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The Triangle China-Tibet-India

New Faces - Old Issues

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Senior Columnist & China Expert



परक्रमयुता प्रज्ञा राष्ट्रभयुदयसाधिका
Wisdom with valour brings glory to the nation

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation



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Claude Arpi is born in Angoulême (France) in 1949. His real quest started in 1972 with a journey to the Indian Himalayas.

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The Triangle China-Tibet-India: New Faces - Old Issues

In March 2013, in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, a new leader was selected to lead the Middle Kingdom for the next 10 years. Xi Jinping took over from Hu Jintao as China's president and 'core' leader of the Fifth Generation. A few months earlier, he had been nominated Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission.

The composition of the State Council (or Cabinet) was announced in March 2013 (at the end of the National People's Congress), with Li Keqiang stepping into Wen Jiabao's boots as China's Premier. Li has now four vice-premiers and five state councillors to help him carry out his difficult task.

On March 14, 2013, soon after Li Keqiang was confirmed as the new Premier, *The South China Morning Post* (SCMP) commented: "A long-orchestrated leadership transition nears its end, leaving the new leaders to confront uneven economic growth, unbridled corruption and a severely befouled environment that are stirring public discontent."¹

There is no doubt that the new leaders have to face several domestic challenges; their leadership qualities will be tested. The Hong Kong newspaper specifically mentions a 'sputtering economy', overly dominated by powerful state industries as well as increasingly vocal Chinese people (mainly through microblogging and the Internet) who express the public impatience with the government's often unfulfilled promises.

Other problems on the new leadership's table are: corruption, particularly corruption in the Party and the Army; pollution; lack of freedom of expression; exacerbated nationalism; regional aspiration for greater autonomy; slow delivery of justice; food safety; the state of preparedness of the People Liberation Army; organised crime; income disparity and economic incertitude following the 2008 world economic crisis.

These issues have implications for India insofar as they might keep the Party and the government in Beijing busy in the years to come. This may partly divert Beijing's attention from 'external' issues like the disputes in the South and East China Seas, the North Korean aggressiveness or the border problem with India. But another issue which remains alive and could create problems for India is the internal situation on the Tibetan plateau.

It needs to be carefully watched. One should not forget that the 4,000 kilometre border between India and China is in fact the Tibetan border. Whatever happens in Tibet has implications for India and the sub-continent (particularly with regard to the rivers flowing from the Tibetan plateau to the plains).

The emergence of a 'Tibet' Gang in the Communist Party

An interesting phenomenon has been happening: a posting to the Roof of the World

¹ South China Morning Post, March 14, 2013 see <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1191367/new-leaders-face-myrriad-challenges>.

seems to bring good luck to Communist officials. A string of senior Party officials who have been posted or connected with Tibet at some point or the other in their career, have now become members of the Politburo, the government or have risen to the top rung of the Party.

Today at least 10 members out of the 25-member Politburo are or have been, connected with Tibet in one way or another.

Interestingly, Xi Jinping, the new Chinese president mentioned this when he paid a visit to the Tibet delegation at the National People's Congress (NPC) on March 9, 2013.

Xi noted that a large number of senior officials attending the March 'Twin Meetings' (the NPC and the CPPCC²) in Beijing were presently, or had in the past, directly shouldered responsibilities of Tibet issues; he commented that the numbers will only increase in the future and that Beijing will continue to pay close attention to this region.

We shall briefly look at some of the members of the 'Tibet Gang'

The Central Working Coordination Small Group on Tibet

Before listing the names of the 'Tibet Gang', it is necessary to say a few words about the Central Working Coordination Small Group on Tibet³.

What is a 'leading small group' or LSG?

According to *Wikipedia* it is: "...an ad hoc supra-ministerial coordinating and consulting body formed to build consensus on issues that cut across the government, party, and military systems when the existing bureaucratic structure is unable to do so. The authorisation for the formation of leading groups comes from Chapter IX of the Constitution of the Communist Party of China"⁴.

These groups usually are a mechanism for decision-makers to exchange views - both formally and informally - and to make recommendations for the Politburo and the State Council. An LSG enunciates guiding principles and gives general directions to the Party/Government.

Again according to *Wikipedia*: "Leading small groups have become increasingly important within the PRC after the 1990s, especially in the field of foreign policy where the LSGs have become a tool for coordinating the work of several agencies as well as ensuring party supervision over government activities"⁵.

Since the beginning of the Deng Xiaoping era, the Tibet Policy of the People's Republic of China has been formulated by the five Tibet Work Forums⁶. A Tibet Work Forum is usually held every five or ten years to discuss the CCP's Tibet policies. These are

²The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference or CPPCC.

³Also known as Small Group on Tibet, one of the Leading Small Groups or LSG's under the CCP's Central Committee.

⁴See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leading_small_group

⁵Ibid.

⁶The five Tibet Work Forums were held in 1980, 1984, 1991, 2001 and 2010.

large meetings are attended by some 200 to 300 senior cadres, by the members of the all-powerful Politburo's Standing Committee, senior PLA generals, representatives of the People's Armed Police, United Front Work Department officials, regional leaders, etc.

On Foreign Affairs Work

On Taiwan Work

Hong Kong-Macao Leading Group

On Finance and Economy

On Ideology and Propaganda

National Security Leading Group

Politics and Law Committee

On Party-Building

On Migrant Workers

For Promoting Medium and Small Enterprise Development

For Nationwide Economy Census

For Western Region Development

For Climate Change and for Energy Conservation

On Poverty Alleviation and Development

For Western Region Development

For the Revitalisation of Old Industrial Bases in Northeast China

Central Tibet Work Coordination Working Group

Central Leading Group on the 'mass line' educational practice

Central Working Coordination Small Group on Xinjiang

The last Tibet Work Forum (the Fifth) was held in January 2010 in Beijing.

A Central Working Coordination Small Group on Tibet (Small Group on Tibet in short) is responsible for the implementation of the policies decided during the Tibet Work Forum. The chair of the Small Group on Tibet is usually held by the CPPCC's chairman⁷.

Former President and General Secretary Hu Jintao

The most illustrious official promoted after a Tibet posting is former President Hu Jintao.

In September 1987, Lhasa witnessed a series of large-scale riots. Beijing became increasingly nervous, as the Chinese leadership feared that it would lose face in the world's eyes. The monks, the very same people who were supposed to have been 'liberated' from the clutches of the high clergy, were now revolting against the 'motherland.' Beijing reasoned that if the situation was allowed to drift, China could go the Soviet Union way to disintegration.

When a demonstration erupted on March 5, 1989, the People's Armed Police quickly took control of the situation; it is where the future President of China showed his skills.

⁷Today, Yu Zhengsheng, the CPPCC's chairman and a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo officiates as chairperson of the Small Group on Tibet as well as the Small Group on Xinjiang.

In Beijing's eyes, Hu saved China, which could have plunged into the 'chaos' so feared by the ancient Chinese emperors. Had Tibet been lost, no doubt other provinces such as Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia would have followed in quick succession.

President Xi Jinping

President Xi Jinping is connected to Tibet through his father Xi Zhongxun who was one of the senior officials 'in charge' of Tibetan affairs in the 1950s and later the 1980s. Xi Senior had earlier been the Political Commissar of the First Field Army under Marshal Peng Dehuai when the PLA entered Amdo province⁸ of north-eastern Tibet in 1949/1950.

Yu Zhengsheng

Yu Zhengsheng, the number Four in the Party hierarchy, has been nominated Chairman of Central Working Coordination Small Group on Tibet, for overlooking the restive region's affairs. He has replaced Jia Qinglin as the CPPCC Chairman. He is directly responsible for the United Front Work Department which deals with the 'minorities', particularly the Tibetans, the Uyghurs and Taiwan as well.

During an inspection tour in Sichuan Province from January 6 to 8, 2013, Yu Zhengsheng called on monks and nuns to be patriotic and observe Chinese laws as well as monastic rules. Yu was participating in a seminar along with Tibetan Buddhist representatives in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan.

Yu pleaded with the monks that they should support the government's efforts to manage monasteries in accordance with the law. His argument was that the government should offer public services to monasteries and manage them in harmony with a socialist society. He wanted a unified and strong motherland together with developing and stable Tibetan areas which would, in turn help ethnic groups improve their lives and brighten the prospects for Tibetan Buddhism.

Yu also said that "the fight against the Dalai Lama clique should continue", adding that it was necessary "to create a favourable social and political environment for economic development and the improvement of people's well-being."

Ganzi was the first 'ethnic minority autonomous prefecture' after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. The prefecture is still one of the poorest in China. Yu assured the monks that the key to development in the Tibetan areas was the setting of infrastructure and public services. Once done, the incomes of farmers and herdsmen would increase

Yu asked the cadres and officials to improve their work style and serve the masses wholeheartedly. This gives some indication of the direction in which the Small Group on Tibet is likely to proceed.

⁸Today Qinghai province..

Liu Yandong

One of the two women-members of the 25-member Politburo, Liu Yandong headed the United Front Work Department between 2002 and 2007. This period witnessed several 'exchanges' between the Dalai Lama's envoys and the United Front officials. More recently Madame Liu has been appointed vice-premier of the State Council. She has full knowledge of the negotiations between Dharamsala and Beijing. It is not known whether she deals with the Tibet issue in the State Council.

Hu Chunhua

Hu Chunhua is one of the Party's rising stars who served in Tibet for several years. He was born into a farming family in Wufeng County, Hubei, in April 1963. In 1979, he came first in his county's in the Gaokao (*The National Higher Education Entrance*) examination. At age 16, he was the youngest in his class. He received his B.A. degree from Peking University in August 1983, majoring in Chinese language and literature. After graduation, he volunteered to go to Tibet. He began to work in the region as a cadre in the Organisation Department of the Communist Youth League. Hu subsequently held various government and Youth League positions in Tibet, ultimately serving as deputy secretary of the CCP's Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee from November 2003 to November 2006 and vice chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Government from November 2003 to November 2005. In Tibet, Hu was instrumental in developing the Tibetan economy.

During the 18th Congress in November 2012, Hu became a member of the Politburo. With Sun Zhengcai, he is the youngest member of the Politburo, and there are speculations that both are being groomed as China's next top leaders in 2022. In December 2012, Hu was appointed the party chief of Guangdong. He is said to speak fluent Tibetan.

Liu Qibao

Another Politburo member, Liu Qibao is also linked with Tibet. From 2008 to 2012, Liu was Party Secretary of the Sichuan province which includes large areas of eastern Tibet (formerly Kham province). Liu is said to be a hardliner responsible for the repression in several monasteries in Kham after the 2008 unrest.

Guo Jinlong

Guo Jinlong made it to the Politburo in November 2012. He served in the Tibet Autonomous Region for over 10 years including as Party Secretary in 2000-2004. Born in Nanjing, he graduated from the Nanjing University department of Physics in 1969; he joined the Communist Party of China in 1979, and was sent to work in Sichuan. In 1993, Guo headed to Lhasa to serve as the Vice-Secretary of the CCP's Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee, and served as secretary from 2000 to 2004. He was pivotal in development of Qinghai-Tibet Railway project. He left Tibet to serve as the secretary of

the CCP's Anhui Committee in 2004; later Guo was mayor of Beijing from 2008 to 2011; he also served as Executive President of the Beijing Organising Committee for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

Yang Chuantang

Another old Tibet hand is Yang Chuantang, a member of the Central Committee and today China's Transport Minister.

Born in Yucheng, Shandong province, Yang joined the CCP in June 1976. In 1993, Yang was transferred to Tibet, where he held the position of administrative vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional government. He was elected vice-governor of Qinghai province in 2003. In 2004 he became secretary of the CCP's Tibet autonomous regional committee. Before becoming Transport Minister, Yang was Vice-Chairman of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission from 2006 to 2011.

Du Qinglin

Born in Panshi city, Du joined the CCP in 1966; he spent most of his career in Jilin Province. Between 2007-2012, he was head of United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee.

Du today is a vice-chairman of the National Committee of the 12th CPPCC as well as a member of the powerful secretariat of the Central Committee. In this position he can monitor the working of the Party's United Front.

According to Xinhua, Du made "an inspection tour to the Tibetan autonomous prefectures of Ganzi and Diqing, in southwest China's Sichuan and Yunnan provinces respectively, between March 29 and April 1 [2013]."

During his tour, probably on behalf of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, Du Qinglin stressed closer Party-people ties and told the local residents that they should have a proper understanding of the importance of safeguarding ethnic solidarity and national unity⁹.

This shows that he remains active in Tibetan affairs.

Qin Yizhi

The latest senior cadre to experience the 'Tibet promotion' is the 47-year-old Qin Yizhi who served as a vice-chairman of Tibet's regional government. In 2013, he was appointed as the head of the Communist Youth League which has nearly 80 million members, and is a training ground for future party and government officials¹⁰.

The South China Morning Post (SCMP) believes that this appointment indicates that he could play a bigger role in China's leadership in the future, as has been the case with

⁹ http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2013-04/01/content_28421179.htm

¹⁰ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1194991/tibet-official-qin-yizhi-gains-key-communist-youth-league-post>

most of his predecessors in the past.

The career of Guangdong party secretary Hu Chunhua had earlier followed the same trajectory: first vice-chairman of Tibet's regional government in 2003 and then Youth League boss in 2006.

In 2005, Qin was appointed Lhasa party chief; later, he was made vice-chairman of the Tibetan government.

Dissident blogger Tsering Woesser considers Qin to be a hardliner who, during his tenure, consistently pushed for 'patriotic education', in other words, 'sinisation' of education. Woesser says that his promotion could send a signal to the current Tibetan officials that only hardliners get good promotions¹¹.

Zhang Yijiong

The new Deputy Head of the United Front Work Department, Zhang Yijiong replaces the hardliner Zhu Weiqun. Zhang, like his predecessor, is a Member of the 18th Central Committee. Zhang Yijiong was born in 1955 in Shanghai. He joined the CPC in June 1976 and graduated from the Party School of the CCP's Central Committee. He was Deputy Secretary of CPC Tibet Autonomous Region Committee from 2006 to 2010. As the Deputy Head of the United Front Work Department, he is responsible for the 'talks' with Dharamsala, if any.

Ling Jihua

A Member of the Central Committee of the 18th Congress, Ling Jihua was promised a seat in the Politburo, due to his proximity to President Hu Jintao; from 2007 to 2012, Ling served as Director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, a central position.

Till November 2012, Ling was also Vice Chairman of the Central Working Coordination Small Group on Tibet.

Unfortunately (for him), one night in March 2012, Ling lost his son (and the promised seat in the coveted Politburo). Ling Gu, the son was killed in a car accident with his Ferrari in Beijing. The 25-year-old was pulled half-naked from the smashed vehicle. Two young women accompanying Ling's son were also killed. The Hong Kong-based news magazine Asia Weekly said that the two women in the vehicle were Tashi Dolma (Zhaxi Zhuoma), daughter of a deputy director of the Qinghai Provincial Public Security Department, and Yang Ji, then a student at China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing; the latter was reportedly the daughter of a well-known 'Living Buddha'¹² from Qinghai.

Ling now heads the United Front Work Department, though after the deadly accident, he has kept a low profile.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² A Reincarnated Lama.

The case of Ngachu

The case of Ngachu¹³ is interesting: despite regular 'inspection tours' by several high-level dignitaries of the Communist Party (including Yu Zhengsheng), the Prefecture is still on the boil.

Nagqu Prefecture is one of the seven prefectures of the Tibet Autonomous Region; it is the largest with an area of 450,537 km² for a population of 400,000. The prefecture is divided into 11 counties with Nagchu Town as capital.

As Nagqu is located on the Qinghai-Tibet railway line, Beijing plans to make the prefecture one of the main economic hubs on the Tibetan plateau.

In May 2013, Yu Zhengsheng chaired his first Small Group on Tibet in Beijing. Apart from the Central officials, the meeting of the Small Group on Tibet is said to have been attended by cadres from Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, Sichuan provinces as well as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).

Soon after the meeting, the Party Secretaries from these areas went back to their respective provinces and gave speeches on the importance of Yu's instructions and comments. A few days later, Yu visited Xinjiang; from his declarations, one can guess what Yu told the Party cadres in Beijing. He called for greater efforts in improving people's living conditions, 'promoting ethnic solidarity' and 'social harmony'; he also emphasized 'social stability'.

On his return to Tibet, Chen Quanguo, the TAR's Party Secretary went for an inspection tour of the Nagchu Prefecture; he carried Yu's message to "bring stability and harmony to Nagqu."

Unfortunately for Secretary Chen, the day he was returning to Lhasa, thousands of Tibetans gathered in Driru county¹⁴. They met at a sacred Tibetan mountain to demonstrate against the Chinese government's planned mining projects in Driru County. The Tibet Post reported: "On May 24, 2013, over 1,000 trucks [probably cars] loaded more than 5,400 Tibetans from the four major areas, including Pekar, Nagshoe Phudha and Tsala, gathered in Dathang town, near the sacred mountain in protest of the growing Chinese mining tensions in the county".

The mountain, called Lhachen Naglha Dzambha, is rich in mineral resources. It was said that the local Tibetans ultimately managed to stop the mining at the holy Mountain, though for days, the situation was reported to be tense on the protest site in the Driru county, where the local authorities deployed a large number of paramilitary personnel, especially after two protesters, Gonp and Abu died in a car accident on their way to the site.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA): "Mining operations in Tibetan regions have led to frequent standoffs with Tibetans who accuse Chinese firms of disrupting sites of spiritual significance and polluting the environment as they extract local wealth. ...Waste

¹³ Or Nagqu in pinyin.

¹⁴ Chinese: Biru in Nagqu Prefecture.

from the mines, in operation since 2005, has been dumped in the local river, and mining activities have polluted the air."

This was bad luck for Mr. Chen who had just preached 'stability'. It was however not the first time that such an incident has happened.

In October 2012, two Tibetan cousins Tsepo, 20 and Tenzin, 25, self-immolated in front of a school in Driru. Tibetans in exile told RFA that the cousins shouted slogans calling for freedom in Tibet and the return of Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama before setting themselves alight. They also pleaded for all Tibetans to be 'united like brothers'.

RFA commented: "Tibetans in Driru have been in the forefront of opposition to Chinese rule in the Tibet Autonomous Region since deadly riots in the region in 2008, with monks and nuns protesting and abandoning monasteries in order to defy 'intrusive' new Chinese regulations."

At that time, Lobsang Gyaltsen, who has since become the head of the government in the TAR, had stayed 2 weeks in the area to pacify the Tibetans. However the Party's senior cadres' exhortations did not work on the local population.

This goes in parallel with the recurring looting of the underground wealth of Tibet. A website, *Meltdown in Tibet*, highlighted the crucial role of the railway line: "Mining and mineral exploration have increased dramatically on the Tibetan Plateau since the 2006 arrival of the Golmud-Lhasa railway link, and due to government programs and promotion. Along with the large government and business controlled mines, small unregulated mining operations are popping up all over the plateau. Due to low salaries, minimal health and safety standards, and weak environmental laws, normally uneconomic mineral deposits can be mined profitably by Chinese companies. Corrupt officials are willing to cut costs even more."

Already in 2007, Xinhua had announced: "Chinese geologists have discovered 16 large copper, iron, lead and zinc ore deposits along the Qinghai-Tibet Railway route since 1999, said the country's top geological surveyor."

Meng Xianlai, director of the China Geological Survey (CGS) under the Ministry of Land and Resources told the Chinese official agency: "Geologists initially found five non-ferrous metal deposits along the 1,956-kilometer railway with total possible reserves of more than 20 million tons of copper and 10 million tons of lead and zinc."

Early October 2013, The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported that the People's Armed Police had beaten and detained 40 Tibetans. The local government apparently used threats and intimidation tactics to enforce the 'mass-line'¹⁵ policy, a brain child of President Xi Jinping.

¹⁵ The mass line is the political, organizational and leadership method developed by Mao Zedong. In 2013, the CCP launched a year-long 'mass line' education campaign to strengthen Party-people relations. On June 18, Xi Jinping declared that the 'mass line' is the lifeline of the Party and the campaign will act as a 'thorough cleanup' of harmful and undesirable work styles such as formalism, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance. He urged the Party's members to boost ties with the people and fight corruption.

The TCHRD says: "Touted by the Chinese government as a means to bring the party leadership closer to the needs and concerns of the masses, the reality is that the policy is aimed at bringing every Tibetan under the direct surveillance of the party's human and technological surveillance machinery."

The human rights organization mentions: "A host of highly-intrusive mass surveillance campaigns such as the 'Benefit the Masses, Solidify the Foundation', 'The Grid Management' system, 'New Socialist Villages' and the recently-announced 'Advanced Joint Household' system are now being implemented in TAR. The official justification behind all these campaigns is that these campaigns would benefit the Tibetans in two ways: by providing long term stability and prosperity."

Those who do not comply with these regulations are severally punished. According to the TCHRD, on 28 September 2013, a serious confrontation occurred between the Chinese security forces and the local Tibetans in Mowa Village in Driru County. The Tibetans rebelled against the compulsory order (under the 'Nine Must Haves' campaign¹⁶) to fly the five-starred red flags during the National Day celebrations.

TCHRD explains: "Local Tibetans in Mowa had refused to fly Chinese flags on their rooftops, a space traditionally reserved for sacred prayer flags; instead they threw the flags into a nearby river to express their disapproval. Armed police and the military arrived later to rein in the Tibetans."

This led to an inevitable confrontation. The local authorities in Driru County announced that the Tibetans who refuse to comply with official rules would be punished; Tibetan protesters would have their children expelled from schools; their sick relatives would not receive medical care in hospitals; and they would not get licenses to harvest the famous *Ophiocordyceps Sinensis*, a pricey caterpillar fungus used as an aphrodisiac in China.

Since 10 September 2013, the Tibetan Autonomous Region authorities have sent some 18,000 Chinese cadres to Driru to intensify the party's 'mass line' policy. These cadres have been conducting 'patriotic education' campaigns among local Tibetans, demanding that they pledge their 'love and gratitude' to the Party and the nation.

The same day, Wu Yingjie, a TAR Deputy Party Secretary, who has been camping for weeks in Nagchu and Dortho, a Chinese born in Tibet who is the Nagchu Prefecture Party

¹⁶ According to The Tibet Daily, the United Front Department decided to promote the 'Nine Haves Monasteries'

1. Have a poster of the four national leaders
2. Have a national PRC flag
3. Have a motorable road to the monastery
4. Have a good source of water
5. Have electricity
6. Have a TV set
7. Have the capacity to show films
8. Have a reading room for books
9. Have The People's Daily and the Tibet Daily newspapers.

Secretary (and TAR's Standing Committee member) ordered the release of the 40 arrested Tibetans.

On September 29, 2013, another protest took place with 4,000 students of County Primary and Middle schools after they were informed about the threat to expel their classmates whose parents had participated in the earlier protests. The County Middle School has later been closed indefinitely.

A day after the National Day (on October 2), local Tibetans in Driru County once again defied the security forces by putting up human blockades along the major highways which had been occupied by the security forces. They demonstrated against the annihilation of the Tibetan identity. Four Tibetans are said to have been killed by bullets in the demonstrations.

To give an idea of the scale of the 'monitoring' of Tibetan activities, Xinhua recently admitted that 60,000 cadres had been stationed in 5459 villages and 1,877 monastic institutions in the TAR. According to TCHRD: "These cadres will either work as village level party secretary or as 'work team' cadres running political education campaigns and espionage activities under another controversial campaign known as 'The Six Ones'. It reminds many of the black day of the Cultural Revolution. Despite the visits of many dignitaries (including Yu Zhengsheng), the situation remains extremely volatile.

Post-trauma stress disorders

One strange phenomenon has to be mentioned here. It demonstrates the difficulty faced by Beijing to 'stabilize' Tibet.

While Beijing's propaganda likes to state that the Tibetans enjoy 'unprecedented freedoms', its People's Armed Police (PAP) suffer in an unprecedented manner on the Roof of the World.

This emerges from a secret Chinese document which has been smuggled out of Tibet and later translated by the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Dharamsala.

The document, dated October 2008 is called "A Handbook on Psychological Counselling and Protection During Stability Maintenance Work in Tibetan Areas". It was drafted by the medical staff department of the Sichuan's PAP Corps. Its objective is to counsel the paramilitary forces doing 'maintenance stability work in Tibetan areas', an euphemism for repression of peaceful gatherings on the Tibetan plateau. The 'handbook' was prepared to take care of the psychological health of the armed police. Various hospitals and health institutes participated in drafting the document which explained: "The purpose of this handbook is to create awareness on common psychological problems faced by PAP soldiers in stability maintenance in Tibetan areas and to identify common psychological problems to strengthen the ways and means to handle such problems while carrying out stability maintenance tasks" Because the PAP's 'psychiatric wellbeing is needed to maintain stability'.

The handbook answers the questions of the stressed jawans in a question and answer format. First question: How to ease mental stress faced by stability maintenance troops in Tibetan areas?

The answer gives the background of 'the work': "Ever since the soldiers began their responsibility of maintaining stability in Tibetan areas, despite all the risks and dangers, on the whole they have kept a determined mind, without succumbing to fear, and made lots of efforts bearing all hardships."

But it is not so easy to control unarmed non-violent Tibetan crowds. The handbook says: "However, the environment of Tibetan areas is very unique and special, and carrying out activities there entails lots of complexities."

Indeed, 60 years after the so-called Liberation of Tibet, the Chinese stress out as soon they reach the plateau.

The handbook goes in detail into different cases of severe headaches, nightmares, flashbacks of brutal episodes such as beating (self-immolations had not begun when the manual was written): "if you face unbearable experiences such as insomnia, it would have an extremely negative impact on your responsibility to carry out work successfully." The unnecessary psychological traumas should be resolved in an appropriate time, says the manual. It explains further: "If you are suffering flashbacks, you should close your eyes and imagine that you are zooming in on the scene like a camera. It may feel uncomfortable. Then zoom all the way out until you cannot see anything. Then tell yourself the flashback has gone."

It appears now that special teams have been visiting the region, spending months at a time counselling Chinese troops.

Something must be rotten in the Middle Kingdom

It is necessary now to go to the Mainland. It may help us to better understand the situation on the Roof of the World.

During his first speech as CCP General Secretary, Xi Jinping asked his partymen to stay clean and self-disciplined, cautioning about the likelihood of the party losing its hold over China due to corruption.

Xinhua reported that the CCP disciplinary watchdogs¹⁴ have called for efforts to halt extravagance during the 2013 Spring Festival. The notification says: "The use of public funds to purchase cigarettes, liquor and gifts for government officials should be strictly prohibited. Public spending on extravagant banquets, travel, entertainment or sporting activities will also be prohibited during the New Year holiday, as well as February's Spring Festival. Officials are prohibited from receiving any gifts in the form of cash, negotiable securities or convertible coupons during official occasions; officials are banned from illegally collecting funds from enterprises or individuals in the form of sponsorships for such occasions. Authorities are also requiring strict regulation over the use of government

¹⁷ The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Ministry of Supervision.

cars for private purposes. Government departments have been told to refrain from diverting public funds to pamper officials and workers. Officials are also banned from using their holidays to lobby or bribe people for promotions, as well as buy votes for official selection procedures." And no holiday gambling!

Similar rules applied to the Army.

The CMC issued ten regulations requiring PLA's officials to cut the number and length of inspection tours, overseas visits, or unnecessary meetings. Military speakers should avoid empty talk, while PLA officials were requested not to attend "ribbon-cutting and cornerstone-laying ceremonies, celebrations or seminars unless they have the CMC's approval."

Further, the new rules say: "The use of vehicles equipped with sirens will be rigorously controlled during official visits in order to prevent public disturbances."

All this may sound familiar in India, but it is not so for the poor (or rich) Chinese Generals, "Officials are also required to discipline their spouses, children and subordinates and make sure they do not take bribes." That is a tough one; 'officials' may not always be 'Generals' at home.

The South China Morning Post reported that Xi Jinping issued another order making the lives of the Chinese generals and senior officers even more difficult. They "have to serve as the lowest-ranking soldiers for at least two weeks per year". Apparently, President Xi Jinping wants to 'shake up the military and boost morale'.

The Hong Kong newspaper explains: "It dictates that officers with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel or above must serve as 'privates' - the lowest-ranking soldier - for not less than 15 days in a year. Generals and officers will have to live, eat and serve with junior soldiers during the period. They need to provide for themselves and pay for their own food."

Even the periodicity of the 'training' for senior most officers is detailed: "Division and Army [Commander] level commanders must serve once every four years. Top leaders from army headquarters and military districts will do so once every five years."

Further horror, all military vehicles must be given new car plates; blacklisted sedans include Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Lincoln, Cadillac, Bentley, Jaguar and Porsche and a few others. In other words, the Great Proletarian Revolution for the PLA!

One can imagine the resentment at the senior level of the PLA; for some generals, it may look more like a Nightmare than the Chinese Dream propagated by Xi Jinping.

Antony Wong Dong, a Macau-based veteran military expert told *The South China Morning Post*: "The lack of discipline, the rampant corruption and the gap between the officers and soldiers are so commonplace, it has compromised the battle-effectiveness of the PLA. Many Generals and senior officers today have never experienced hardship. They are promoted to their position because of their connections or other reasons."¹⁸

¹⁸ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1221012/xi-jinping-orders-generals-and-senior-pla-officers-serve-privates>.

In 1990s already General Wang Zhen, one of the CCP's Eight Elders, lying in a Beijing military hospital told a visitor he felt betrayed: "Decades after he risked his life fighting for an egalitarian utopia, the ideals he held as one of Communist China's founding fathers were being undermined by the capitalist ways of his children - business leaders in finance, aviation and computers." Wang Zhen called the new generation 'Turtle eggs', a slang term for bastards: "I don't acknowledge them as my sons."

The problem seems to be that there are many 'turtle eggs' in China today.

Reforms in the People's Liberation Army?

The People's Liberation Army has immediately understood the change of wind: "The people have noticed that certain army cadres have only a vague understanding of their mission after a long break from combat, and have become lazy in their primary tasks," asserts the same editorial of The PLA Daily.

It criticized army officials who lack the 'awareness of always being ready to fight' and even admits that some soldiers "have not been trained hard enough and the quality of military training is not good enough. They are just not up for the fight."

The PLA Daily reminds its readers that the primary task and ultimate duty of military leaders should be to 'lead soldiers in battles': "Everything the army does should be about fighting, and everything counts for nothing, if the army cannot win battles."

In other words, the role of the PLA is not to get into business ventures or enjoy a comfortable life. The article asks "can today the PLA continue to win battles, when it faces very real, complicated threats and fierce military competition."

This raises a serious question, and as often in China, the mere fact that the question is asked means that Beijing is facing a difficult and real problem in that particular area.

Since he took over the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission (CMC), President Xi Jinping has made it clear that the PLA should be ready 'to fight and win battles'.

He has asserted time and again that to build a modern military power ('with Chinese characteristics and under the Party's leadership') reforms are badly required.

The PLA publication mentions a few of these reforms: "to optimize the size and structure of the army, reform the leadership system, and reduce noncombat institutions and personnel". The negative ethos (in another word, corruption) needs to be curbed and the sense of duty and responsibility of senior army officials needs to be enhanced, says the Party.

The PLA Daily adds: "Combat effectiveness should be a core standard in leadership, logistics, armaments and other sectors of the army. Tactics and training must be regarded as the main job of the army leadership. Leaders should encourage strategic studies, grasp the internal logic of IT-based wars and enhance their capacity to control informationalized equipment."

It clearly signifies that it is not the case in the ranks of the PLA today.

The Central Committee's Third Plenum

"China's People's Liberation Army is striving to maintain its glorious wartime reputation by advancing military reform and putting paid to the ethos of decadence", said an editorial of The PLA Daily, the day after the Third Plenum of the 18th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (a 4 day-conclave held from November 9 to 12, 2013). The Party had just delivered 2 new Leading Groups: one on reforms (it was expected) and more surprisingly, a National Security Committee (NSC).

The new leadership in Beijing had decided to bet on development and reforms: "The general objective of the approved reforms is to improve and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics ...development is still the key to solving all problems in China," affirmed a statement of the Central Committee.

Xi Jinping and his colleagues seem to have seen the clouds gathering in the Middle Kingdom's sky: for the present Emperors, the only way to avoid the fate of former Soviet Union (where the internal security apparatus had become weak, corrupt and ineffective), was to act fast; reforms needed to be introduced at once, or else the Communist Party's days would be counted.

The Third Plenum admitted that the forthcoming reforms would decide the destiny of modern China. The statement concluded with "the need to deepen reforms in order to build a moderately prosperous society, and a strong and democratic country, as well as realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation."

Xi Jinping's reforms may remain a dream; *Sinocism*, an excellent newsletter which analyses the current events in China, commented: "The decision is impressive and shows that the leadership is both aware of and committed to deep reforms. ...the truly hard part is not the drafting but the implementation of changes that will affect interests throughout society. But at least Xi has clearly articulated [his] resolve and vision for reform."

Is it enough?

The National Security Committee

Two things worry Beijing a great deal: stability and security.

When the 204-member Central Committee discussed building a fairer and more sustainable social security system, encompassing an improved housing guarantee, strengthening the protection of intellectual property rights, encouraging innovation, etc., the background was 'stability'.

According to Xi Jinping, the new economic policies can only be implemented if China is stable: "State security and social stability are preconditions for reform and development", said the President, adding that only when the nation is safe and society is stable, could reform and development constantly advance.

This seems the justification for the creation of the National Security Committee (NSC) which will deal with internal as well external issues: "China is facing two pressures: internationally, the country needs to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development

interests; domestically, political security and social stability should be ensured¹⁹", explained Xi, adding: "The variety of predictable and unpredictable risks has been increasing remarkably, and the system has not yet met the needs of safeguarding state security."

Reuters said that it "will enable the government to speak with a single voice when it comes to dealing with crises at home and abroad."

Does China today speak with more than one voice in the East China Sea or the Indian border in Ladakh? Probably!

'Internal' security has traditionally meant muzzling the opposition to the regime. It will continue. It was reported that a sophisticated new system allowing tracking of messages in the languages of all the Mainland's ethnic groups has recently been introduced in China. The report added: "The system is aimed at local authorities in areas such as Xinjiang and Tibet, where security officials do not know the local language."

Tibet and Xinjiang are two of the 'internal' threats which will be dealt with by the new body. Recently, the repression has increased in both restive regions. The self-immolations in Tibet have been the most visible consequence of the stiffening of the security apparatus.

While actively popularizing the Internet, the Plenum decided to 'reinforce its overall administration over cyberspace in accordance with the law and accelerate formation of a sound Internet management system".

It sounds ominous for the 'minorities'!

Analysts believe that the NSC is based on the National Security Agency of the United States and may have snooping facilities like in the US. Reuters says that the NSC "would increase coordination among the various wings of China's security bureaucracy, split now among the police, military, intelligence and diplomatic services."

What are the reforms contemplated by Beijing today?

The Reform of the PLA

Traditionally the ground forces played a major role in China; in the past, there was no question of a joint operation with the PLAN (Navy) and the PLAAF (Air Force) participating on equal footing as the PLA.

Speaking on the question of structural and organizational reforms of the Chinese military, Yang Yujun, the spokesman of the Ministry of National Defense (MND) admitted that the PLA "has made explorations in that field", he added that the Chinese PLA "will deepen reform in good time and blaze a trail in reform on joint operation command system [...] with Chinese characteristics."

Yang gave some examples: "the ratio of officers to soldiers and that of troop units to organs are not reasonable in the PLA"; further "to cope with threats and challenges facing national security, the scale and structure of the Chinese military should be further optimized and the proportion of combat forces should be raised, so as to enhance the

¹⁸Xi Jinping expounds security commission role, see <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/825214.shtml>.

Chinese military's ability of fighting and winning battles."

In the wake of the Plenum, military schools were told to review their curriculums 'to boost real combat abilities', as a PLA publication put it.

According to an official statement, "the reform will also unify teaching materials, innovate in teaching methods for combat command and hone a performance-based reward and penalty mechanism for students."

The military academies and universities should thereafter "foster talent in accordance with the goals of strengthening the army and boosting students' ideological and political quality, adopting a combat-oriented educational system", adding "concrete efforts should be made to cultivate high-quality military talents that are capable of participating in and winning a war".

The new NSC will probably overview and monitor these 'reform' programs.

A Chinese publication emphasizes that the PLA should "better co-ordinate the work of its different military and geographical branches".

Does it mean that the CMC will change the army's command structure to enhance its capacity to 'win modern wars'?

The South China Morning Post quoted military officials and experts saying that the PLA was keen on innovation, but was unlikely to build a chain of united commands like the US Pacific Command, which co-ordinates regional military, terrorism and crime-fighting.

Xu Guangyu, a former PLA major general who is now a senior researcher at the Beijing-based China Arms Control and Disarmament Association told the Hong Kong newspaper: "The PLA will definitely make reforms, but its steps cannot be too big. ...All foreign countries' military systems could be a reference, but it doesn't mean the PLA will copy any one of them. Past experience shows us that the current system still works. It just needs some improvement." The leadership can't go too fast with many 'vested interests' and lobbies in the PLA.

The Plenum also decided to call for "innovation in military theory, strengthening military leadership, improving military strategy in the new era, and building a modern military power system with Chinese characteristics."

All this means a centralization of the power in the CMC, in other words, in Xi Jinping's hands; his role will thereafter be 'optimized'.

Interestingly, 'quality privately-owned enterprises will be allowed to join the defence industry'.

India should perhaps study these reforms and learn from them?

Some of the possible reforms

Coming back to the reforms, what are the possible improvements (apart from eradicating corruption) that the PLA can take up?

In an interview to the *Beijing Morning News*, Li Daguang, a military expert at

National Defense University said that China should reduce the proportion of its ground forces and increase its navy and air force.

He suggested that the CMC should establish a separate command headquarters for the respective military entities: "In combat operations, they will be under a joint command based on the direction of combat."

On November 15, Xinhua reported that China will "optimize the size and structure of the army, adjust and improve the proportion between various troops, and reduce non-combat institutions and personnel".

It added that joint operation command authority under the CMC, and theater joint operation command system, will be improved. The new leadership promised to accelerate the building of new combat powers, and deepen the reform of military colleges. Further, the systems of defence research and production, and procurement of weaponry, need to be reformed, as quality privately-owned enterprises may be allowed to join defence industry.

Changes in the nuclear sphere are also on the cards.

In 2012, Radio Free Asia had reported that speaking at a seminar, Major General Zhu Chenghu of China's National Defense University had announced that China will need to modernize its nuclear arsenal in response to a planned US-backed missile defense system that may have a destabilizing effect on strategic stability: "China must modernize its nuclear arsenal ...because the deployment of a U.S. missile defense system may reduce the credibility of China's nuclear deterrence. ...Otherwise, we will have a tough time maintaining that we have a credible system of nuclear deterrence," he said.

Another necessary reform, *The PLA Daily* published a report that highlighted the urgent need for standardization in the armed forces. The report says that standardization would multiply the troops' combat capabilities: "Otherwise, the lack of coordinated standardization among the army, navy, and air forces could become the 'Achilles heel' of the military forces."

For example, during a military exercise, while sailors on the four ships were able to hear each other, they could not transmit combat data because their information system was not compatible with that of the other ships.

Another example: a brigade in the Second Artillery responded to an emergency with more than 300 vehicles and varied equipment; there were as many as 90 different brands and models. The communications battalion alone had 12 different models of generators. The brigade commander complained that if there were a war, they would need to have several truckloads of spare parts.

No comment is required.

Conclusion

Delhi should definitely be alert and follow closely the development on the NSC front as the new body will also be responsible for the Sino-Indian border issue and incidents similar to the Depsang Plain episode in Ladakh in April 2013 are bound to occur again and this time, there will be certainly a better coordination between the military on the border and the foreign office in Beijing.

Taking the reins

The likely structure of the Central Military Commission after the 18th party congress late next year



Chief of General Staff Fang Fenghui OR Zhang Youxia	Commander of Second Artillery Force Wei Fenghe	Potential new commanders of China's seven military regions Shenyang Jia Xiaowei
Director of General Political Department Liu Yuan OR Zhang Haiyang	Navy Commander Sun Jianguo	 Beijing Wang Ning
Director of General Logistics Department Hou Shusen	Air Force Commander Ma Xiaotian	 Lanzhou Liu Yuejun
	Director of General Armament Department Zhang Youxia OR Xu Fenlin	 Jinan Zhao Zongqi
		 Nanjing Qin Weijiang
		 Guangzhou Qi Jianguo
		 Chengdu Hou Jizhen

SCMP



"We do not wish it to be known that we are simply the torch-bearers of somebody else, because we have also our own philosophy and our ideology. The doctrine for which India has stood has been the doctrine of live and let live...there are certain fundamental and basic ideologies for which India has stood and even stands today. We stand for freedom of expression, for freedom of thought, for freedom of association and religion and our Constitution has been based on the sound principles of democracy...Today two things are vitally necessary. We have to strengthen our military position and if we cannot do it alone we shall have to do it in collaboration with others with whom we can stand on a common platform in defence of a common ideology. Then we shall have to strengthen internal strength and peace, and satisfactorily solve the economic problem...so that we can create that solidarity and stability which would be impregnable both from the national and international standpoints."

- Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

(Discussion in Parliament on the International Situation, 6th December, 1950)