

The CCP's Views on Its Mission of China's Unification and Its Thorny Challenges

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Abstract

Unification is one of Beijing's three major tasks before 2049. China's decades-long economic growth is strengthening Xi Jinping's confidence and ambition to be reelected at the coming 20th party congress as an unprecedented maker of the Chinese dream. Xi announced "one country, two systems with a Taiwan Formula," but immediately was refuted by Tsai Ing-wen; Hong Kong's version of the *National Security Law* was passed, but at the cost of the birth of *Hong Kong Autonomy Act*, sanctioning China. The U.S.-led democratic allies followed suit. Different from Deng Xiaoping, Xi has followed Mao Zedong's radical, provocative, and xenophobic path against the U.S.-led democracies. Structurally, U.S.-China relations will continue to stand in a stalemate, and there is no need or incentive for either to trigger a war immediately. As the hostilities between China and the U.S.-led democracies have been structured, they will bring about a devastating catastrophe for China in the long run. For example, Hong Kong is losing its glamour as a free international city. Also, the Taiwan Strait is located at the axis of the First Island Chain, so the free world cannot afford to lose Taiwan again. Taiwan, therefore, has to safeguard itself well and play a constructive role in the U.S.-led democracies.

Keywords: Xi Jinping, Unification, One Country Two Systems with a Taiwan Formula, Hong Kong's Version of the National Security Law, Hong Kong Autonomy Act

I. Unification as One of the Three Major Tasks before the Centenary of the People's Republic of China in 2049

In order to comprehensively inquire about Xi Jinping's second term policy in the relationship between China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, we may have to return to the context and rationale of the "Report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," unveiled by Xi on October 27, 2017. Continuing the tradition of the Communist Party of China, the "Report" is framed by three historical tasks, namely "realizing the advancement of modernization," "completing the reunification of the motherland," and "maintaining world peace and promoting common development"; among them, "completing the reunification of the motherland" involves the "China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan" triangle relationship. In promoting the three major historical processes, the so-called "two centenary years" are milestones marked by Xi's generation: the first centenary is 2021, which is the 100th year of the founding of the CCP; the second one is 2049, which is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

In conjunction with the two time points of 2021 and 2049, the "Report" pointed out that the prospects of China's development can be accomplished in two stages: "Phase 1, 2020-2035, to achieve socialist modernization" and "Phase 2, 2035-2050, to achieve a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious and beautiful modern socialist country." The period of time, from the 19th National Congress of 2017 to the 20th of 2022, is the historical intersection of the "two centenary" goals, which is the "decisive period" for building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way. In other words, it is a period of preparation. If it is done well, then there will be a good foundation for development of Phase 1. In fact, China's decades-long robust economic growth speculated by analysts also strengthened Xi's confidence that China may overtake the United States as the world's largest economic power (see Figure 1). This may also account for the incentives for Xi's efforts to be reelected at the 20th party congress as an unprecedented maker of the Chinese dream.

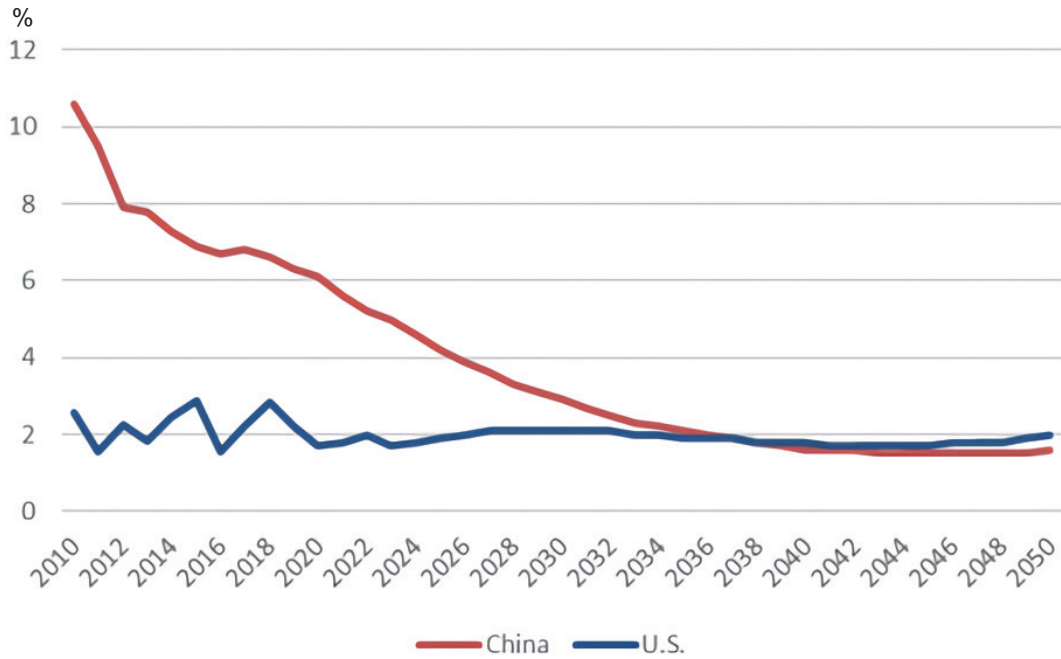


Figure 1. U.S. and Chinese Annual Real GDP Growth Rates in 2010-2018 and Projections through 2050

Source: Wayne M. Morrison, “China’s Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States,” June 25, 2019, *EveryCRSReport.com*, <<https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33534.html#Content>>.

Since Xi regards his second term as so decisive for his ambitious Chinese dream, his political decisions domestically and externally have seemed so aggressive and radical. Thus, he needs to grip power by assuming more hats in manipulating political power (see Table 1).

Table 1. Chairs of Leading Groups that Xi Jinping Assumes

Chinese	English	Start date	Chair	Deputy Chair(s)	Head of Office	Comments
中央財經	Finance & Economy	1980	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang	Liu He	Upgrade to a commission after 19 th Party Congress
中央外事工作	Foreign Affairs	1981	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang	Yang Jiechi	Upgrade to a commission after 19 th Party Congress
中央全面深化改革	Comprehensively Deepening Reform	2013	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang, Wang Huning, Han Zheng	Wang Huning	Upgrade to a commission after 19 th Party Congress
中央國家安全	National Security	2013	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu	Ding Xuexiang*	Founded as commission
中央網路安全和信息化	Cybersecurity & Informatization	2014	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang, Wang Huning	Zhuang Rongwen	Upgrade to a commission after 19 th Party Congress
中央全面依法治國	Commission for Comprehensive Law-based Governance	2017	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang, Wang Huning, Li Zhanshu	Guo Shengkun	Upgrade to a commission after 19 th Party Congress
中央軍民融合發展	Integrated Military and Civil Development	2017	Xi Jinping	Wang Huning, Han Zheng	Han Zheng*	Founded as commission
中央審計	National Audit	2018*	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang, Zhao Leji	Hu Zejun	Founded as commission

Source: Nis Grünberg & Katja Drinhausen, “The Party leads on everything China’s changing governance in Xi Jinping’s new era,” September 24, 2019, *MERICs*, <<https://merics.org/en/report/party-leads-everything>>.

Notes: Three hats are omitted by the authors in the table, *i.e.*: The Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs (中央對臺工作小組), The National Defense and Armed Forces (國防和軍隊改革小組), and The CMC Joint Operations Command Center (軍委聯合作戰指揮部).

Regarding the Taiwan issue, on January 2, 2019, Xi announced a “one country, two systems with a Taiwan Formula.” This, however, was refuted immediately and rejected totally by the Tsai Ing-wen government. As for the Hong Kong issue, on June 30, 2020, the Standing Committee of CNPC passed the *Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China on the Maintenance of National Security*

Law, also known as the Hong Kong Version of the “Law.” Afterwards, Hong Kong’s Democrats successively announced their withdrawal from political and social activities. This signifies that Hong Kong’s legal and political life has officially walked into the end of “one country, two systems” (see Table 2).

Table 2. Ten Reasons Why Everyone Should Be Worried about This New Law

1	“Endangering national security” can mean virtually anything.
2	The law has been abused from day one.
3	The law tightens control over education, journalism, and social media.
4	People could be taken to mainland China for unfair trials.
5	The law applies to everyone on the planet.
6	The investigating authorities have new and extensive powers.
7	The Chinese government now has a national security arm in Hong Kong.
8	The Hong Kong government also has a new body that is not subject to oversight.
9	Human rights protections risk being overridden.
10	The law has already had an immediate chilling effect.

Source: Compiled by the author, based on “Hong Kong’s national security law: 10 things you need to know,” July 17, 2020, *Amnesty International*, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/hong-kong-national-security-law-10-things-you-need-to-know/>>.

In contrast to Hong Kong, in Xi’s calculations, Taiwan Strait relations with its highly international involvements have not yet been placed on the first priority of the agenda. The fact is that Taiwan’s mainstream stance on cross-Strait relations is to “maintain the *status quo*,” and places such as the U.S., Japan, and Europe also strongly support this order. With it, for China, an old-fashioned Taiwan policy with strategic patience is more desirable and safer. Nevertheless, this does not mean that China will ignore or deal with the Taiwan issue coldly. Beijing would rather change its way of dealing with Taiwan in its own way. The way the CCP is good at operation is naturally a unilateral act of “doing but not telling.” Realistically and pragmatically, Beijing will continue the practice of absorbing Taiwan with social and economic factors; drawing in the private sector and isolating the official one.

II. The Failure of Hong Kong's One Country, Two Systems

Since the implementation of the Hong Kong version of the “Law,” the Hong Kong government has endlessly arrested and prosecuted democrats and dissidents. The CCP’s promotion of this law reveals its strong intent to deter foreign forces from interfering in Hong Kong affairs. Corresponding to the “Law,” the U.S. simultaneously passed the *Hong Kong Autonomy Act of 2020* to abolish its treatment status. The Act authorizes Washington to assist Hong Kongers to obtain legal access to the U.S. Besides, those officials persecuting Hong Kong’s democracy, freedom, human rights, and autonomy who have assets in the U.S. will have those assets locked by the Secretary of State or the Secretary of the Treasury. Their family members also are not allowed to enter the U.S. Relevant laws also have been released accordingly, including the following. First, the *Hong Kong Safe Harbor Act*, relaxing the asylum of Hong Kongers who are not treated fairly or are politically persecuted. Second, the *Hong Kong People’s Freedom and Choice Act*, providing for the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) of Hong Kong people.

After the announcement of the “Law,” the UK, together with its two major alliance countries, Canada and Australia, expressed their concerns about Hong Kong’s autonomy. After the U.S. Secretary of State announced that Hong Kong is no longer autonomous, the UK-led Commonwealth of Nations also joined the official statement with the U.S., paving the way for the Five-Eye Alliance to share information and discuss Hong Kong’s political situation. The UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have adopted a unified position relaxing Hong Kongers’ immigration conditions and suspending their extradition agreements with China.

A series of consultations among EU countries led by Germany and France reached a final consensus. The 27 EU countries will restrict the export of technologies that may be used for suppression or surveillance to Hong Kong, and review the “Law” on asylum, immigration, visas, and residence. Additionally, they will strengthen coordination with Hong Kong students and universities, discuss the risks that the law brings to EU citizens, and review its impact on the European extradition treaty. Nevertheless, the conclusion reached by the Council of the EU only provides the EU countries’ “framework for action” on Hong Kong issues, and the leadership of the implementation of actual measures is still left to the governments of the EU countries.

Japan is the first Asian country to join the G7 and issue a statement on the implementation of the “Law.” Nevertheless, the Suga government only expressed “significant worries” about the situation in Hong Kong regarding the implementation of the “Law.” Japan’s cross-party Japan Parliamentary Alliance on China (JPAC) requires the Japanese government to enact the *Human Rights Violation Sanctions Act* as soon as possible, and to study whether there are measures in the current legal system to respond to people who are persecuted by the Chinese and Hong Kong governments.

In response to the “Law,” the Taiwan government also has announced the “Hong Kong Humanitarian Aid and Care Action Project” and established a Taiwan-Hong Kong Service Exchange Office to provide various consultations and one-stop services for Hong Kong people coming to Taiwan. In addition, Hong Kong people who have safety concerns about their individual cases and whose freedom is endangered urgently will be assisted as soon as possible with special cases.

Faced with the possible exodus of talent and funds brought about by the immigration wave of Hong Kong people, the CCP announced on the one hand that it will no longer recognize British National (Overseas) passport as a travel document and identity certificate from the end of January 2021. On the other hand, The Immigration Ordinance of Hong Kong was passed on the third reading on April 28 and will come into effect on August 1. It empowers the Secretary for Security to authorize the Director of Immigration to restrict anyone from entering or leaving Hong Kong as an aid to the “Law.” It can be found that the CCP also is trying to carry out related countermeasures against international aid measures to Hong Kong people.

Contrary to Beijing’s expectation, since Biden was elected, the pattern of strategic confrontation between the U.S. and China has not changed. Although then-President Trump signed the *Hong Kong Autonomy Act* as a positive tool for the U.S. to sanction China, for the Democratic Party, the changes in Hong Kong’s political system are China’s internal affairs, nevertheless, once a human rights incident is involved, it will be a value issue that is unavoidable for Biden. The arrest of democrats and dissidents by the Hong Kong government this year is an active strategy of the CCP to counter U.S. sanctions and suppression. The purpose of binding dissidents in Hong Kong as hostages is to force Biden to get China-U.S. exchanges back on track as soon as possible. After the talks between U.S. Secretary of State Blinken and CCP Politburo

member Yang Jiechi in Alaska, however, the confrontation between the U.S. and China became more apparent, and it also likely the CCP may adopt a more austere strategy for governing Hong Kong in the future.

Realistically, China does not need Hong Kong nearly as much as it used to. Hong Kong's share of China's economy has been declining since early the 1990s (see Figure 2).

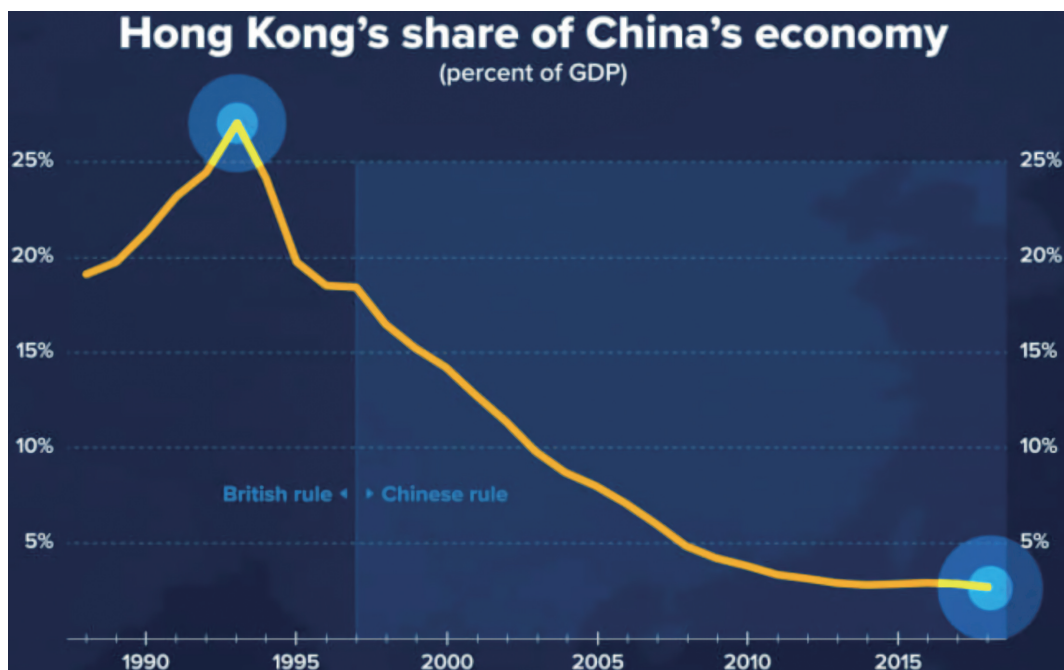


Figure 2. The Declining Importance of Hong Kong in China

Source: MacKenzie Sigalos, "How China's national security law could change Hong Kong forever," *CNBC*, August 19, 2020, <<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/01/chinas-national-security-law-hong-kong-global-financial-center.html>>.

Beijing no longer cares about different voices in Hong Kong. From Beijing's point of view, the value of Hong Kong's existence lies in its role as only a pillar of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in an economic and strategic sense. Namely, for Beijing, Hong Kong is more an instrumental role rather than a showcase for democracy; democracy is a media for forceful intervention from abroad. The 14th Five-Year Plan stated that "supporting Hong Kong and Macau to consolidate and enhance their competitive advantages and well integrate them into the overall

development of the country”; and financial advantages are an important entry point for Hong Kong to integrate into the 14th Five-Year Plan. Beijing also expects Hong Kong to play a unique role in the national 14th Five-Year Plan, the “One Belt One Road” initiative and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The role of Hong Kong, however, became limited after Trump signed *Hong Kong Autonomy Act* and issued an executive order to terminate the special preferential trade treatment for Hong Kong; Hong Kong's trade and tariff status will be the same as China's. In the “Economic Freedom Index” published by the Heritage Foundation in the United States in March this year, Hong Kong was removed from the rating for the first time. Although there is no denying that the software operations, talents, lawyers, financial structure, *etc.* involved in the stabilization of the financial industry in Hong Kong will hardly be replaced immediately, the trend of Hong Kong's future is turning bleak. In a long-term perspective, Hong Kong will gradually decline from an international metropolis into a city at the national level.

III. “One country, Two systems” Has No Market in Taiwan

On March 5, 2021, China's Taiwan policy revealed in Li Keqiang's government report stated the following. (1) Adhere to the one-China principle and the 1992 consensus. (2) Promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and the reunification of the motherland, be highly vigilant, and resolutely curb secessionist activities in Taiwan independence. (3) Improve systems and policies that guarantee the well-being of Taiwan compatriots and enjoy equal treatment on the mainland. (4) Promote cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation, integrate development, and work together to create a bright future for national rejuvenation.

Nevertheless, the contents of the policy are filled with *cliché* and have become increasingly distant from the actual order; honey is no longer sweet, and the red line is also ineffective. In fact, Taiwan has been drifting away from a China-centric order ever since the DPP won the landslide elections in 2016. Recently, Taiwan's closer relations with the U.S. have been enhanced by its being highly integrated into U.S. technological and industrial systems (see Figure 3).

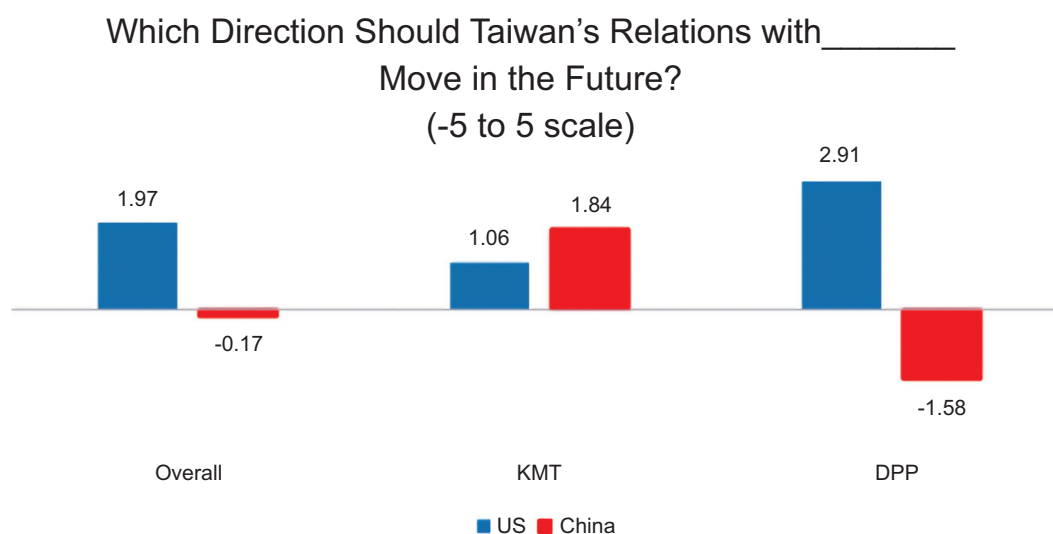


Figure 3. Support for Closer Relations with China or the United States, Broken Down by Party Lines

Source: Timothy Rich & Andi Dahmer, "Taiwan Opinion Polling on Unification with China," *China Brief*, Vol. 20, Issue 18, October 19, 2020, *Jamestown Foundation*, <<https://jamestown.org/program/taiwan-opinion-polling-on-unification-with-china/>>.

In public opinion, the de-sinicization of Taiwan's identity is also intensifying. On May 12, 2020, the Pew Research Center released a poll on Taiwan conducted from October 16 to November 30, 2019, which pointed out that 66% of people agree that they are Taiwanese; 28% agree that they are both Chinese and are also Taiwanese, and only 4% identify as Chinese.¹ The polls at the end of 2019 were like this, and the notorious image of China has become worse starting in early 2020 after the Covid-19 outburst.

In mid-April, Biden sent a special mission to the Taiwan Straits and received Japanese Prime Minister Suga at the White House. A clear strategic blueprint was unfolded. The U.S. and Japan mentioned Taiwan for the first time in 52 years and endorsed their support and protection for Taiwan. On April 15, the U.S. special envoy

1. Kat Devlin & Christine Huang, "In Taiwan, Views of Mainland China Mostly Negative: Closer Taiwan-U.S. relations largely welcome, especially economically," May 12, 2020, p. 12, *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/05/PG_2020.05.12_Taiwan_final.pdf>.

led by Todd skillfully challenged the KMT's views on the "1992 Consensus". Simultaneously, in Washington, the joint statement of the U.S.-Japan summit on April 17 stated the "importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." The United States and Japan formally crossed the red line drawn by Beijing; the myth of the "One China Principle" totally has been broken and ignored.

On the whole, what China can do to counter the U.S.-led democracies is actually limited. As U.S.-China relations have deteriorated seriously, China announced a high-profile plan to amend the *National Defense Law* and add content about stopping "separatism" and "defending the interests of national development." Economically, from the "Regulations on the List of Unreliable Entities," the *Export Control Law* to the military amendments to the *National Defense Law*, we can see the intention of Beijing to achieve the purpose of political propaganda, which "affects China's developmental interests."

Clearly, Beijing is taking a tit-for-tat approach against the U.S. and its allies. The question, however, is: Can China maintain it long, or will it be only for domestic consumption? With regard to the Xinjiang cotton issue, China had imposed sanctions on some members of parliament in retaliation against the EU. Now, however, it has brought about considerable embarrassment for Xi in urging the European Parliament to resume the review of the "Europe-China Investment Agreement" via his private channel with German Chancellor Merkel. Apparently, it is not easy. At least, Xi has to abandon his sanctions against 10 people and 4 entities in Europe, including a number of European Parliament members, think tanks, and scholars on March 22. Nevertheless, can Xi afford losing face?

IV. The Continued Confrontations between China and the U.S. and Its Major Allies Will Become the New Normal

(1) Xi's Maoist Nationalist Strategy toward U.S.-led Democracies

Since Xi was elected General Secretary of the CCP at the end of 2012, he has, intentionally or unintentionally, promoted Maoist Nationalism. The most impressive thing is that, on December 1, 2012, the CCP official *Xinhuanet* reposted Xi Jinping's 2009 visit to Mexico where he criticized "some foreigners who are full and have

nothing to do, are pointing fingers at our affairs.” Xi Jinping no longer followed Deng Xiaoping’s style of hiding his powers and biding his time, instead using Mao Zedong’s provocative and xenophobic nationalism.

It is worth observing that the generation born in the age of the Cultural Revolution have unique characteristics of aggression, destruction, endurance, perseverance, resilience, and flexibility. During Trump’s time, Xi Jinping was cautious in his words and deeds, and remained very low-key. Once Trump lost the election, Xi’s arrogance and aggression began to rise again, provoking the U.S. with words everywhere. Besides, he also softly stretched the olive branch of goodwill to Biden. Unfortunately, Biden has not violated Trump’s anti-China policy. On January 25, 2021, Xi lost his patience and sharply criticized the U.S. for its bullying and making its own small circle excluding China at the World Economic Forum in Davos. On February 25, Xi’s Maoist dominance was published on the *Qilian News Network*: “‘The strong west and the weak east’ is a matter of the past, and the ‘rise in the east and fall in the west’ is the future”; it is also about theoretical, institutional, and cultural confidence; “The biggest source of chaos in the world today is in the U.S.”

Over the past few months, the intensive military flights harassing Taiwan have not stopped, which not only threatens Taiwan, but also intends to challenge the U.S. As Xi severely criticized U.S., his followers naturally have become much more radical. In the U.S.-China 2+2 meeting held in Alaska on March 19, Yang Jiechi denounced the U.S. and said: “The US is not qualified to talk to China in a condescending manner”; “The Chinese do not buy it”; “You are not qualified to say in front of China that you talk to China from a position of strength.” Wang Yi immediately added that the U.S. should abandon its hegemonic act of interfering in China’s internal affairs; “[These] old flaws should be corrected.” The *Chinese News Agency* published it as soon as possible, but deliberately ignored the response of U.S. officials. The *People’s Daily* also published a series of graphics through social media to promote Yang’s speech and stimulate anti-American remarks by Chinese netizens.

(2) “Maintaining Stability” Is Still the Main Theme of Xi’s Strategy in 2021-2022

2021 is the 100th anniversary of the CCP, and 2022 is an important year for Xi to extend his power in the party. Hence, during this period of time, chaos is not

allowed, and stability must override everything. Even though the hawks may prevail, they will be taught to be self-restrained with strategic patience. In other words, Xi still does not want to fight and has no confidence in winning the war by the end of 2022. Nevertheless, as the deterioration of U.S.-China relations is comprehensive and continuous, China's internal issues also have been severely impacted. Hence, in order to maintain internal stability and nationalistic support, the CCP's actions will inevitably tend to be iron-fisted and make order under strong control. The setting of a growth rate of more than 6% means that the Chinese government is willing to release funds to maintain economic growth, rather than slowing down the economy in response to increased debts. It is foreseeable that 14th Five-Year Plan, as well as the OBOR, is bound to be promoted strongly. As for its policy toward Hong Kong, although international confidence in its high degree of autonomy is withering, Beijing endorsed the Hong Kong government to invest about US\$15.5 billion for boosting the economy.

Maintaining internal and external stability is the best policy for Xi in 2021-2022. From China's attempts to ease relations with neighboring countries, including India, Japan, South Korea, and so on, we can expect that, in the coming two years, Xi Jinping will strive to maintain a stable *status quo*, even though a large number of PLA military aircraft and warships fly back and forth in the South China Sea or around Taiwan Island. What the PLA is doing is at best a sort of psychological warfare. The nature of Chinese aggression and provocation is defensive; hence, he should turn external pressure into internal pressure: more action in the name of fighting corruption, distributive justice, and purging financial and economic order so that he may win the hearts of the deprived people on the one hand, and eradicate dissidents and consolidate his political power on the other hand. With these concerns, it sounds necessary for Xi to try to suppress Deng's doctrines, shirk his own responsibility, strike against corruption, transfer diplomatic pressure, and even accumulate nationalism to counter the oppression of the U.S. Certainly, as mentioned earlier, if Xi wants to maintain stability, his hostile internal and external forces may do the opposite. China's internal affairs are filled with uncertainties.

(3) The U.S. Will Deliberately Unite Like-minded Democracies in Carrying Out Hawkish Measures Against China Rising

Americans' favorable ratings of China have plummeted over the past three years

(see Figure 4).

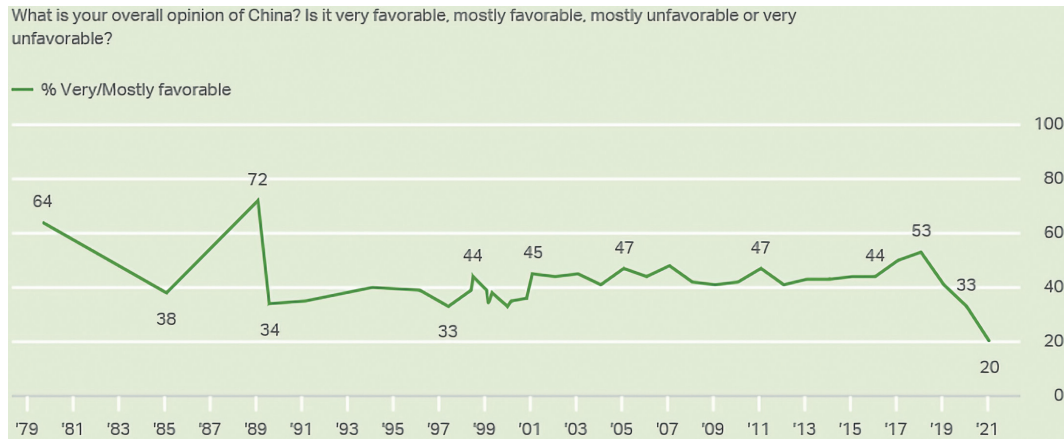


Figure 4. American Impressions toward Chinese Have Plummeted over the Past Three Years

Source: Mohamed Younis, “China, Russia Images in U.S. Hit Historic Lows,” March 1, 2021, *Gallup*, <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/331082/china-russia-images-hit-historic-lows.aspx>>.

Under these circumstances, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken praised Trump for his tough stance on China, although he criticized Trump’s practices and tactics for being problematic. He advocated working closely with those allies and partners who are equally disgusted with China and share the same hatred. On February 19, Biden said at the Munich Security Video Conference that democratic countries should join hands to confront challenges from institutional competitors such as China and Russia. Among them, on the economic front, after the meeting, the leaders of the G7 countries expressed their desire to pursue the prospects for recovery after the new COVID-19 pandemic, looking forward to the emergence of a “credible free flow of data and a freer, fairer, rules-based multilateral trading system.”

The problem is that the G7 statement reflects the thinking of a liberal capitalist market economy, and this claim cannot be accepted by China. Under the banner of the “socialist market economy system with Chinese characteristics” announced by the CCP, state-owned enterprises have always been placed in the leading position by declaring: “We must unwaveringly consolidate and develop the public ownership economy, and unwaveringly encourage, support, and guide the development of the non-public ownership economy”; “promote the development of state-owned capital

to become stronger, better and bigger.” In a word, public ownership is the foundation of the CCP's theory and practice of national development, and state-owned enterprises are also the power sources of the CCP's leadership. The state-owned economic system is the backbone of the “socialist market economic system with Chinese characteristics.” Therefore, the “non-market” elements criticized by the G7 means that the party-led CCP government should be decoupled from the state-owned economic system; thus, the CCP should abandon the privilege of intervening in the market. Conversely, the CCP is strengthening its grip on Chinese society (see Figure 5). Clearly, it is a deadlock. There is almost no solution.



Figure 5. The Number of Party Cells of the Chinese Communist Party Are on the Rise

Source: Nis Grünberg & Katja Drinhausen, “The Party leads on everything China’s changing governance in Xi Jinping’s new era,” September 24, 2019, *MERICCS*, <<https://merics.org/en/report/party-leads-everything>>.

V. Conclusion

Indoctrinated by historical thoughts of the greater Chinese history, most Chinese

long for the Chinese dream in regard to restoring the ever glorious history and washing away the centuries of shame. Looking back on history, there is no doubt that China rising over the past four decades has rewritten a new page of history in modern China. It is also an economic miracle in the world history. Nevertheless, it is also true that the wish that China will become democratic and free as a result of economic growth has failed. It is mere wishful thinking. Apparently, Deng Xiaoping's doctrine of keeping a low profile is not taken by Xi; instead, Xi has followed Mao Zedong's radical, provocative, and xenophobic path. In view of the west, the rise of China is challenging the hegemony of Western civilization. It is not only a matter of impression, but the ideal of looking to become the wealthiest and strongest one-party-ruled socialist country is written in the political report of the 19th party congress, 2017. As the fear of Chinese threats has become common and rampant in the western world, the stereotypical image can hardly be dissolved. Not only that, Chinese "wolf diplomacy" has even strengthened its confrontations against the west. This structural tendency will not change easily, at least, until Xi successfully extends his party power before the end of 2022. The structure speaks. As the hostilities between China and the U.S.-led democracies have been structured, finally it will bring about a devastating catastrophe for China.

China is very big and international affairs are dynamic, changeable, and unpredictable. Nevertheless, a one-man ruled party has made the pace of the party tend to be consistent and homogeneous; different voices or corrected suggestions will be seen as heterodox and exposed to attacks. The structural inertia will push Xi and his aides into a pessimistically vicious circle.

Although either in terms of interests or power in the world arena, China is too big to be ignored, China has its own way to remove the western containment and isolation in some aspects. The west is not consistent and homogeneous in every respect with regard to China issues. Some Chinese skeptics even describe the members of the G7 as strange bedfellows.² Besides, many under-developed and developing countries look to economic, financial, and diplomatic support, and even the provision of vaccines

2. Wong Qi & Zhang Hui, "US is losing leadership, attempt of 'Western unity' through G7 hard to tick off: experts," *Global Times*, February 19, 2021, <<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1215943.shtml>>.

from China. China's strong presence in the international arena has reached a point that cannot be underestimated. Certainly, too much accumulation of hostilities and confrontations against the west will, in the long run, lead to the shrinking of China's living space.

From the perspective of a grand strategy, Beijing's wolf diplomacy and western worries and resentment have paved a way to a prelude to China's isolation and defeat. Coupled with epidemics, flood, haze damage, economic downturn, capital flight, and bottlenecks in the high-end technologies, there also arise civilian protests in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong protests, Sino-Indian border conflicts, and so on. China's ratings of international image and foreign investments plummeted sharply. Above all, after taking office, Biden has wooed the League of Democracy to encircle China, and used "small courtyards, high walls" to restrict China's technology and industrial development. Generally speaking, the advantages of the international situation are still in the western alliance, but stability or otherwise depends on whether China will cause trouble. China seems to be provocative, but it comes from psychological intimidation. Judging from the current situation, at least before the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party at the end of 2022, successfully running the 100th anniversary of the party and renewing party power are the two major tasks. Therefore, the "storm in the teapot" style of stability is in Xi Jinping's interests.

By 2022, U.S.-China relations will continue to stand in a stalemate, but there is no need or incentive for each other to trigger a war. 2023 may be the year of window of opportunity for China to improve its foreign relations, but the downward spiral makes this possibility an illusion; deterioration of relations will be the normal scenario. It is very likely that there will be a battle between China and the U.S.-led democracies in the long run. The free world have to prepare for the worst scenario. Since the Taiwan Strait is located at the axis of the First Island Chain, the free world cannot afford to lose Taiwan. In the pandemic management, as well as the supply of IT industries, Taiwan has shown its strengths, not to mention democratic achievements. In the face of possible Chinese aggression, Taiwan has to safeguard itself well and demonstrate itself as a constructive and valuable partner in the U.S.-led value and security alliances.

