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## The Chinese Communist Party Focuses on Culture

2011-10-20

The Communist Party Central Committee's Sixth Plenum concluded on October 18. While the unstated subjects of the Plenum were preparations for the 2012 Party Congress and continued jockeying among officials for positions in the leadership transition, the express focus of the Plenum was cultural policy—specifically, driving reform of the cultural structure.

The focus on reform of the cultural structure has its roots in three concerns: (1) the perceived decline in ethics among the populace, which to the Party means a decline in the responsiveness of the populace to propaganda; (2) the limited commercial success of the cultural industry or preferred segments thereof; and (3) the limited international appeal or soft power of China's cultural industry.

The communiqué issued at the end of the Plenum provides few specifics on actions to be taken beyond a determination to provide some subsidized cultural content free of charge or at low cost to the populace. There also is a determination to enhance the dissemination of cultural content to increase its availability, which may provide some opportunities for foreign business in technology and marketing.

There is, however, no indication of any intent to relax political control over culture. To the contrary, the emphasis is on "core socialist values" in culture with such values essential to the development of a "national, scientific and popular" culture.

Nevertheless, the focus on development of the cultural sector may indirectly lead to a loosening of some restrictions on content and further opening to foreign programming and investment in order to enhance the popular appeal and global reach of Chinese culture.

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