

CPC to set agenda all the way to 2049: Kuhn on Party's 19th National Congress

By Kou Jie, Liu Ning (People's Daily Online) 16:26, September 28, 2017



Being one of China's most important political events, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (NCCPC) is scheduled to convene on Oct. 18 in Beijing, with many experts hailing it as "an unprecedented meeting that will determine China's two centenary goals."

The National Congress, which is held every five years, normally draws out guidelines and policies for the country's next five years' development and a leadership reshuffle will take place.

The two centenary goals

“This year’s NCCPC would be different from the former ones. Because of the overarching issues in China and the opportunities for the future, the vision of this national congress looks like it will be much more than five years in terms of the goals. The developmental plan will be set at the 19th Party congress and that sets the agenda and strategy to go all the way potentially to 2050,” Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a public intellectual and China expert who has advised the Chinese government, told People’s Daily Online.

The Two Centenaries includes the 100 year anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2021 and the centenary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 2049. The first goal, which is within the next five years’ plan, aims to build a moderately prosperous society in China, while the latter aims to make China a strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and modern socialist country by 2049.

“The second centenary goal is the highlight of this year’s National Congress, because that is when China would blossom and mature into a fully modernized socialist country. By then, China’s all aspects of society, its industry, its science, technology, culture would all be at world-class standard, and that’s really a massive undertaking,” said Kuhn.

According to Kuhn, China’s development path might potentially be set for more than 30 years, as opposed to the normal five years, while the agenda, strategies, and mechanisms that will be used to achieve the second centenary goal are likely to be discussed at the 19th NCCPC.

In addition to making national development plans, this year’s National Congress will elect a new CPC Central Committee and a new Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Efforts will also be made to continue to build a better Party, to achieve the final victory of building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way, and to create new prospect for socialism with Chinese characteristics.

A glimpse of Xi’s new ideas, thoughts, and strategies of state governance

“China is at a critical moment now in terms of its domestic development and its engagement with the world, while the latter is a new conception and is very proactive under President Xi,” said Kuhn, who believed that Xi’s new ideas, thoughts, and strategies of state governance have provided the nation systematic approaches to boost its future development.

According to Xinhua, the 19th NCCPC will advance coordinated development of the “Four Comprehensives,” which refers to a four-pronged strategy that aims to comprehensively accomplish a moderately prosperous society, deepen reform, advance rule of law, and strengthen Party self-governance.

“The Four Comprehensives is President Xi’s overarching governance philosophy,” Kuhn said, adding that it is clearly a vision and commitment. “It is a big vision. President Xi has called it the Chinese Dream,” Kuhn noted.

“Though each of these policies have been suggested and supported by previous leaders for many years, Xi’s comprehensive combination of the four points means what have been done was no longer good enough, and the policies need to be tested at a higher level of its significance,” said Kuhn.

A moderately prosperous society, the goal is number one. Deepening reform is a means. Rule of Law is principle. And strict governance of the Party is like action of State of Affairs, Kuhn said, “The Four Comprehensives highlight the deep-root complexity of what it will take to achieve the Chinese Dream.”



Robert Lawrence Kuhn

Echoing Kuhn, many experts and sources from within the Party agreed that in order to comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society, China should set out to eradicate extreme poverty rather than only focus on GDP per capita, while substantial reforms must disrupt certain interest groups, particularly state enterprises and individuals that protect their own interests.

“The rule of law is the most underappreciated one among the four policies among Western scholars. While Westerners focus on individual court cases, the judiciary reform under this policy has been a milestone,” said Kuhn.

The last Comprehensive, strengthening Party self-governance, has led to the largest organized anti-graft effort in the history of the CPC. The far-reaching campaign began in 2012 following the conclusion of the 18th National Congress of the CPC.

More than 200 vice-ministerial and higher-level officials and managers have been investigated since the 18th NCCPC, tripled that of the 2007 to 2012 period, Zhang Hao, a professor from the Party School of the Guangdong Provincial Committee of CPC, told Xinhua.

“While many Westerners see the anti-corruption campaign as a political struggle, I believe that the effort will transform China ultimately into a model of a world-class business ethics and standard,” said Kuhn.

“The Four Comprehensives and Xi’s ideas of governance work together and reinforce each other. I look at it as a grand vision and a very serious commitment to make it happen,” he added.