

Prospects & Perspectives



Throughout the Twentieth National Party Congress, CCP-controlled media actively promoted the absolute support of the party representatives for Xi's thought and authority. Xi Jinping's personal victory at the Twentieth National Party Congress does not mean, however, that it is a gospel for all the Chinese people.

Picture source: 申宏, October 23, 2022, 《中國政府網》, <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-10/23/content_5720998.htm>.

The Future Ruling Strategy of the Chinese Communist Party after the Twentieth National Congress

By *Wen-hsuan Tsai*

The Twentieth National Party Congress was held from October 16 to 22, 2022. General Secretary Xi Jinping delivered a political report on the 16th. This report provides insights into the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) governing strategy for the future. This paper discusses some of the key



elements of that strategy.

First, the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” and the “two centenary” goals are reemphasized. However, the discussion is relatively vague and can be regarded as a type of political propaganda. More innovative is the concept of so-called Chinese-style modernization. That is, the CCP must take China’s own national conditions into consideration while carrying out modernization. This suggests that the CCP will make decisions relevant to its own needs in its future governance. For example, this political report included “the whole process of people’s democracy” (全過程人民民主) in the text. This “democratic” model does not have the familiar mechanisms of free elections and independent supervision but instead emphasizes consultation between officials and the people. However, “the whole process of people’s democracy” can easily become a kind of formalism without much substantive meaning.

The second point concerns the implementation of the “common prosperity” policy. In the political report, the need to improve the distribution system is mentioned. Over the past three decades, the CCP has promoted a socialist market economy, minimized state interference in the economic field, encouraged people or businesses to get rich, and created magnates such as Jack Ma (馬雲). In future, Xi could use the idea of so-called common prosperity to crack down on particularly wealthy entrepreneurs and nationalize their assets. This policy of Xi has a strong element of Mao Zedong’s egalitarianism. However, the current model is not conducive to the sound development of the economy and may cause dissatisfaction among entrepreneurs.

Third, China will intensify its efforts to innovate in science and technology. These areas include projects such as network technology, electronics, new energy, aerospace, and the military industry. Xi believes that technological innovation will be China’s primary productive force and an important driving influence for China to compete with Western countries. All countries in the world attach great importance to scientific and technological innovation, but for the Xi regime, the combination of scientific and technological innovation, as well as national honor and strategy, reflects the intense color of technological nationalism. In future, China will invest large amounts of funds and manpower to carry out this work, reflecting the characteristics of the “new system for mobilizing the resources nationwide” (新型舉國體制).



The report then emphasizes the “rule of law.” Under Xi, China has passed more state laws and party regulations than under Deng, Jiang, and Hu combined. However, this does not mean that Xi attaches great importance to modern legal concepts such as the “rule of law” and checks and balances of power. On the contrary, he has undermined the term limit system for the president of the country. Although this was also done by amending the constitution, it lacks any spirit of constitutionalism. Governing the country by law will become merely a slogan, with every policy of Xi being endorsed by law, yet at the core of this will be the dictator’s centralist ideology.

Finally, in terms of international politics and cross-Strait relations, Xi will strengthen strategic deterrence. In future, China will continue to adhere to a hostile policy toward the United States and compete with the United States in the fields of trade and the military. In terms of cross-Strait relations, Xi emphasized an “overall strategy for resolving the Taiwan issue” (解決台灣問題總體方略), and the process of reunification may be further accelerated in future. Although not necessarily resorting to force, China could use various means to compel the Taiwanese government to engage in political negotiations. If Xi remains in power after 2027, he may actively engage in some “performances” in international affairs or cross-Strait relations.

Throughout the Twentieth National Party Congress, CCP-controlled media actively promoted the absolute support of the party representatives for Xi’s thought and authority. In the entire agenda of the congress, it seemed to be a ritual that all cadres worship Xi, which led to the disappearance of some of the enlightened styles of the CCP during the Hu Jintao period. The party representatives at the congress strongly lauded efforts at poverty alleviation, environmental protection, scientific and technological development, and education reform promoted by Xi in recent years, but did not mention his missteps in handling foreign relations and the COVID-19 epidemic policy, which have hindered economic development. It is obvious that China’s control of public opinion has reached an unimaginable level. Additionally, in the revision of the party constitution at the Twentieth National Congress, the words “implementing the policy of one country, two systems, and resolutely opposing and containing Taiwan independence” were added. This also suggests that Xi may hope to deflect the dissatisfaction of the Chinese people with the economic



downturn by intensifying the issue of cross-Strait relations.

During the party congress, Xi assumed the position of the only “leader” (領袖) in the party. In addition to emphasizing that “two determinations” (兩個確立) want “two upholds” (兩個維護), the new Politburo Standing Committee members are all Xi’s cronies. As predicted, several non-Xi cronies, such as Wang Yang, Li Keqiang, and Hu Chunhua, who normally would have been expected to make it onto the Standing Committee, were not selected. The implication is that there no longer is another faction within the party for Xi to contend with. This regime, which lacks feedback and protest mechanisms, is therefore a highly dangerous system. Xi Jinping’s personal victory at the Twentieth National Party Congress does not mean, however, that it is a gospel for all the Chinese people.

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