I. INTRODUCTION

At its first plenary session on 16 November, 2012, the 18th Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) returned its seven-member Standing Committee. XI Jinping serves as the General Secretary, the Chairman of the Central Military Commission and the Chairman of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). LI Keqiang serves as the Premier. The other five members are ZHANG Dejiang, YU Zhengsheng, LIU Yunshan, WANG Qishan, and ZHANG Gaoli. What are the implications of this change for the CCP and China? To get an answer, this paper analyzes the idiosyncratic and structural characteristics of the leadership, the challenges these top leaders are facing, and what they would do. The focus of this investigation is on how politics are affected by social, economic, and cultural conditions. This paper also pursues a structural approach, which is more likely to offer systematic and reliable estimates of what is in store for China.

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