

BBC World News

Xi Jinping Political Report to 19th CPC National Congress

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October 18, 2017

Host: Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn is a long-time advisor to China's leaders and the author of *How China's Leaders Think*. Welcome, Dr. Kuhn; you attended Xi Jinping's speech in Beijing. What was it like?

RLK: It was an ambitious and audacious speech, giving a broad sweep of what China has achieved in the last five years and where China is going in the future. CPC General Secretary Xi used an interesting word, "confluence", to describe the 19th CPC National Congress because China has put forth two overarching goals. The short-term goal is 2020, a moderately prosperous society - which is approximately the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China in 2021. The long-term goal goes to 2050, actually 2049, which the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and that's to have a fully modernized, socialist nation that's prosperous, strong, democratic, and harmonious and beautiful, and lots of adjectives.



RLK: And this 19th Party Congress, and the five years that will ensue from it, brings both together short and long-term overarching goals. It fulfills the first goal, the moderately prosperous society within the term of the 19th Party Congress. It then sets the agenda, and perhaps the leadership - certainly the strategies, the ideas, the new thinking that go all the way to 2050. Xi talked about two stages getting to 2050: 2020 to 2035 and then 2035 to 2050, in building the kind of country that they envision. As I said, it's an audacious vision, and it was very specific. It was highly appreciated by the people in the Great Hall of the People. We were sitting there—as a China watcher I found it quite engaging, even for all three and a half hours.

Host: That was quite some lengthy speech. The anti-corruption drive continues. What does that say about Xi's grip on power? I mean several million people seem to be caught up in that over the past few years.

RLK: Anti-corruption is an absolutely critical part of this speech. There has been some speculation that, in his second term, President Xi would slightly let up on the anti-corruption - the theory being by external observers that the anti-corruption campaign was largely a political tool, and having achieved what was done in the 19th Party Congress, it would no longer be necessary. And that's been proven totally false. There's actually multiple for the anti-corruption campaign – I've noted ten reasons.



RLK: But what President Xi said today made it brutally clear that the anti-corruption campaign not only will continue, it will be strengthened. And he hinted that there will be some additional features – maybe some kind of institutionalization going forward. But he is very serious and there's a bigger vision in it because President Xi wants China to become literally among the world leaders in every major category. He wants China to be a business center in the world, a global role model, and China cannot achieve that if its own internal ethics and morality is very weak because of corruption in the one-party system. So, the claim that he made is that the Communist Party of China, the ruling party, is able to deal with corruption itself. It doesn't need external checks and balances – these are my words, not his.



RLK: But that was basically what he said: we can do it ourselves. He really laid down the gauntlet. He said fighting corruption is what we have to do and we're going to do. And we're going to do more than ever. It sounds like he has some surprises in store.



Host: What about conflicting messages on the economy?

RLK: On the economy, Xi was straightforward. I don't think there was anything remarkable. The emphasis was on the Party. On the economy, continuing reform. There wasn't a lot about state-owned enterprises that maybe some people were looking to. Very strong on strengthening rule of law. Also The emphasis was international.