

Article

Decoding Xi Jinping's 3.0 Team: Changes in Political and Military Leadership

Kota Mallikarjuna Gupta

Abstract

Political leaderships and their networks are influential and impactful in the decision-making process of societies worldwide. The role of the top political leaders is even more significant in authoritarian systems/single-party states like China. Absolute political power without resistance or opposition helps with quick decisions and policy formulations/alternations by government agencies. The competition to acquire power and position can be peaceful or fierce and depends on the capacities of individuals/institutions. This attempt to capture power, institutions and position among the elites of the Communist Party in China happens every five years during the Party Congress. Many factors determine the outcome of the fierce competition for power and positions in the Communist Party during the Party Congress. This fierce competition to acquire power influences ideological leanings, loyalty, political networks and governance models. The debate on the issues of consent, consensus and justice in the distribution/redistribution of power and positions in authoritarian regimes is tricky to conclude. Chinese Politics are like the 'Great Wall of China', where construction materials change based on geographical conditions. Chinese politics are also like the ancient Chinese board game of Wei qi, where the priority is to capture more territory over others.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) held its 20th Party Congress from October 16 to October 22, 2022, with the theme of holding the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, implementing the thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts. The work

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report presented by Chinese President Xi Jinping during the Party Congress highlighted the achievements and challenges faced by the CPC. Revising China's constitution, reforming CPC and state institutions, modernising the Chinese system and capacity for governance, and the long-range objectives through the year 2035 are significant issues on which resolutions were adopted in seven plenary sessions of the 19th Party Congress.¹ The Party leadership, including the local leaderships from Chinese Provinces, have a collective role in achieving the long-term goals of the CPC. The changes in the CPC, including its highest bodies like the Politburo, Politburo Standing Committee, Central Committee, and military institutions like Central Military Commission (CMC) during the 20th Party Congress, are, therefore, significant to understand the dynamics of Chinese politics and policy making.

CPC's 20th Politburo

There are 24 members in the 20th Politburo of CPC, announced in October 2022², which is the highest policymaking body in China. These members of the Politburo are elected by the Central Committee (CC), but back-room negotiations usually determine its membership.³ Table 1 lists the 20th Politburo members of the CPC. The background details and professional associations of Politburo members compiled by the author from Macropolio website's Digital Database on Chinese Elite politics— The Committee.⁴

The 19th Party Congress of CPC had 25 members in its Politburo. So, there is a decrease of one in the 20th Politburo full members. There has been a significant overhaul in the composition of the Politburo from the 19th to the 20th Party Congress. Only 11 members of a total of 25 members from the 19th Politburo retained their position in the 20th Politburo. The list of new members of the 20th Politburo includes Ma Xingrui, Wang Yi, Yin Li, Shi Taifeng, Liu Guozhong, Li Ganjie, Li Shulei, He Weidong, He Lifeng, Zhang Guoqing, Chen Wenqing, Chen Jining and Yuan Jiajun. Fourteen members from the 19th Politburo are not part of the 20th Politburo of the CPC, which includes Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Han Zheng, Wang Chen, Liu He, Xu Qiliang, Sun Chunlan, Yang Jiechi, Yang Xiaodu, Chen Xi, Chen Quanguo, Hu Chunhua and Guo Shengkun.

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Table 1: Brief Details of Politburo Members of the 20th Party Congress of CPC

Name of CPC Politburo Member	Age	Position	Education	Home Town	Ethnicity
Xi Jinping	69	General Secretary CPC, Chairman of the CMC, President of the People's Republic of China (PRC)	Degree in chemical engineering; PhD in Marxist theory and political education, Tsinghua University	Fuping, Shaanxi	Han
Li Qiang	63	Member Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), Former Shanghai party secretary	Sociology via correspondence; MBA, Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Ruian, Zhejiang	Han
Zhao Leji	65	PSC member	Degree in philosophy, Peking University; master's in political science, Central Party School	Xian, Shaanxi	Han
Wang Huning	67	PSC member	Master's in international politics, Fudan University	Laizhou, Shandong	Han
Cai Qi	67	PSC member, First secretary of the Central Secretariat	Degree in political science and education; PhD in economics, Fujian Normal University	Youxi, Fujian	Han
Ding Xuexiang	60	PSC member, Director of the general office of the Central Committee	Degree in mechanical engineering, Northeast Heavy Machinery College; master's in administrative management, Fudan University	Nantong, Jiangsu	Han
Li Xi	66	PSC member, Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	Degree in Chinese language and literature, Northwest Normal University; MBA, Tsinghua University	Liangdang, Gansu	Han
Ma Xingrui	63	Politburo member, Xinjiang party secretary, Former Guangdong governor and general manager of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation	Degree in mechanical engineering, Fuxin University of Mining and Technology; master's in general mechanics, Tianjin University; PhD in general mechanics, Harbin Institute of Technology	Yuncheng, Shandong	Han

Wang Yi	69	Politburo member, State councilor, Former Minister of foreign affairs	Degree in Japanese, Beijing International Studies University; master's in economics, Nankai University	Beijing	Han
Yin Li	60	Politburo member, Party secretary of Beijing, Former party secretary of Fujian	Degree in medicine, master's in social health management, Shandong Medical University; PhD in health economics and management, Russian Academy of Medical Sciences	Linyi, Shandong	Han
Shi Taifeng	66	Politburo member, Director of the United Front Work Department, Former President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Former party secretary of Inner Mongolia	Degree in law and master's of jurisprudence, Peking University	Yushe, Shanxi	Han
Liu Guozhong	60	Politburo member, Former party secretary of Shaanxi	Degree in metallics and master's in pressure processing and system engineering, Harbin Institute of Technology.	Wangkui, Heilongjiang	Han
Li Ganjie	58	Politburo member, Party secretary of Shandong	Degree in nuclear reactor engineering, master's in nuclear reactor engineering and safety, Tsinghua University.	Wangcheng, Hunan	Han
Li Shukei	59	Politburo member, Director of the Central Publicity Department	Degree in library science, Peking University; master's and PhD in modern Chinese literature, Peking University	Yuanyang, Henan	Han
Li Hongzhong	66	Politburo member, Former Tianjin party secretary	Degree in history, Jilin University	Changle, Shandong	Han
He Weidong	65	General, Politburo member, Vice-chairman of the CMC, Commander of the CMC's Joint Command Centre	Graduated from Army Command College and National University of Defence Technology	Dongtai, Jiangsu	Han
He Lifeng	67	Politburo member, Director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC)	Degree in finance and PhD in economics, Xiamen University	Xingning, Guangdong	Han
Zhang Youxia	72	General, Politburo member, Vice-chairman of the CMC	Joint combat command diploma, National Defence University	Weinan, Shaanxi	Han

Zhang Guoqing	58	Politburo member, Former party secretary of Liaoning, Former general manager of China North Industries Group Corporation and chairman of China North Industries Corporation	Degree in optics and electronics technology, Changchun Institute of Optics and Fine Mechanics; degree in industrial foreign trade, East China Institute of Technology; advanced management diploma, Harvard Business School; master's in quantitative economics and PhD in economics, Tsinghua University	Luoshan, Henan	Han
Chen Wenqing	63	Politburo member, Secretary of the Central Secretariat Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, Former minister and party secretary of the Ministry of State Security (MSS)	Degree in law, Southwest University of Political Science and Law	Renshou, Sichuan	Han
Chen Jining	58	Politburo member, Party secretary of Shanghai, Former deputy party secretary and mayor of Beijing	Degree and master's in civil and environmental engineering, Tsinghua University; PhD in environmental systems analysis, Imperial College London	Lishu, Jilin	Han
Chen Miner	62	Politburo member, Tianjin party secretary, Former Chongqing party secretary	Degree in Chinese studies, Shaoxing Normal College; master's in law, Central Party School	Zhuji, Zhejiang	Han
Yuan Jiajun	60	Politburo member, Chongqing party secretary, Former Zhejiang party secretary	Degree in solid mechanics, Beihang University; master's degree in space vehicle design, Fifth Research Institute of the Ministry of Aeronautics and Astronautics; PhD in engineering, Beihang University	Tonghua, Jilin	Han
Huang Kunming	66	Politburo member, Party secretary of Guangdong, Former head of the Central Publicity Department	Degree in political science and education, Fujian Normal University; PhD in management, Tsinghua University	Shanghang, Fujian	Han

Source: Compiled by Author from South China Morning Post Database.⁵

Retirement age is a significant issue for the leadership transition process in CPC. The unwritten rule of retiring at 68 was established in 2002 after decades of political turmoil for a stable political transition. In all, 12 Politburo members were above the unofficial retirement age of 68 before the 20th Party Congress of CPC in October 2022, which includes the Chinese President, Xi Jinping.⁶ There are three members of the 20th Politburo who are above the unofficial retirement age of 68, including Chinese President Xi Jinping (69), former Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi (69) and Zhang Youxia (72), Vice-chairman of the CMC. President Xi Jinping, in his third term as the CPC's top leader at age 69, is the first exception to the unofficial retirement age rule in place since 2002.

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The selection of new members to the Politburo helps to analyse further the challenges and leadership priorities and plans for the future. Ma Xingrui, the Party Secretary of Xinjiang, has vast work experience in Guangdong Province as Party Secretary and Governor and holds a PhD in Flight Dynamics from Harbin Institute of Technology. He also worked as Party Secretary and General Manager at China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation during 2007-13. Ma Xingrui previously served as chief Commander of China's Shenzhou space programme.⁷ China's Aerospace Industrial hub is based in Guangdong Province and hosts Zhuhai Air Show. Ma Xingrui will help China expand its aerospace industrial capacities with his expertise.

The inclusion of Wang Yi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, marks the replacement of Yang Jiechi in Politburo to handle the foreign policy issues of China. Wang Yi is an ex-career diplomat associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) since 1982. He served as China's Ambassador to Japan during 2004-07. He is also a member of the CCP Central Leading Small Group for Foreign Affairs Work, CCP Central Foreign Affairs Commission, and CCP Central Leading Small Group for Taiwan Affairs since 2018.

Yin Li is the only Politburo member from the 20th Party Congress specialising in public health and medicine. He holds a PhD in Public Health from the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences and worked in various positions at the Ministry of Health, World

Health Organization (WHO), State Food and Drug Administration, and Party Secretary of Fujian Province (2020-22) and Beijing Municipality from 2022. China has moved away from its Zero-Covid policy, and President Xi Jinping, in his 2023 New Year address, highlighted “entering a new phase of COVID response where tough challenges remain.”⁸

Shi Taifeng was appointed Director of the United Front Work Department in 2022. He served as Party Secretary and President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences for a few months in 2022. He was vice-president of the Central Party School when Xi Jinping headed the cadre-training academy between 2007 and 2012. During his role as Party Secretary of the Inner Mongolia Regional CCP Committee (2019-22), he replaced Mongolian in some school subjects with Mandarin.⁹ He also held various party positions in Jiangsu Province and Suzhou City. He was also a professor at the Central Party School from 1995-2010.

Liu Guozhong worked in the Chinese Provinces of Shaanxi, Jilin, Sichuan and Heilongjiang in various party positions of the CPC before becoming a member of the 20th Politburo of the CPC.¹⁰ Another member of the 20th Politburo, Li Ganjie, worked as Director of the Nuclear Reactor Division at the National Nuclear Safety Administration during 1996-98. Li Ganjie is a trained engineer and nuclear safety expert and served as China's Environment minister, leading a green plan for three years to improve air quality. He also served as Party Secretary in Shandong Province.¹¹

Li Shulei is the Director of the Central Publicity Department of CPC and possesses a PhD in modern Chinese literature from Peking University. He is closely associated with CCP Central Party School in various roles from 1989 to 2014. Li Shulei is the brain behind many of President Xi Jinping's speeches. Li Shulei worked under Xi Jinping as head of the Central Party School from 2007 to 2012. He also worked at Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the agency chasing corrupt officials who fled overseas and retrieving the money for some years.¹²

He Lifeng has been the Director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) since 2017, the official think-tank of the State Council under the jurisdiction of China's Premier. He Lifeng worked in Fujian from 1984 to 2009, while President Xi served in various roles in the same province between 1985 and 2002. Including He Lifeng in the 20th Politburo further consolidates Xi Jinping's control over China's planning agency, State Council.¹³

Defence industry expert Zhang Guoqing served as Party Secretary of Liaoning during 2020-22. His long association with China North Industries Corporation (NORINCO) in various positions since 1987 included the post of chairman of NORINCO during 2008-13. He holds PhD in Economics from Tsinghua University. He also served as Mayor of Tianjin after a bribery scandal in 2017.¹⁴

Chen Wenqing is the Secretary of the Central Secretariat and Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission. He was the former minister and party secretary of the Ministry of State Security (MSS) during 2015-22. Chen Wenqing wrote that Coronavirus was a test of China's capacity to tackle non-traditional security threats in his article for Quishi, CPC Journal in 2020. He supports coordinated and comprehensive approaches to tackle non-traditional security issues like the economy, culture, society, technology, cyberspace and biology.¹⁵

Another Newcomer to the 20th Politburo, Chen Jining, is the Party secretary of Shanghai and former deputy party secretary and mayor of Beijing during 2017-22. He served as Minister for Environmental Protection for two years during 2015-17 and was with Tsinghua University as a student from 1981 and later as Dean of Graduate School during 2010-2012. Chen has a PhD in Environmental Systems Analysis from Imperial College London.¹⁶

The Second Aerospace Specialist in the 20th Party Congress of CPC is Yuan Jiajun, Party Secretary of Chongqing and various positions in Zhejiang Province, Ningxia. He served as President of the China Academy of Space Technology during 2003-07 and associated with Shenzhou Spacecraft System during 1995-96 as Executive Deputy Commander.

There are nine members with a background in engineering/technology in various fields like aerospace, metallurgy, chemical, military and nuclear science among the 24 members in the 20th Politburo. The politburo members have served in various party positions like Party Secretary and Governors in Provinces like Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, Shaanxi, Shandong, autonomous regions like Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, and municipalities like Beijing and Shanghai.

Nearly a quarter of the Politburo members (6 out of the overall 24) are alumni of the Tsinghua University where Xi Jinping received his PhD in Marxist theory.

The path of most Politburo members has gone through responsibilities at various large national institutions for many years, and included some experience at the provincial level. Nearly a quarter of the Politburo members (6 out of the overall 24) are alumni of the Tsinghua University (See Table 1) where Xi Jinping received his PhD in Marxist theory. Some members of the 20th Politburo, like Chen Jining and Zhang Guoqing, were close associates of Xi Jinping during his education at Tsinghua University. There is no representation of women in this all-powerful Politburo. There was one woman member in the 19th Politburo of CPC—Sun Chunlan. There is also no representation of minority ethnic groups in the 20th Politburo.

CPC's 20th Politburo Standing Committee (PSC)

CPC's Central Committee (CC) named its seven-member PSC, the highest decision-making body, led by CPC's General Secretary, Xi Jinping and other members of the 20th PSC as Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi on October 23, 2022.¹⁷ All seven of the 20th PSC members were members of the 19th Politburo of the CPC. However, four members of the 20th PSC - Li Qiang, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi are new members. Zhao Leji and Wang Huning are members of the 19th PSC of CPC.

CPC's General Secretary and China's President, Xi Jinping, is the son of Xi Zhongxun, a former Politburo member and vice premier who was one of the architects of China's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the early 1980s. He joined CPC in 1974 and is considered the protégé of both former PRC president Jiang Zemin and former PRC vice president Zeng Qinghong. Some of his major political moves include an anti-graft campaign, military reform, poverty elimination and a proactive foreign policy.¹⁸

Li Qiang has been a member of CPC's Politburo since 2017 and served as the former Party Secretary of Shanghai during 2017-22. He was appointed as the 20th PSC member in October 2022. He will be confirmed as China's next Premier at the National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2023.¹⁹ Li Qiang is one of Xi Jinping's most trusted protégés, who worked directly under Xi as his chief of staff in Zhejiang during 2004-07. His appointment as Party Secretary of Jiangsu during 2016-17 is significant, as the Jiangsu province is known for scandals involving top provincial leaders. Tesla established its electric car factory in Shanghai in 2018 amid U.S.- China trade war tensions. This modern electric car factory construction took just ten months.²⁰ He is outspoken in his support for economic reform, innovation and the private sector and less vocal about politics and ideology.²¹

Zhao Leji has been a member of CPC's PSC since 2017 and served as Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) during 2017-22 and 20th PSC member in October 2022. He also served as Director of the CCP Organisation Department during 2012-17, which makes appointments for 4,000 senior positions in the party, government, military, state-owned enterprises, and other vital institutions. Zhao served as Party Secretary of Shaanxi during 2007-12.²²

Wang Huning is a member of both the 19th PSC and 20th PSC and Head of the Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideology and Central Leading Group for Party Building Work. He spent more than two decades at the Central Policy Research Office (CPRO) of the Central Committee and served as Director of CPRO during 2002-20. Wang is believed to have been a principal drafter of the "three represents" theory expounded by former Chinese President Jiang Zemin. He emphasises the importance of respecting China's prevailing political, social, and cultural conditions.²³

Cai Qi was the first secretary to the 20th CPC Secretariat from 2022 and member of the 20th PSC member and served as Party Secretary of Beijing during 2017-22. Cai Qi and Xi Jinping worked together in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces from 1985 to 2007. Cai played a crucial role in establishing Xiong'an, near Beijing, the third largest SEZ in China.²⁴

Ding Xuexiang is the Director of the general office of the Central Committee (CC) and a member of the 20th PSC of CPC. He worked for a few months under Xi Jinping in 2007 and quickly gained Xi's trust. Additionally, he was the Director of the PRC Office of the President since 2013. He also served in various political positions in Shanghai before becoming Xi Jinping's assistant. He highlighted the crucial role of technological innovation in China's domestic development and international competition.²⁵

Li Xi is the Secretary of the CC for Discipline Inspection and a member of the 20th PSC. He also served as Party Secretary of Guangdong during 2017-22 and Liaoning during 2015-17. Li Xi was known for his tough stance against corruption as Liaoning party secretary. His priority agenda includes promoting the economic integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area into a world-class urban cluster.²⁶

Apart from the overlapping political careers, other factors like family ties and the same hometown/province determine Chinese elite politics. Li Xi is part of the informal

Shaanxi Gang, which receives favours from President Xi Jinping. Similarly, Zhao Leji is a native of Shaanxi province, and family ties go back to the 1980s when the fathers of Zhao Leji and President Xi had some ties. Li Qiang and Cai Xi are part of Xi Jinping's Zhejiang Army.²⁷

The new members of the 20th Politburo are long-standing allies of President Xi Jinping.

Overall, the new members of the 20th Politburo are long-standing allies of President Xi Jinping, and their close ties developed over many years of overlapping political career paths. The composition of the 20th PSC and Politburo reinforces Xi Jinping's dominance at the core of the CPC.²⁸

CPC's 20th Central Committee (CC)

Two hundred and five members and 171 alternate members of the 20th Central Committee of CPC were elected at the closing session of the 20th CPC National Congress in Beijing in October 2022. According to CPC Constitution, the Central Committee (CC) is one of the two highest leading bodies and has the power to make decisions on major national policies. The Central Committee (CC) is charged with implementing resolutions of the Party Congress, directing all CPC work and representing the CPC in external relations. It also contains future Chinese leaders ascending to the Politburo or its PSC at the 21st Party Congress in 2027.²⁹

The Database on the 20th Central Committee published by Chinese Newspaper Daily provides insights about the members on parameters like age, hometown, gender, ethnicity, education and positions of office/power. Three hundred and forty-two men and 30 women are members of the 20th Central Committee (CC). The ratio of women in the 20th CC is less than 10 percent. The majority of the 20th CC members of the CPC were born in the 1960s; see Table 2. The representation of different Chinese ethnic groups in the 20th Central Committee reflects the priority given to the various ethnic groups in the comprehensive policy planning in China. More than 90 percent of the 20th Central Committee members of CPC are Han (Ethnicity), as listed in Table 3.

The ratio of women in the 20th CC is less than 10 percent.

The majority of the various Chinese ethnic communities have representation with less than 1 percent of the total members/alternate members of the 20th Central Committee of CPC.

Table 2: Generations of 20th Central Committee Members/Alternate Members

Generation (Age)	Number of Central Committee Members/ Alternate Members in the 20th Party Congress
1950's	37
1960's	295
1970's	33

Source: South China Morning Post Database on 20th Central Committee.³⁰

Table 3: Ethnic Composition of 20th Central Committee.³¹

Ethnic Group in China	Total Number of Members/ Alternate Members in 20th Central Committee
Han	343
Bai	2
Bouyei	1
Dong	1
Hui	3
Korean	2
Manchu	4
Miao	3
Mongol	3
Qazaq	1
Tibetan	4
Uygur	2
Yao	1
Yi	1
Zhuang	3

There are four members from the Manchu ethnic community, a total of 374 members in the 20th Central Committee. Other ethnic communities like Mongols, Tibetan, Uyгур and Hui are less than 1 percent of the total members/alternate members of the 20th Central Committee of CPC.

The details of members/alternate members from smaller ethnic groups of the 20th Central Committee are listed below in Table 4. There are only eight full members from various ethnic minority communities represented in the total of 205 full members of the 20th Central Committee. Ethnic minority communities are nearly 4 percent of the total members of the Central Committee, announced in October 2022, most of them are alternate members (24) and a few full members (8). Most of these alternate members from various ethnic communities are between 50-60 years, which provides them technically another ten years for elevation to higher positions in CPC. There are 10 PhD holders in the list of 32 members/alternate members. Party positions at local levels like Standing Committee Member of the local and Party Committee, Mayor, Party Secretary/Governor and their Deputies of different minority concentrated cities and Autonomous regions of China, have been allocated to these members/alternate members from minority ethnic groups in the 20th Central Committee.

There are only eight full members from various ethnic minority communities represented in the total of 205 full members of the 20th Central Committee.

Hometown/Provincial linkages play a significant role in the hierarchy of Communist political dynamics of China. These linkages and networks, beginning at the provincial level, impact comprehensive governance in China. The hometown/regional linkages of members/alternate members of the 20th Central Committee are listed in Table 5. The representation of members/alternate members of the 20th Central Committee highlights the factional politics of the CPC under President Xi Jinping's leadership. The largest province of China, Guangdong, in terms of population and economy, has just one member in a total of 374 members/alternate members of the 20th Central Committee. In the first half of the financial year 2022, the nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Guangdong province reached USD 882.7 billion, contributing nearly 10.5 percent of Chinese GDP.

Table 4: Members and Alternate Members Brief Data from Minority Ethnic Communities of the 20th Central Committee of CPC. The Author Compiles them from South China Morning Post Database on the 20th Party Congress of CPC.³²

Name of the Individual	Age	Member/ Alternate (Alt.) Member	Position	Education	Home Town	Ethnicity
Li Shisong	53	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Yunnan party committee, Qujing party secretary	PhD in world economy	Yunnan	Bai
Shen Yiqin (Female)	63	Member	Former party secretary of Guizhou province, Former governor of Guizhou	Bachelor's in history	Guizhou	Bai
Wu Shenghua	56	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Guizhou party committee, Party secretary of Bijie	Master's in Philosophy	Guizhou	Bouyei
Wu Qiang	56	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Guizhou party committee, Vice-governor of Guizhou	Master's in engineering	Hunan	Dong
Huang Ru (Female)	53	Alt. Member	President and deputy party secretary of Southeast University, Member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	PhD in science	Fujian	Hui
Ma Hancheng	55	Alt. Member	Ningxia Hui party standing committee member, Former vice-chairman of Ningxia	Bachelor's in economics	Ningxia	Hui
Zhang Yup	60	Member	Deputy party secretary and chairman of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region	PhD in management	Shandong	Hui
Hong Qing	46	Alt. Member	Deputy party secretary and governor of the Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture	PhD in economics	No Information Available	Korean
Li Xianyu (Female)	57	Alt. Member	Member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, Major general, Researcher at the PLA Rocket Force	Master's in physics	Heilongjiang	Korean

Chen Yong	56	Alt. Member	Deputy party secretary of the Ningxia, Former standing committee member of the Beijing party committee	Master's in law and business administration	Liaoning	Manchu
Guan Zhou	53	Alt. Member	Director of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration	PhD in ecology	Liaoning	Manchu
Yu Huiwen	54	Alt. Member	Party secretary of Wanzhou district in Chongqing, Former Director of Sichuan's ecology and environment department	PhD in engineering	Liaoning	Manchu
Zhao Dong	52	Alt. Member	General manager and deputy party secretary of Sinopec Group	PhD in engineering	Not Available	Manchu
Luo Qiang	59	Alt. Member	Vice-governor of Sichuan province	PhD in science	Chongqing	Miao
Shi Jintong	43	Alt. Member	Deputy mayor of Shuanglong, Party secretary of Shibadong	Not Available	Hunan	Miao
Shi Yugang	57	Alt. Member	Deputy party secretary of Yunnan province, Former deputy director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission	Master's in Law	Hunan	Miao
Bao Gang	53	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Inner Mongolia party committee, Party secretary of Hohhot, Former deputy governor of Inner Mongolia	Party school	Liaoning	Mongol
Bater	67	Member	Vice-chairman of the National Committee of the CPPCC, Former Director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, Former chairman of Inner Mongolia	Master's in economics	Liaoning	Mongol

Wang Lixia (Female)	58	Member	Deputy party secretary and governor of the Inner Mongolia	PhD in economics	Liaoning	Mongol
Nurlan Abilmazhinuly	59	Member	Chairman of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region's political consultative conference	Degree in law	Xinjiang	Qazaq
Cai Rangtai	54	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Qinghai, Vice-governor of Qinghai	Bachelor in public administration	Qinghai	Tibetan
Karma Zeden	55	Alt. Member	Standing committee member and head of the united front work department of the Tibet, Deputy party secretary and vice-chairman of the Tibet political consultative conference	Master's in public administration	Tibet	Tibetan
Pupu Dhondup	50	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Tibet party committee, Party secretary of Lhasa	Degree in Tibetan and Literature	Tibet	Tibetan
Yan Jinhai	60	Member	Deputy party secretary and chairman of the Tibet	Degree in linguistics	Qinghai	Tibetan
Erken Tuniaz	61	Member	Deputy party secretary and chairman of the Xinjiang	Master's in economics	Xinjiang	Uygur
Zuliyati Simayi (Female)	45	Alt. Member	Alternate member of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region committee, Deputy party secretary and vice-president of Kashgar University	PhD in sociology	Xinjiang	Uygur
Lan Xiao	53	Alt. Member	Party secretary of Chongzuo	Master's in public administration	Guangxi	Yao
Yang Bin	56	Alt. Member	Vice-governor of Yunnan	Master's degree	Yunnan	Yi
Lan Tianli	60	Member	Deputy party secretary and chairman of the Guangxi Zhuang	Bachelor's in engineering	Guangxi	Zhuang

Nong Shengwen	57	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Guangxi Zhuang party committee, Nanning party secretary	Master's in geography	Guangxi	Zhuang
Wei Tao	52	Alt. Member	Standing committee member of the Shanxi party committee, Party secretary of Taiyuan	Bachelor's in engineering	Guangxi	Zhuang

Table 5: Home Town/ Provincial Data of the 20th Central Committee Members/Alternate Members. The Author Compiled them from South China Morning Post Data Base on the 20th Party Congress.³³

Hometown/Province/Autonomous Region/Municipality of China	Total Number of Members/Alternate Members in the 20 th Central Committee
Anhui	12
Beijing	3
Chongqing	5
Fujian	25
Gansu	5
Guangdong	1
Guangxi	5
Guizhou	3
Hebei	14
Heilongjiang	6
Henan	30
Hubei	18
Hunan	21
Inner Mongolia	1
Jiangsu	43
Jiangxi	7
Jilin	6
Liaoning	23
Ningxia	3
Qinghai	2
Shaanxi	16
Shandong	37
Shanghai	4
Shanxi	9

Sichuan	12
Taiwan (Symbolic. Reportedly born in Taiwan and residing in China)	1
Tianjin	2
Tibet	2
Xinjiang	3
Yunnan	3
Zhejiang	26

The second largest province in terms of economy in China is Jiangsu Province, with a nominal GDP of USD 740 billion in the first half of the financial year 2022 and has the maximum representation of 43 members/alternate members in the 20th Central Committee. Similarly, Shandong Province, with a nominal GDP of USD 618.7 billion in the first half of the financial year 2022, has 37 members/alternate members in the 20th Central Committee.³⁴

Communist Party members from six provinces of China— Jiangsu, Shandong, Henan, Zhejiang, Fujian and Liaoning constitute more than 50 percent (184 out of 374) of total members/alternate members in the 20th Central Committee, indicating strong ties between Xi Jinping and local party units of a few provinces. In contrast to this trend, Communist leaders with their home towns in Chinese provinces like Guangdong and Yunnan and Autonomous regions like Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang

Members from six provinces —Jiangsu, Shandong, Henan, Zhejiang, Fujian and Liaoning constitute more than 50 percent of total members/alternate members in the Central Committee, indicating strong ties between Xi Jinping and party units of a few provinces.

together are just ten members out of a total of 374 members/alternate members in the 20th Central Committee.

Provincial political dynamics are significant to understand the policy planning trends of the 20th Central Committee and priorities. The representation of provincial leaders in the 20th Central Committee is compiled in Table 6. Provincial leadership role in the 20th Central Committee is significant for policy formulation and implementation in China, as there are 73 Provincial leaders, out of a total of 205 full members of the 20th Central Committee.

Table 6: Complete List of Provincial Leaders of the 20th Central Committee of CPC

Name of the Provincial Leader in 20th Central committee full members	Age	Position	Elevated/New Comer/ Remains from 19th Central Committee	Education	Ethnicity
Cai Jianjiang	59	Party Secretary of State Administration of Air Traffic Control (Beijing)	Elevated	Bachelor's in aviation and English	Han
Chen Gang	57	Party Secretary of Qinghai	Elevated	PhD in science	Han
Chen Jining	58	Party Secretary of Shanghai	Remains	PhD in engineering	Han
Chen Miner	62	Party Secretary of Tianjin	Remains	Degree in Chinese	Han
Cheng Lihua (Female)	57	Deputy Party Secretary of Anhui	Elevated	Bachelor's in in accounting	Han
Erkin Tuniyaz	61	Governor of Xinjiang	Elevated	Master's in economics	Uygur
Feng Fei	60	Governor of Hainan	Newcomer	PhD in engineering	Han
Gong Zheng	62	Mayor of Shanghai	Remains	PhD in economics	Han
Han Jun	59	Governor of Jilin	Newcomer	Bachelor's in economics	Han
Hao Peng	62	Party Secretary of Liaoning	Remains	Master's in engineering	Han
Hu Changsheng	59	Party Secretary of Gansu	Elevated	PhD in history	Han
Hu Henghua	59	Mayor of Chongqing	Elevated	Master's in business administration	Han
Hu Yuting	58	Deputy Party Secretary of Liaoning/Party Secretary of Dalian City	Newcomer	Master's in engineering and business administration	Han
Huang Jianfa	58	Deputy Party Secretary of Zhejiang / Director of Zhejiang Provincial United Front Work Department	Newcomer	Master's in geology	Han
Huang Kunming	66	Party Secretary of Guangdong	Remains	PhD in management	Han
Huang Qiang	59	Governor of Sichuan	Newcomer	PhD in engineering	Han
Jin Xiangjun	58	Governor of Shanxi	Newcomer	PhD in management	Han

Jing Junhai	62	Party Secretary of Jilin/Chair of Jilin Provincial People's Congress	Elevated	Master's in engineering	Han
Lan Fan	60	Party Secretary of Shanxi	Newcomer	Master's in management	Han
Lan Tianli	60	Governor of Guangxi	Elevated	Bachelor's in engineering	Zhuang
Li Bingjun	59	Governor of Guizhou	Newcomer	Degree in engineering	Han
Li Ganjie	58	Secretary of the CCP Secretariat, former Party Secretary of Shandong	Remains	Master's in engineering	Han
Li Lecheng	57	Governor of Liaoning	Newcomer	Degree in engineering	Han
Liang Huiling (Female)	60	Governor of Heilongjiang	Newcomer	Master's in economics	Han
Liang Yanshun	60	Party Secretary of Ningxia	Newcomer	PhD in economics	Han
Lin Wu	60	Party Secretary of Shandong/Chair of Shandong Provincial People's Congress	Newcomer	PhD in engineering	Han
Liu Ning	61	Party Secretary of Guangxi	Elevated	PhD in engineering	Han
Liu Wei	57	Deputy Party Secretary of Beijing	Newcomer	PhD in economics	Han
Liu Xiaoming	58	Deputy Party Secretary of Guangxi	Newcomer	Master's in engineering	Han
Lou Yangsheng	63	Party Secretary of Henan	Remains	Bachelor's in mathematics	Han
Ma Xingrui	63	Party Secretary of Xinjiang	Remains	PhD in general mechanics	Han
Mao Weiming	61	Governor of Hunan	Elevated	Degree in engineering	Han
Meng Fanli	57	Deputy Party Secretary of Guangdong/Party Secretary of Shenzhen City	Newcomer	PhD in economics	Han
Ni Yuefeng	58	Party Secretary of Hebei	Remains	PhD in engineering	Han
Nurlan Abelmanjen	60	Chair of Xinjiang CPPCC	Remains	Degree in law	Kazakh
Ren Zhen	58	Governor of Gansu	Newcomer	Master's in ideological and political education	Tujia

Shen Xiaoming	59	Party Secretary of Hainan	Remains	PhD in medicine	Han
Sun Shaocheng	62	Party Secretary of Inner Mongolia	Remains	PhD in law	Han
Wang Hao	59	Governor of Zhejiang	Newcomer	Degree in economics	Han
Wang Junzheng	59	Party Secretary of Tibet	Elevated	PhD in management	Han
Wang Kai	60	Governor of Henan	Newcomer	PhD in economics	Han
Wang Lixia (Female)	58	Governor of Inner Mongolia	Elevated	PhD in economics	Han
Wang Menghui	63	Party Secretary of Hubei	Remains	PhD in engineering	Han
Wang Ning	61	Party Secretary of Yunnan	Elevated	Degree in architecture	Han
Wang Qingxian	59	Governor of Anhui	Newcomer	PhD in economics	Han
Wang Weizhong	60	Governor of Guangdong	Elevated	PhD in management	Han
Wang Xiaohui	60	Party Secretary of Sichuan	Remains	Master's in law	Han
Wang Yubo	60	Governor of Yunnan	Newcomer	Master's in economics	Han
Wang Zheng	59	Governor of Hebei	Newcomer	Degree in agriculture	Han
Wang Zhijun	57	Deputy Party Secretary of Heilongjiang	Newcomer	No Information Available	Han
Wang Zhonglin	60	Governor of Hubei	Newcomer	PhD in management	Han
Wu Xiaojun	57	Governor of Qinghai	Newcomer	Degree in political economy	Han
Xin Changxing	59	Party Secretary of Jiangsu	Elevated	Master's in economics	Han
Xu Kunlin	57	Governor of Jiangsu	Newcomer	Degree in economics	Han
Xu Lin	59	Party Secretary of Guizhou	Remains	MBA	Han
Xu Qin	61	Party Secretary of Heilongjiang	Remains	PhD in management	Han
Yan Jinhai	60	Governor of Tibet	Elevated	Degree in linguistics	Tibetan
Ye Jianchun	57	Governor of Jiangxi	Newcomer	PhD in hydrology and water resources	Han
Yi Lianhong	63	Party Secretary of Zhejiang	Elevated	Master's in economics	Han
Yin Hong	59	Party Secretary of Jiangxi	Elevated	Degree in metallography and Marxism	Han
Yin Li	60	Party Secretary of Beijing	Remains	PhD in health economics and management	Han

Yin Yong	53	Mayor of Beijing	Newcomer	PhD in engineering	Han
Yuan Jiajun	60	Party Secretary of Chongqing	Remains	PhD in engineering	Han
Zhang Gong	61	Mayor of Tianjin	Elevated	Degree in engineering	Han
Zhang Qingwei	61	Party Secretary of Hunan	Remains	PhD in management	Han
Zhang Yup	60	Governor of Ningxia	Newcomer	PhD in management	Hui
Zhao Gang	54	Governor of Shaanxi	Newcomer	Master's in engineering and business administration	Han
Zhao Long	55	Governor of Fujian	Newcomer	Master's in public administration	Han
Zhao Yide	57	Party Secretary of Shaanxi	Elevated	Master's degree from Zhejiang Provincial Party School	
Zheng Shanjie	61	Party Secretary of Anhui	Newcomer	Master of business administration	Han
Zheng Xing	59	Director of PRC Liaison Office in Macao SAR	Newcomer	Degree from Fujian party school	Han
Zhou Naixiang	61	Governor of Shandong	Elevated	Degree in architecture	Han
Zhou Ziyi	58	Party Secretary of Fujian	Newcomer	PhD in science	Han

Source: Compiled by Author from Macropolo Digital Database – The Committee.³⁵

The consensus in policymaking will be complex for the 20th Central Committee without the endorsement of provincial party leaders, who are almost one-third of the total members of the Central Committee.

There are 33 newcomers among the 73 Provincial full members of the 20th Central Committee (See Table 6), which is nearly 45 percent of the total. Additionally, 21 provincial leaders were promoted/elevated from their previous positions in the Central Committee. The remaining 19 provincial leaders retained their position as Central Committee members during the 20th Party Congress.

Higher Educational qualification for top Provincial leadership positions in China is a parameter in President Xi Jinping's third term in the composition of the 20th Central Committee of CPC. Thirty-two provincial-level leaders have a PhD degree among the

73 leaders listed in Table 6, which is nearly 44 percent of the total provincial leadership of the Central Committee. Another 19 members have completed their master's degrees and hold provincial leadership positions. In all, there are 52 provincial leaders who either have a PhD or master's degree. However, there are only three women in the Central Committee— which is less than 5 percent.

Most members of the 20th Central Committee are not part of the 20th Politburo (refer to Table 1) or the Provincial leader's list of the 20th Central Committee (refer to Table 6). Many such 20th Central Committee members are associated with CPC in party activities or Chinese military organisations. The list of people associated with the Communist Party in various positions from the 20th Central Committee is provided below in Table 7.

Communist Party networks and their work is a big task for a Party-State Country like China. Various CPC Organisations like the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), CCDI, State Internet Information Office, CCP United Front Work Department, CCP National Security Commission Office, Communist Youth League, CCP Propaganda Department, China Media Group, and People's Daily as mentioned in Table 7 have prominence in the working of CPC.

Table 7: Details the 20th Central Committee Members Associated with Various CPC Organisations

Name of the 20th Central Committee Member	Age	Position/Work	Education	Ethnicity
Bater	67	Vice Chair of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)	Master's in economics	Mongol
Chen Xiaojiang	60	Lead Deputy Director of CCP United Front Work Department	Degree in engineering	Han
Chen Yixin	63	Minister of State Security/Deputy Director of CCP National Security Commission Office	Degree in physics	Han
He Junke	53	Lead Secretary of Communist Youth League	Master's in engineering	Han
Li Xiaoxin (Female)	60	Deputy Director of CCP Organization Department	Degree in agriculture	Han
Liu Haixing	59	Lead Deputy Director of CCP National Security Commission Office	Degree in public administration	Han

Liu Jianchao	58	Director of the Office of CCP International Liaison Department	Degree in arts	Han
Liu Jinguo	67	Deputy Secretary of Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI)/Deputy Director of National Supervisory Commission	Degree in economics	Han
Meng Xiangfeng	58	Lead Deputy Director of CCP General Office	PhD in law	Han
Pan Yue	62	Deputy Director of CCP United Front Work Department/Director of State Ethnic Affairs Commission	PhD in history	Han
Qu Qingshan	65	President of CCP History and Literature Research Institute	Degree in History	Han
Shen Haixiong	55	Deputy Director of CCP Propaganda Department/Director of China Media Group	Bachelor's in journalism	Han
Tuo Zhen	63	President of People's Daily	Bachelor's in political economy	Han
Wu Hansheng	59	Lead Deputy Secretary of CCP Central Party and State Organs Working Committee	Degree in engineering	Han
Xiao Pei	62	Deputy Secretary of CCDI/Deputy Director of National Supervisory Commission	Master's in management	Han
Xie Chuntao	59	Senior Vice President of the Central Party School	PhD in law	Han
Zhuang Rongwen	61	Director of State Internet Information Office	PhD in engineering	Han
Zou Jiayi (Female)	59	Deputy Secretary-General of CPPCC National Committee	Master's in economics	Han

Source: Compiled by the Author from Macropolo's Digital Database-the Committee.³⁶

PLA Representation in the Central Committee

The 20th Central Committee also comprises many military personnel from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and other military organs. There are 44 members from the Chinese military in the 205 members of the 20th Central Committee announced in October 2022. A detailed list of these military members is compiled below in Table 8.

The representation of Chinese military personnel as full-time members of the 20th Central Committee helps in policy coordination and formulation on security issues. There is complete domination of the Han ethnic community, and none from minority ethnic groups is among the military members (Table 8). Nearly 70 percent of military members (31 members) are newcomers to the 20th Central Committee.

Table 8: Complete List of Chinese Military Members of the 20th Central Committee

Name of Military Member of 20th Central Committee	Age	Position	Rank	Home Town/ Province	Ethnicity	Elevated/ Newcomer/ Remains from 19th central Committee
Chang Dingjiu	55	Commander of PLA Air Force	General	Hengyang, Hunan	Han	Elevated
Dong Jun	60	Commander of PLA Navy	General	Yantai, Shandong	Han	Newcomer
Guo Puxiao	59	Political Commissar of PLA Air Force	General	Yaodian, Shaanxi	Han	Newcomer
He Hongjun	61	Deputy Director of CMC Political Work Department	Lieutenant General	Yangxian, Shaanxi	Han	Newcomer
He Weidong	65	Vice Chair of CMC	Deputy national leader	Dongtai, Jiangsu	Han	Newcomer
Hu Zhongming	59	Chief of Staff of PLA Navy	Lieutenant General	Qingdao, Shandong	Han	Newcomer
Huang Ming	59	Chief of Staff of PLA Ground Force	Lieutenant General	Yixing, Jiangsu	Han	Newcomer
Ju Qiansheng	60	Commander of PLA Strategic Support Force	General	Baoji, Shaanxi	Han	Newcomer
Li Fengbiao	63	Political Commissar of PLA Western Theater Command	General	Anxin, Hebei	Han	Remains
Li Xiaoming	61	Commander of PLA Ground Force	General	Yanshi, Henan	Han	Remains
Li Shangfu	64	Member of CMC	General	Xingguo, Jiangxi	Han	Remains
Li Wei	62	Political Commissar of PLA Strategic Support Force	General	Jiyuan, Henan	Han	Newcomer
Li Yuchao	60	Commander of PLA Rocket Force	General	Sui County, Henan	Han	Elevated
Lin Xiangyang	58	Commander of PLA Eastern Theater Command	General	Fuqing, Fujian	Han	Newcomer
Liu Facing	58	Deputy Commander of PLA Ground Force	Lieutenant General	Yanshi, Henan	Han	Elevated

Liu Qingsong	59	Political Commissar of PLA Northern Theater Command	General	Zhangqiu, Shandong	Han	Newcomer
Liu Zhenli	58	Chief of Staff of CMC Joint Staffs	General	Lauching, Hebei	Han	Remains
Miao Hua	67	Director of CMC Political Work Department	General	Rugao, Jiangsu	Han	Remains
Qin Shutong	59	Political Commissar of PLA Ground Force	General	Jiangyan, Jiangsu	Han	Newcomer
Wang Channing	59	Commander of People's Armed Police	General	Musing, Shandong	Han	Elevated
Wang Haijiang	59	Commander of PLA Western Theater Command	General	Anyone, Sichuan	Han	Newcomer
Wang Kai (PLA)	59	Director of PLA Tibet Military Region General	Lieutenant	Meishan, Sichuan	Han	Newcomer
Wang Peng	58	Director of CMC Training and Administration Department	Lieutenant General	Xiangxiang, Hunan	Han	Newcomer
Wang Qiang	60	Commander of PLA Northern Theater Command	General	Rongxian, Sichuan	Han	Newcomer
Wang Renhua	61	Secretary of CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission	Lieutenant General	No Information Available	Han	Newcomer
Wang Wenquan	60	Political Commissar of CMC Joint Logistics Support Force	Lieutenant General	Xinzhou, Hubei	Han	Newcomer
Wang Xiubin	58	Commander of PLA Southern Theater Command	General	Rudong, Jiangsu	Han	Newcomer
Wu Yanan	60	Commander of PLA Central Theater Command	General	Shijiazhuang, Hebei	Han	Newcomer
Xu Deqing	59	Political Commissar of PLA Central Theater Command	General	Deyang, Sichuan	Han	Newcomer
Xu Qiling	60	Deputy Chief of Staff of CMC Joint Staffs	General	Huaiyang, Henan	Han	Newcomer

Xu Xisheng	58	Deputy Political Commissar of PLA Southern Theater Command	Lieutenant General	Xintai, Shandong	Han	Newcomer	
Xu Xueqiang	60	Director of CMC Equipment Development Department	General	Henan	Han	Newcomer	
Xu Zhongbo	62	Political Commissar of PLA Rocket Force	General	Rushan, Shandong	Han	Elevated	
Yang Cheng	58	Political Commissar of PLA Xinjiang Military Region	Lieutenant General	Shaoyang, Hunan	Han	Newcomer	
Yang Xuejun	59	President of PLA Academy of Military Science	General	Shandong	Wucheng, Henan	Han	Remains
Yang Zhiliang	60	Political Commissar of PLA Navy Southern Theater Command	Lieutenant General	Hushe, Henan	Han	Newcomer	
Yu Qingjiang	59	Chief of Staff of PLA Air Force	Lieutenant General	Nanjing, Jiangsu	Han	Newcomer	
Yuan Huazhi	61	Political Commissar of PLA Navy	General	Xiantao, Hubei	Han	Newcomer	
Zhang Hongbing	57	Political Commissar of People's Armed Police	General	Xianning, Hubei	Han	Newcomer	
Zhang Lin	58	Director of CMC Logistics Support Department	Lieutenant General	No Information Available	Han	Newcomer	
Zhang Shengmin	64	Deputy Secretary of CCDI/ Secretary of CMC Discipline Inspection Commission	General	Wugong, Shaanxi	Han	Remains	
Zhang Youxia	72	Vice Chair of CMC	Deputy national leader	Weinan, Shaanxi	Han	Remains	
Zhao Xiaozhe	59	Deputy Director of CMC Science and Technology Commission	Lieutenant General	Dalian, Liaoning	Han	Newcomer	
Zhong Shaojun	54	Director of CMC General Office	Lieutenant General	Quzhou, Zhejiang	Han	Newcomer	

Source: Compiled by the Author from Macropolo's Digital Database - The Committee.³⁷

Additionally, eight military members retained their position in the 20th CC, and only five members from the military background were elevated/promoted, as compiled in Table 8. There are 26 members with the military rank of General and 15 members with the rank of Lieutenant General in the 20th Central Committee.

The Central Committee has four military members (See Table 8) from Western Theatre Command (WTC) — Political Commissar of WTC, Commander of WTC, Director of PLA Tibet Military Region and Political Commissar of PLA Xinjiang Military Region out of total 44 military full members of the 20th Central Committee. The Tibet and Xinjiang Military regions are the only two military regions represented in the 20th Central Committee. These appointments are considered strategically significant in the backdrop of India-China military tensions after the Galwan valley clash in June 2020.

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The Central Military Commission (CMC)

The 20th CMC comprises seven members, with Chinese President Xi Jinping as Chairman. Zhang Youxia and He Weidong both have the post of Vice-Chairman in the 20th CMC. The other four members of the 20th CMC are Li Shangfu, Liu Zhenli, Miao Hua and Zhang Shengmin (See Table 8).

Zhang Youxia, aged 72, is the oldest member of the 20th Politburo, Central Committee and CMC. Norms were broken in the appointments of both Vice-Chairman of the 20th CMC. Zhang Youxia, aged 72, has broken the age norm to be appointed Vice-Chairman in the CMC, while He Weidong had no prior experience as a CMC or Central Committee member. He Weidong was elevated to Vice Chairman of CMC because of his background. He was the Commander of the Eastern Theater Command (ETC), responsible for PLA activities related to Taiwan during 2019-22. He was also Deputy Commander of the Western Theater Command (WTC) and Commander of the WTC Army during 2016-19. He was involved in the Chinese response to India during skirmishes on the Doklam Plateau in 2017. He Weidong's ties with President Xi go back to 1999-2002 when Xi was Party Secretary of Fujian Province, and He Weidong served in the Fujian-based PLA unit.

Li Shangfu, the former head of the CMC Equipment Development Department, was sanctioned in 2018 by the U.S. government due to Chinese purchases of advanced Su-35 fighters and S-400 missile systems. He worked at the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in Sichuan province and to have played a key role in China's space program during 1982-2013. Another member of the 20th CMC, Liu Zhenli, is the only CMC member besides Zhang Youxia to have experience in real combat, having fought in border conflicts with Vietnam in the 1980s. Liu Zhenli, as Chief of Staff of CMC Joint Staffs, has never served in a joint position, and his combat experiences are considered responsible for his position. Additionally, Miao Hua and Zhang Shengmin retained their positions as Director of the CMC's Political Work Department and Secretary of the CMC's disciplinary commission, respectively, in the 20th CMC.³⁸

He Weidong was elevated to Vice Chairman of CMC because of his background. He was the Commander of the Eastern Theater Command (ETC), responsible for PLA activities related to Taiwan during 2019-22. He was also Deputy Commander of the Western Theater Command (WTC) and Commander of the WTC Army during 2016-19. He was involved in the Chinese response to India during skirmishes on the Doklam Plateau in 2017.

PLA Army dominance is again visible in the CMC's composition, with four of the six members of the 20th CMC from the Army. Two members, Miao Hua and Zhang Shengmin, of the 20th CMC, lack experience in operational command positions. There is no representation from Air Force in the 20th CMC, which is happening after two decades. Chinese military modernisation is reflected in the selection of Zhang Youxia and Li Shangfu as 20th CMC members. Both of them were directors of the Equipment Development Department.³⁹

Conclusion

Political changes in China are dynamic and are influenced by many factors such as ancestral home town/province, gender, age, education, ideological thoughts and political loyalty. Political/military leaders' growth in Chinese elite politics or institutions like Central Committee, Politburo and CMC gets tilted due to their factional dominance in Chinese politics. However, there are rewards for political loyalty and individual performance in their respective field. The selection of many members in high positions

in the Politburo and Central Committee of the 20th Party Congress, with specialisation in space, rockets, missile development and infrastructure building, is aimed at boosting Chinese long-term plans to dominate the global economy with advanced technology. There is, however, very less presence of public health specialists, doctors, and biotechnology/life sciences in the 20th Central Committee despite the massive disruptions and acute challenges posed by the Covid pandemic and climate change. Many scholars use the term 'technocrats' to refer to the new generation of Chinese leaders in the 21st century. Chinese leaders from the 20th Central Committee have PhD degrees in various subjects from some of the elite educational institutions of China, like Tsinghua University. Very few Chinese leaders have an educational background in the humanities stream or an ideological background in Marxism. Chinese President Xi Jinping earned his PhD in Marxist thought as a part-time scholar from Tsinghua University.

Very few Chinese leaders have an educational background in the humanities stream or an ideological background in Marxism.

Most Chinese leaders elevated or shortlisted for big responsibilities in the 20th Central Committee and CMC have had close ties with Xi Jinping for decades. Many loyalists of Chinese President Xi Jinping have been placed as deputies and at other levels of various ministries, departments and institutions of the CPC and Chinese government since 2012. Some of these loyalists of President Xi were elevated/promoted to higher positions during the 20th Party Congress. CPC announced many political changes during the 20th Party Congress in October 2022. However, the appointment of Qin Gang as Minister of Foreign Affairs was announced on December 30, 2022, two months after the conclusion of the 20th Party Congress in October 2022. Xi Jinping's loyalists occupying high positions in elite Chinese politics and government institutions will continue for a few more years.

Most Chinese leaders elevated or shortlisted for big responsibilities in the 20th Central Committee and CMC have had close ties with Xi Jinping for decades.

Policy failures/reversals like the Zero-Covid policy tarnished the public opinion of President Xi Jinping's governance and questioned the effectiveness of his team in China. The provincial leadership capabilities of Xi Jinping's loyalists and their performance after the withdrawal of the Zero-Covid policy will be a parameter to judge Xi Jinping's

governance model and policies. Similarly, China's private sector has faced multiple challenges, which include lockdowns due to Coronavirus and other curbs from government agencies. The composition of members of the Central Committee and Politburo hardly includes members with a background in China's private sector. The real estate sector in China is facing headwinds after Evergrande's debt crisis. The team of Xi Jinping's loyalists in the 20th Central Committee has to address economic challenges as their top priority for China's economic growth.

President Xi Jinping's 'common prosperity' slogan emphasises the redistribution of wealth and prosperity in China. However, there is an absence of proportional distribution/allocation to various factions, provinces and minority ethnic communities in the composition of the Politburo and Central Committee of the 20th Party Congress. The performance of the 20th Central Committee will impact the legacy of the Chinese President and his model of governance for China with global ramifications.

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