

# Ideological Path Reflected by the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CCP Central Committee

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## 1. News Highlights

The “Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on the Major Achievements and Historical Experiences of the Party’s Centennial Struggle” (“the Centennial Resolution”) passed at the 6th Plenary Session of the 19th CCP Central Committee held from November 8 to 11, 2021, is the third historical resolution of the CCP since its founding. The “Communique of the 6th Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CCP” (“the Communique”) made public after the meeting shows that two-fifths of the Communique is devoted to acknowledging the contributions of leaders such as Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao and the century-long achievements of the CCP in leading China, two-fifths to praising the theoretical and political achievements

of Xi Jinping since the 18th National Congress, while one-fifth to elaborating future goals, and finally announcing that the 20th National Party Congress of the CCP will be held in the second half of 2022. The Centennial Resolution is divided into four periods: the period of the “new democratic revolution”, the period of “socialist revolution and construction”, the new period of “reform and opening up” as well as “modernization of socialism”, and lastly “the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics”, with three main features such as “focusing on summarizing the major achievements and historical experiences of the CCP’s centennial struggle”, “highlighting the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics”, and “focusing on the evaluation of major events, important meetings, and important figures to connect with the major achievements and historical

experiences of the CCP's existing resolutions"<sup>1</sup>. This article will focus on the analysis of how this conference deals with the heritage and innovation of the ideology of the CCP.

## 2. Security Implications

### 2-1. Shaping Xi's theoretical status as comparable to Mao

The CCP has always taken ideology as the basis for guiding its actions, and the Party's theories and leader-titled ideas are the specific guidelines. The Centennial Resolution, while summarizing the achievements of the CCP in the past century, also takes "Xi Jinping's Thoughts on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" ("Xi's Thoughts") to a new level of guidance. First of all, the Centennial Resolution affirms that "the Chinese Communists, represented mainly by Comrade Mao Zedong, combined the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism

with the specific reality of China and made a theoretical summary of a series of original experiences accumulated through painstaking exploration and great sacrifices... and founded the Mao Zedong Thoughts, which pointed out the correct direction for winning the revolutionary victory of a new democracy". In 1981, the 6th Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP adopted the "Resolution on Certain Historical Problems of the Party since the Founding of the PRC", which concluded Mao's merits and faults and criticized his mistakes in his later years, and reiterated in the Centennial Resolution that "Comrade Mao Zedong's mistakes in the theory and practice of socialist class struggle have become increasingly serious, and the Party's Central Committee failed to correct these mistakes in time. At last, Comrade Mao Zedong made a completely wrong assessment of the class situation in China and the political situation of the Party and the country at that time, and,

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1. "Communique of the 6th Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CCP," *People's Daily Online*, November 12, 2021; <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1112/c64094-32280226.html>; "Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on the Major Achievements and Historical Experiences of the Party's Centennial Struggle," *People's Daily Online*, November 17, 2021; <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1117/c1001-32284266.html>

as a result, initiated and led the Cultural Revolution.”<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the Centennial Resolution presents Xi Jinping’s theoretical contributions since the 18th CCP Congress in a structure comparable to the aforementioned glorification of Mao Zedong, for example, “The Chinese Communists, represented mainly by Comrade Xi Jinping, insisted on combining the basic principles of Marxism with the specific reality of China... profoundly summarized and fully applied the historical experience of the Party since its founding, and created Xi Jinping’s Socialist Thoughts with Chinese Characteristics of the new era, for the new reality.” This means that “Xi’s Thoughts” is comparable to “Mao’s Thoughts” and emphasizes that both are the summation of the Party’s experience. This upholds the theoretical thoughts titled with the two leaders on the same great level.

### **2-1. Emphasizing importance of ideology localization**

The Communique proclaims

that “Mao’s Thoughts is the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism in China, the correct theoretical principles and summaries of experience proven by practice regarding the Chinese revolution and construction, and the first historical leap in the Chinese localization of Marxism.” In The Centennial Resolution, Xi’s Thoughts is also praised as “not only the contemporary Chinese Marxism, but also Marxism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; it’s the essence of Chinese culture and the spirit of the times, and a new leap in the Chinese localization of Marxism. The Party has established Comrade Xi’s position as the core of the Party Central Committee and the core of the CCP, and the guiding position of Xi’s Thoughts on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.” The purpose and importance of these two paragraphs, which tout the same keyword “Chinese localized Marxism” for the two leaders, is to localize the ideology, to prove the legitimacy of the CCP’s governance, and to reject the “spiritual pollution” and public antagonism from the West.

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2. “Resolution on Certain Historical Problems of the Party since the Founding of the PRC,” China government website, June 23, 2008. [http://big5.www.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/test/2008-06/23/content\\_1024934.htm](http://big5.www.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/test/2008-06/23/content_1024934.htm)

The so-called “Chinese localization of Marxism” had already been carried out during Mao Zedong’s time and became Mao’s main contribution to the CCP theory. Mao considered it necessary to combine Marxism and universal principles with the realities of the Chinese revolution, and to distinguish Marxism into a “split” structure consisting of basic principles (core) and assessed individuals (peripheral). With the structure, the CCP can categorize the “internationalists” who were the political opponents as “the outside” that was against the reality of China’s situation, so the “core” can avoid being affected while the CCP attacks the “outside”.<sup>3</sup> This distinction and the emphasis on the importance of combining ideological theory with the Chinese context were put into practice in “The Resolution on Certain Historical Issues” adopted at the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 7<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CCP in 1945, which concluded that “the ideological roots of all political, military, and organizational lines, whether correct or not, lie in whether they are based on

the dialectical and historical materialism of Marxism-Leninism and whether they are based on the objective reality of the Chinese revolution and the objective needs of the Chinese people.” That means localization of ideology is used as the criterion for judging the correctness of the line for the future CCP. The Communique and the Centennial Resolution have repeatedly echoed this point, and it was specially arranged that Wang Xiaohui, the vice minister in charge of the daily work of the Central Propaganda Department, explained the achievements of Xi’s Thoughts in the Chinese localization of Marxism at the press conference of the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee to stress the theoretical confidence of the Party since its founding 100 years ago.

### 3. Trend Observation

#### 3-1. CCP resists Western democracy with “all-process people's democracy”

The Communique affirms the

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3. Lee, Ying-ming, “Reading China - A Debate on Policy, Power, and Ideology,” Sheng-chi Publication, Taipei, 2003, p. 48-49.

institutional and theoretical design of the CCP leadership in “actively developing ‘all-process people’s democracy’ of political construction, and institutionalizing, standardizing and systemizing socialist democratic politics in China”. At the press conference of the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, Jiang Jinqun, director of the Central Policy Research Office, responded to a reporter’s question about “all-process people’s democracy” by saying that “all-process people’s democracy is a complete institutional chain that includes all elements of democratic politics, such as electoral democracy, consultative democracy, social democracy, grassroots democracy and civic democracy, covering democratic elections, democratic consultation, democratic decision-making, democratic management, democratic supervision and other areas... It’s a complete practice of participation realizing the process of democracy and results in democracy, systematic democracy and substantive democracy,

direct democracy and indirect democracy — a unification of people’s democracy and national will.”<sup>4</sup> Jiang also repeated Xi Jinping’s speech at the working session of the Chinese National People’s Congress in October: “The evaluation of whether a country’s political system is democratic and effective depends mainly on whether the leadership of the country can be changed in an orderly manner in accordance with the law, whether the people as a whole can manage state, social, economic and cultural affairs in accordance with the law... whether the ruling party can exercise leadership in state affairs in accordance with the constitution and laws, and that the use of power is effectively restrained and supervised,” and “democracy is not the monopoly of a few countries. Whether a country is democratic or not should be left for the people of that country to judge.”<sup>5</sup>

This means that while the CCP continues to insist on resisting the Western-style values of democracy, it also develops and supplements the

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4. “Jiang Jinqun: The Hole Process of People’s Democracy in Our Country is a Complete Institutional Chain,” *People’s Daily Online*, November 2, 2021. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1112/c64387-32280809.html>.

5. “Xi Jinping: Whether a Country is Democratic or Not Should be Left for the People of That Country to Judge.” *ETtoday News*, October 14, 2021; <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20211014/2101385.htm#ixzz7CLN8SvnN>

theoretical basis of its socialist democracy and emphasizes its own theoretical and institutional advantages to reinterpret its democracy in a Chinese way. This is also linked to the aforementioned ideological localization, which attempts to break out of the fetters of Western values and repackage, as Mao did, a localized discourse rooted in Chinese conditions and appealing to the Chinese people.

### **3-2. “Xi's Thoughts” becomes guideline for next century**

Through the enactment of The Centennial Resolution, Xi has demonstrated his firm position in the Party, just like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping who were able to summarize the experience of the previous era and unify the thinking of the Party through their authority, and further serve as a future guide for the next era. Xi has portrayed himself as the leader of the CCP in the party's centennial, not only to use the opportunity to build momentum for himself and reaffirm his central position, but also to announce to the outside world that the direction in the next century will continue to adhere to the CCP leadership and the development of China's national conditions. No matter how the external

environment evolves, it will not affect the guiding role of the CCP's theory in the government's policies. On the contrary, this means that no matter how the CCP leadership changes in the future, it will not compromise with the world trend, and the Chinese people must still be tied to the Party and even to Xi. Since the CCP has already affirmed the leadership of the Party for the past 100 years and the achievements of Xi as the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress with the height of the historical resolution at the same time, China will face the future external challenges with a unified ideology based on this resolution, and consequently all the Chinese people will be forced by the CCP to move forward for the next hundred years.

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