of creating a mass base in China. They have followed a policy of planning for every thirty years with the first of these on establishing party control over China, second the consolidation of that power, and the last 30 odd years have been dedicated to economic development. Thus, now it will be interesting to watch how the party will adapt to the changing circumstances in the next thirty years.



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