



British Embassy  
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## China Politics Update – September 2014

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President Xi Jinping paid a two-day visit to Mongolia (21-22 August). It was Xi's first visit to the country since becoming President in 2013. Both sides agreed to upgrade the bilateral relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership. During a meeting with Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, Xi said China was keen to enhance cross-border transport and cooperation in mining and new energy sectors with Mongolia.

22 August marked the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. Celebrations were held nationwide to commemorate his legacy. Addressing at a symposium in Beijing, President Xi described Deng as "a long-tested communist fighter, the chief architect of China's socialist reform and opening." Xi emphasised the importance of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, created under Deng's leadership, and urged the current leadership to carry on the responsibility to further develop China. "The independent path, theory and system are keys to sovereignty and dignity of our country as well as the self-esteem and independence of the Chinese nation" said Xi.

China's State Internet Information Office passed a new set of regulations on 7 August targeted at popular instant messaging platforms. The new rules require users to use real names to register for accounts and abide by seven directives, such as adherence to the socialist system, national interests, and social morality. Furthermore, it also prevents 'public' accounts from publishing current affairs news unless they are from an officially-sanctioned media outlet. According to an official spokesman, the new regulations will counter "terrorism, violence and pornography as well as slander and rumours." Previously, the government passed similar regulations against China's popular microblogging platform Sina Weibo (China's Twitter) in 2012. In September last year, the authorities introduced a law that criminalised spreading online rumours that are later forwarded 500 times or viewed 5,000 times. As a result sensitive online debate, migrated to WeChat (China's whatsapp with 400 million+ users), which appears to be the main target of the new regulations.

The anti-corruption campaign continues as four senior level officials from Shanxi Province were netted. Vice-governor Ren Ruihou and head of United Front Work Department Bai Yun were removed from office for alleged corruption. Wang Shulin became the new Party Secretary, while his predecessor Yuan Chunqing was transferred to an unknown position handling rural policy. Accordingly to the state Xinhua news agency, Politburo Standing Committee member Liu Yunshan told Shanxi officials that the province's "political ecology" was riddled with problems and the situation with regard to party building, clean government and the fight against corruption was grim.

The National People's Congress (China's top legislature) adopted on 31 August the legal framework for Hong Kong's first executive election by universal suffrage in 2017, and warned that the rising illegal activities in the city could undermine Hong Kong's rule of law and social stability. "The decision is vital for steadily developing democracy in Hong Kong and implementing the selection of the HKSAR Chief Executive by universal suffrage according to the law," said Politburo Standing Committee member Zhang Dejiang. Current Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying hailed the decision as "a major step forward in the development of the Hong Kong society," adding that the government will launch the second round of public consultation before the framework is put to a vote in the first quarter of 2015. The move sparked anger among pro-democracy groups, who gathered in front of the Hong Kong City Hall to protest the decision. Under the new rules, candidates for Chief Executive would need the support of more than 50% of a nominating committee to run in the election, and that only two or three would be selected.

A magnitude 6.5 earthquake struck Ludian county in Yunnan Province on 03 August, leaving over 600 people dead and 2000 injured. Premier Li Keqiang arrived at the epicentre within 24 hours to oversee rescue efforts.



Finally, property giant Dalian Wanda Group has announced plans to join two of the country's biggest internet companies, the search engine Baidu and social media group Tencent, in building a large scale e-commerce platform. The venture could challenge the dominance of Alibaba, which itself will soon be listed on the New York Stock Exchange in what analysts believe to be one of the biggest initial public offerings in history. "Within five years, the total investment will be around 20 billion yuan" according to Wang Jianlin, CEO of Wanda Group,.

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