

Chapter 10

Tightening Social Control under the 100th Anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party

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I. Introduction

Since November 2020, China has introduced more than 50 regulations on anti-trust, Internet and data security, finance and education, as well as culture and entertainment, and the news industry, far more frequently than in previous years. Online technology giants such as Ant Group have been subject to rectification; the ride-hailing platform DiDi, the logistics platforms Yunmanman and Huochebang, and the job bank Boss Direct Hire were investigated subsequent to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party in July 2021. China's Ministry of Education issued a "Double Reduction" education policy, "tainted celebrities" are being blacklisted and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) imposed a ban on non-publicly owned capital in the news media business. The Western press and academics have leveled severe criticism that Xi Jinping's move represents a relapse into the "leftist" ways. The Economist argues that Xi Jinping is mounting a campaign to sweep away capitalism, treating the growing disparity between rich and poor and the pollution of spiritual

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civilization as a mockery of Marxism, and therefore rolling out the notion of “common prosperity” to clean up private enterprises and raising the red banner of patriotism to clamp down on people’s voices and activities.¹ However, China denies these claims, with Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Wang Wenbin on September 8, 2021 stressing at a press conference that “The Chinese government has stepped up anti-monopoly regulation and cracked down on unfair competition behaviors to uphold the order of fair competition ... Such efforts are the common practice of managing economic activities in many countries,” and that “Opening-up is China’s basic national policy that will never waver.”²

On top of private enterprises, China has also issued stern warnings to specific groups in society, such as the military and social organizations. Xi Jinping insists that “the Party commands the gun” and that one should “firmly listen to the Party and follow the Party” to strengthen ideological and political education. To contribute to the creation of a safe social environment for the celebration of the centenary of the Communist Party of China, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has since March 2021 launched a three-and-a-half-month campaign to eradicate illegal social organizations, in the hope that the government-led public-private partnership can stem the “harm of illegal social organizations to society” at source and maintain social stability. Meanwhile, China has also made a concerted effort to Sinicize its ethnic minorities, dismissing “ethnic separatism” as a “pernicious influence” and underscoring the single identity of all ethnic groups with respect to the Chinese nation.

In the short run, as China’s 20th National People’s Congress in 2022 is drawing near, Xi Jinping’s re-election and staffing plans hinge on social stability. In the long run, China must eliminate risks in all areas before it can basically achieve the long-term goal of socialist modernization by 2035. Is the Chinese government’s strict crackdown on the financial, economic, cultural and media spheres an attempt by Xi Jinping to emulate Mao Zedong in his desire to establish a highly totalitarian

¹ “China’s New Reality is Rife with Danger,” *The Economist*, October 2, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3Ab3jcY>.

² “Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Wang Wenbin Hosts a Regular Press Conference on September 8, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, September 8, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1905563.shtml.

regime by assuming control of order and authority, or is it a move to quell the opposition within the Party? Or is it a step-by-step move by the state to tighten its grip on society? This paper attempts to collect information on China's tightened regulatory measures at all levels of society, and infer the factors behind the current wave of tougher regulatory requirements and future developments.

II. Tightened Government Supervision at All Levels of Society

1. Rectification of “Potentially Threatening” Online Platforms

According to the observations of Yang Minggang, a research fellow at Beijing Boya, there are five main areas in which the Beijing Government regulates online platforms: (1) anti-monopoly measures against e-commerce; (2) domains that shape public opinion, such as social networking sites; (3) those associated with young people or social trends, such as online games and fan culture; (4) those related to personal privacy and big data security; and (5) those involving financial order.³ China, in particular, sees online platforms that influence public opinion and hold a wealth of data as “thorns in the side” of the regime.

The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) announced on July 2, 2021 that “To protect against national data security risks, safeguard national security and protect public interests,” it would impose cybersecurity censorship on the ride-hailing platform “DiDi,” the “Yunmanman” and “Huochebang” under China’s freight and logistics platform Full Truck Alliance and the job bank “BOSS Direct Hire” in compliance with relevant laws and regulations. DiDi has 377 million users and 13 million drivers in China; Yunmanman and Huochebang operate in over 300 cities and collect data on over 2.8 million truck drivers; and BOSS Direct Hire has data on over 85 million job seekers and 6.3 million companies. In addition to the above enterprises, more than 33 apps, including WeChat and Baidu, were also accused of gathering personal information from users in violation of the law and were either interviewed or asked to rectify the situation. Moreover, in the wake of

³ “End of ‘Winner-takes-all’ Era for Tech Giants,” *Sing Tao Daily*, September 15, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3GkArmA>.

the COVID-19 pandemic, various e-learning courses such as “New Oriental” and “Good Future” have sprung up, and the number of student users of these platforms has grown by about 44 percent, reaching a grand total of 2.3 million and 6.7 million respectively, and indirectly holding a large amount of user data.

In general, all of these companies are in possession of an enormous body of private user information, have businesses related to critical information infrastructure in China, and are listed in the U.S. According to Deputy Director Li Keshun of the Jiangsu “Big Data Exchange and Distribution Engineering Laboratory,” enterprises under censorship in China have access to at least 80 percent of in-depth data in their respective fields, which can directly or indirectly reveal the distribution of population, business activities, population movement, cargo flow and business operations across China’s regions.⁴ Since this year (2021), China has rolled out the “Data Security Law 2021,” the “Personal Information Protection Law of the PRC,” and the Regulation on Protecting the Security of Critical Information Infrastructure; released the Provisions on the Management of Network Product Security Vulnerabilities and “Several Provisions on the Management of Automotive Data Security (trial version),” and amended the “Measures for Cybersecurity Review.” In late August, Reuters reported on China’s plans to ban initial public offerings (IPOs) in the U.S. by technology companies that run the risk of data security.⁵ Speaking at the launch of the “National Cyber Security Promotion Week 2021” in Xi’an on October 17, Director General Sun Weimin of the CAC Bureau of Network Security Coordination said that data security and personal data protection, critical infrastructure security information protection and new technologies, and new application risk prevention are the key items in China’s national cyber security top-level design.⁶

Therefore, what the Chinese government is really concerned about is the online platform that holds strategically valuable big data and the potential risk of data

⁴ “Internet Faces Most Stringent Censorship,” *Economic Daily News*, July 8, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3Gb88aa>.

⁵ “China Plans to Ban Tech Companies with Data Security Risks from IPOs in U.S.,” *Reuters*, August 27, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3jvAphS>.

⁶ “This year’s National Cyber Security Week to Focus on Personal Information Protection Hotspots,” *People’s Daily Online*, October 1, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3omcbKq>.

leaving the country. “Data security” has been regarded as part of China’s national security, and has become as important as the barrel of a gun and the barrel of a pen in governing. Consequently, it is imperative that the “Party controls data,” and it is impossible to risk the leakage of critical data to other countries and leave it in the hands of private enterprises.

2. Tightening the Public Voice

On the other hand, China has begun a major overhaul of its cultural, entertainment and news industries. In May 2021, the CAC’s Deputy Director Sheng Ronghua attended the “Clear and Bright campaign 2021” press conference and said that the campaign aimed to crack down on historical nihilism on the Internet, remedy the online environment during the Lunar New Year holidays, combat an Internet Water Army, traffic falsification, and black PR firms, manage the abuse of algorithms, rectify the Internet environment for minors, tackle the disorder in the ranking of online cultural recreation activities and hotspots, and regulate the operation of website accounts, as well as fix the problem of PUSH pop-ups.⁷ On the 15th of June, the CAC announced the initiation of a two-month “Clear and Bright — Remediation of the Fan Circle Mess” campaign, which targeted five types of fan group disorder: (1) inducing underage fans to raise funds, spend large sums of money, and vote on charts; (2) fans tearing each other apart and hurling abuses, stomping on each other, creating rumors and mounting attacks, doxing, and violating privacy; (3) instigating fans to compare and show off their wealth and extravagance; (4) calling on fans, employing a water army, or “manipulating multiple social media accounts” to control comments; and (5) interfering with public opinion and influencing the order of communication by “newsjacking” and creating a buzz. On the 27 of August, the CAC published the “Notice concerning Further Strengthening Control over the Fan Circle Mess,” rolling out 10 work measures, while social networking sites such as Weibo and TikTok also started to clean up themselves. On September 6, Weibo announced a

⁷ “Press Conference on ‘Clear and Bright’ Campaign 2021,” *Chinese Government Portal*, May 9, 2021, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-05/09/content_5605434.htm.

30-day ban on postings to a group of 21 South Korean entertainment-themed fan accounts, while social media platform Douban took the same day to suspend its reply function for seven days without warning, after which a number of Douban entertainment groups stated that they would no longer accept posts with sensational news. On September 7, bilibili, China's largest interactive video site, followed suit by announcing a complete ban on "abbreviated, simplified and distorted terms for personal attacks," and on October 1, TikTok issued a statement to further step up its efforts to "rectify the disorderly situation of fandoms" by disbanding more than 1,900 fan groups in one fell swoop.

In addition to requiring the relevant platforms to rectify the chaotic situation of fan groups, China has also tightened control over the news media and online speech. The CAC Report Center, the official WeChat account of the CAC, published statistics on September 9, revealing that since the CAC announced on August 27 that it had started a special rectification of commercial website platforms and "self-media," 2,929 "self-media" accounts have been dealt with, of which 1,793 accounts have been shut down and banned, including three accounts with more than 1 million followers.⁸ The National Development and Reform Commission of the PRC (NDRC) on October 8 released on its official website the "Negative List for Market Access (2021 Version)," soliciting public views and adding to the negative list the "Prohibition of non-compliant news media-related businesses," imposing broader and deeper restrictions on the participation of non-public capital in news gathering/editing, broadcasting and other operations. Should the law be enforced in China in the future, the dependence of the privately owned media outlets will gradually be eroded away, leaving the state media as the only legitimate source of news for the Chinese public.

As a matter of fact, Xi Jinping said at the 2014 symposium on literature and art work that "The leadership of the Party is the fundamental guarantee for the development of socialist literature and art. The fundamental aim of the Party is to serve the people wholeheartedly, while the fundamental aim of literature and art

⁸ "Swift Action! A Number of Financial 'Black Mouth' Accounts Shut down and Banned," *CAC Report Center*, September 9, 2021, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/fviuAFYLRjSatW1CEZmXag>.

is to produce works for the people. By keeping a firm grip on this foundation, the link between the Party and the arts can be correctly managed, and the relationship between the Party and the people, and between political stance and freedom of creation can be properly established.”⁹ In 2017, Xi Jinping emphasized at “The Party’s News and Public Opinion Work Symposium” that “The media outlets run by the Party and the government is the propaganda front of the Party and the government, and must serve the Party. All the work of the Party’s press and media must embody the Party’s will and reflect the Party’s ideas.”¹⁰

Following this logic, Chinese films, television programs, literary works, and even news reports must be highly aligned with China’s political stance, and within this framework, the cultural and entertainment industries can enjoy limited freedom of creation, while the opposite will be forcibly suppressed. In August 2020, for example, Xi Jinping issued a directive to “put an end to food and drink waste,” and in April 2021, the “Anti-food Waste Law” was passed, but in May, a clip was released of the Chinese talent show “Youth With You 3,” in which fans bought milk in bulk from a sponsor to support their idol but dumped it all in the end, blatantly running counter to China’s policy. The arrest of artist Kris Wu has led to a series of rescue operations by fans on various platforms, prompting the People’s Daily to criticize his fans for not even taking the bottom line for their idol, a perverse fan group culture that tries to challenge the authority of the government and the law, which must be addressed.

The Beijing Government has further pushed the power of the state into the community by addressing the disarray in the cultural and entertainment industries and the journalism industry, and by imposing restrictions on the topics and language applied in online forums, and even on the usage time and medium, in an attempt to curtail the powerful online and offline social mobilization capability of “key opinion leaders” (KOLs) and “influencers” “writers” In the Chinese context,

⁹ “(Authorized) Xi Jinping: Speech at the Symposium on Literature and Art Work,” *Xinhuanet.com*, October 14, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-10/14/c_1116825558.htm.

¹⁰ “Xi Jinping: Adhering to the Right Direction and Innovating Methods and Means to Boost the Power of News and Media Dissemination and Guidance,” *Xinhuanet.com*, February 19, 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-02/19/c_1118102868.htm.

the Party is, and can only be, the biggest KOL in the country.

3. Building a “Solid Military Image” to Promote Social Unity

Although on the surface Xi Jinping appears to have consolidated his military power, “military instability” remains the biggest concern at his core amidst a prolonged period of strong anti-corruption efforts that have eroded the interests of established generals and the increasingly obvious challenges to China’s domestic and foreign affairs. In addition to safeguarding Xi Jinping’s leadership authority in the military, creating a “solid military image” is also conducive to social harmony and stability.

From 2012 to 2021, Xi Jinping’s talks on “strengthening education on Party history and military history and glorious traditions” and ensuring that officers and soldiers “firmly listen to the Party and follow the Party” were excerpted by the Qiushi journal in July 2021.¹¹ It can be observed that “upholding the absolute leadership of the Party over the military” and “firmly listening to the Party and following the Party” are considered the most important elements, and the “theory” that carried wide-ranging contents had gradually evolved into a “scientific theory” in 2014 and an “innovative theory” in 2020. In 2013, the phrase “ensure the absolute loyalty, purity and reliability of the troops” was introduced for the first time; in 2014, “the leadership of the Party reaches the grassroots and the soldiers”; and in 2021, more emphasis is placed on the “ideology building” in the army. The People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) “ideology” is shaped by Xi Jinping’s thinking on strengthening the military, including “firmly listening to the Party and following the Party” (adhering to the Party’s absolute leadership of the army), “capable of winning battles” (ready to respond to the call, to fight, to win the war) and “excellent ethos” (absolute loyalty, absolute purity and absolute reliability).¹² According to the “Guidelines on Promoting Ideological and Political Education within the Chinese Military in the New Era” promulgated in April 2021, it is clear

¹¹ “Strengthen Education on Party History and Military History and Glorious Traditions to Ensure that Officers and Soldiers Firmly Listen to the Party and Follow the Party,” *qstheory.cn*, July 31, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3oz8jpp>.

¹² “A Study on the Development of Xi Jinping’s ‘Strong Army Thought,’” *Navy Professional Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 3, June 2019, p. 122.

that “following the Party” (actually “following Xi’s command”) is the crucial part of Xi Jinping’s thinking on strengthening the military, and is also his Achilles’ heel, which must be reinforced through a series of Party history studies and education, and by stressing that military personnel should be loyal to the “Xi’s core position” to bolster political security.

In addition, China has also made great efforts to create a “glorious image” of the military and build up mutual trust between the military and the society. For example, it has released a list “The Most Outstanding Revolutionary Military Personnel of the New Era” and produced such melodramatic films as “The Battle at Lake Changjin” and “The Sacrifice,” which feature servicemen and portray “love for the Party, love for the country and love for the military,” and promoted them vigorously among student groups and veterans in order to consolidate the unity between the government and the armed forces and between the people and the armed forces.

4. Stepping up Efforts to Combat Social Mobilization Capabilities

On March 20, 2021, the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs and more than 10 central government departments held a meeting on “Further Combating and Rectifying Illegal Social Organizations” and mounted a three-and-a-half-month campaign against organizations that had not registered with the competent authorities, nor with the relevant agencies, market supervision agencies, nor with Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan or other countries or regions and that were carrying out activities in the name of social organizations, private non-enterprise entities and foundations without permission, as well as those that continued to operate as social organizations after their registration certificates had been revoked or suspended. The investigation focused on six items, including: (1) illegal social organizations that operated in the economic, cultural and charitable fields on the pretext of national strategies such as “rural revitalization”; (2) illegal social organizations that bore the words “China,” “Chinese,” “national,” “Strait,” etc., or were in the guise of entities affiliated to state agencies or enterprises, etc., and committed fraud and accumulated wealth by unfair means; (3) illegal social organizations that carried out activities in collusion with legally registered ones, or that passed

off as something they were not; (4) illegal social organizations that launched selection and award activities on the pretext of marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); (5) illegal social organizations that engaged in false health, sinology and mysticism activities, as well as those that operated under the banner of religion; and (6) other illegal social organizations that might endanger national security or the safety of people's personal property.¹³

On March 22, 2021, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC (MCA) and 22 other departments issued another "Notice on Removing the Breeding Ground for Illegal Social Organizations and Cleansing the Ecological Space of Social Organizations," setting out seven requirements.¹⁴ Recently, China had seen an uptick in the number of illegal social organizations driven by interests, said the official in charge of the ministry during a press briefing, adding that to create a clean and upright social environment and a peaceful and festive atmosphere for the centenary of the CCP, illegal social organizations must not be allowed to act as "stumbling blocks" to the kick-off of the 14th Five-Year Plan. As of November 2021, the MCA has published six batches of lists (Table 10-1) containing 61 illegal social organizations and 67 websites or new media accounts of illegal organizations, while the civil affairs offices across the country have also announced a total of 516 illegal social organizations in eight stages. Judging from the lists, the central list is mostly composed of professional (teachers, artists), clan (Yu Clan Association, Xiong Clan Association) and voluntary associations (Volunteer Association, Recitation Association), while the regional lists consist of many religious groups that are regarded as thorns in the side of the government.¹⁵ China

¹³ "China Deploys a Special Campaign to Further Crack down on Illegal Social Organizations," *Chinanews.com*, March 20, 2021, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2021/03-20/9436720.shtml>.

¹⁴ The seven requirements are: Business entities and social organizations shall not have ties with illegal social organizations; Party members and cadres shall not participate in the activities of illegal social organizations; the press shall not publicize the activities of illegal social organizations; public service facilities and venues shall not cater for illegal social organizations; Internet enterprises shall not facilitate the online activities of illegal social organizations; financial institutions shall not facilitate the activities of illegal social organizations; and the cost of breaking the law for illegal social organizations shall be raised. "China's Crackdown on Illegal Social Organizations Escalates Again," *China News Service*, March 23, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3vGSSwP>.

¹⁵ "China's 'Crackdown on Illegal Social Organizations' Campaign Spreads to Five Types of Groups," *Radio Free Asia*, March 26, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3BcywwP>.

has been aiming for “de-socialization,” forbidding any other organizations to operate on their own, and attempting to prevent all people from being exposed to the influence of social organizations such as families, churches (temples), and civil societies (including recreational groups). On the contrary, only the Chinese government can inculcate an ideology that will integrate the masses and enable all social classes to be “united to the Party.” This time, China’s central and local governments are stepping up efforts to clean up illegal social organizations, and over the course of the investigation, they have taken the opportunity to establish a national database of social organizations, indicating the country’s attempt to create a positive social atmosphere for the July 1 centenary of the Party, and to keep track of the developments of social organizations at all levels with the aid of data, so as to preclude local self-organizations from growing and posing a threat to the country’s rule.

5. Tightened Surveillance of Ethnic Minorities and Inculcation of “Worship Xi Education”

In August 2021, Xi Jinping said at the Central Work Conference on Ethnic Affairs that it was imperative to prevent major risks and dangers in the ethnic areas, actively and steadily deal with ideology issues involving ethnic factors, continue eliminating ethnic separatism, and strengthen international cooperation on counter-terrorism.¹⁶ The talk, for the first time, characterized ethnic separatism and religious extremism as “pernicious influence,” and was seen by outsiders as a sign that China would intensify its policy of genocide and that those in the religious community would also be treated as a “cancer” and subject to various restrictions and purges.

Marking the 70th anniversary of China’s liberation of Tibet in 2021, the State Council on May 21 released a white paper entitled “Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity,” claiming that Tibet has scored a “comprehensive victory” in the fight to alleviate poverty, and that the society is stable and the

¹⁶ “Resolve to Prevent Major risks and Dangers in Ethnic Areas, Says Xi Jinping,” *Radio France Internationale*, August 28, 2021, <https://bit.ly/314iSPL>.

people are living happily. However, according to human rights group Tibet Watch, several incidents of China's repression of Tibetans have occurred in Tibet since 2021, such as the secret arrest of six Tibetan dissidents, including Tibetan writer Gangkye Drubpa Kyab, and the repeated military raids by the Snow Wolf Commando Unit (part of the Chinese armed police) on the hometown of dissident Tenzin Nyima in Dza Wonpo, as well as numerous arrests of families and individuals in possession of photographs of the 14th Dalai Lama. Moreover, there are rumors in Qinghai and Sichuan provinces that their governments are demanding that all Tibetan schools use Mandarin as the medium of instruction and that they may face closure if they refuse to cooperate. In August 2021, two young Tibetans were detained by the police after they criticized the local government in a Tibetan chat group for making it mandatory for Tibetan schools to use the new version of Chinese textbooks in the new school year.

Table 10-1 List of Illegal Organizations in China Published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs

Batch	List	Batch	List
Batch 1 (10)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chinese Society for Aesthetic Research 2. China Blockchain Committee 3. China-Africa Cultural Friendship Association 4. Chinese Patriotic Artists Association 5. China Volunteers Association 6. China Cultural Development Committee 7. International Chinese Arts Association 8. Chinese Society for the Study of Party History 9. Chinese Yu Clan Association 10. China Versatile Talent Training Association 	Batch 2 (10)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China Association for the Promotion of Industrial Development 2. China Tea Industry Management Association 3. China Quality Certification Supervisory Committee 4. Asian Language Artists Association 5. National Institute of Health Services Development 6. China Vocational and Technical Education Development Institute 7. China Green Energy and Environmental Protection Industry Association 8. Elderly Health, Sports and Welfare Association 9. International Chinese Artists Association 10. Chinese Medicine Association

Batch	List	Batch	List
Batch 3 (11)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chinese International Feng Shui Association 2. Chinese Recitation Association 3. China Modern Hard Pen Calligraphy Society (legally registered as China Hard Pen Calligraphy Association) 4. China Famous Brand Products Joint Development and Promotion Association 5. China State Guesthouse Association 6. China Interior Design Association (legally registered as China Interior Decoration Association) 7. Chinese Society for Teacher Development 8. China Association for Barrier Free Access 9. China Federation of Teaching Entrepreneurs 10. China Folk Martial Artists Association 11. National Thermal Insulation Material Technology and Information Association 	Batch 4 (12)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China Education Service Industry Association 2. Xiong Clan Association 3. Chinese Le's Cultural Research Society 4. Chinese Traditional Culture Exchange Association 5. China Shanghai School National Apparel Art Association 6. Chinese I Ching Philosophers Association 7. China Railfan Association 8. Chinese Celebrity Biographical Society 9. China Martial Arts Calligraphers and Painters Association 10. China Youth Calligraphy and Painting Institute 11. International Society of Bilingualism 12. International Martial Arts Development Association

Batch	List	Batch	List
Batch 5 (8)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China Cosmetic and Hairdressing Association (legally registered as China Hairdressing and Cosmetic Association) 2. Society of Contemporary Artists 3. China Yogi Accreditation Association 4. China Bangshu Art Society 5. China Art Collection and Authentication Professional Committee 6. China Huaxia Photographers Association 7. Chinese Yang Culture Research Society 8. China Engineering Construction Management Association 	Batch 6 (10)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China Enterprise Structure Association 2. Chinese Literary Development Association 3. China City Recitation Alliance 4. Chinese Society of Lifestyle Medicine 5. China Framing Industry Manufacturers' Federation 6. China National Range Supervisory Association 7. China Practical Shooting Association 8. China Seamen's Association 9. China Quality Certification Development Association 10. China National Quality Certification Review Committee

Source: Compiled by the author from the official website of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China at <http://www.mca.gov.cn/>.

It was no coincidence that tens of thousands of people staged protests and schools organized a boycott against Inner Mongolia in September 2020 after it called for the substitution of Chinese language teaching materials for the local Mongolian language. In March this year, Xi Jinping attended the deliberations of the Inner Mongolia representatives at the National People's Congress (NPC) and said Inner Mongolia should firmly push for the adoption of national textbooks, "correct misconceptions about culture and ethnicity" and make efforts to popularize the common language and script. On September 28, the Chinese government released the "Outline for the Development of Children (2021-2030)," in which the phrase "respect and protect the right of ethnic minorities to receive education in their own language and script" was deleted from Article 4 of "Children and Education" and replaced by an emphasis on "step up efforts to promote the common national language and characters." According to Dilxat Raxit, a spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, China's political aim is

to further intensify the indoctrination of Chinese culture, language and script from childhood, thereby eradicating and eliminating the traditional culture of the Uyghur people. This is not just directed at the Uyghurs, but also Tibetan culture and Mongolian culture.¹⁷ Professor Yang Haiying pointed out that the language policy was first tested in Hubei Province, and that China first tried it out in places with little ethnic minority influence, such as Hubei and Hunan provinces, before extending it to Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet. In the past, it usually took one to two years for the ethnic minority policy that was launched to be applied to other provinces in China, but now it seems that assimilation measures have been introduced nationwide, suggesting that China has expedited a full-scale sinicization of its ethnic minorities.¹⁸ China has replicated the experience of the 2012-2016 crackdown on Tibet by monitoring the autonomous regions such as Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, and the “re-education camps” in Xinjiang have been applied to Tibet, demonstrating that China’s model of ethnic minority policy is one of “regional experimentation,” “repeated verification” and “large-scale implementation.”

It is worth noting that in late 2020, a craze for “rugged good looks” hit the Chinese Internet, with a Tibetan teenager named Ding Zhen bursting onto the scene with his kind and simple nature. Meanwhile, the Chinese state media seized the opportunity to “tell the story of a simple Tibetan young man with the Party,” with China Central Television (CCTV) interviewing Ding Zhen about what he wanted to see in Beijing, to which he replied: “The raising of the national flag. The People’s Daily immediately advertised the event with the hashtag “# Ding Zhen says he wants to come to Beijing to see the national flag being raised.” Later on, the Chinese state media also ran such features on ethnic minority Internet celebrities as “Run like a Tibetan girl, Cao Mojie” and “Little Zhuoma, a 4-year-old Tibetan girl from Sichuan.” In October 2021, a clip of a 10-year-old Inner Mongolian boy

¹⁷ “Language Curriculum Removes ‘Respect for Ethnic Minorities’ Clause, Requiring Mandarin Instruction from Primary School,” *Radio Free Asia*, September 30, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3A4RcxO>.

¹⁸ “Likely Backlash from Tibetans, Mongolians and Xinjiangers as China Accelerates Assimilation,” *Voice of America*, October 19, 2021, <https://bit.ly/30Nzp2a>.

galloping across the grasslands and promoting his hometown in both Mandarin and Mongolian appeared on the Chinese Internet (Figure 10-1). This suggests that the use of minority stock characters for publicity purposes seems to have made it to the stage of “repeated verification,” and it is worth following up whether similar characters will be portrayed in other regions such as Hong Kong and Taiwan in the future.



Figure 10-1 China's Portrayal of the Minority “Stock Character”

Sources: Sina Weibo # Little Zhuoma on the grassland? #, @litangdingzhen, Bastille Post.

III. Summary: Conclusion

In August 2021, after Li Guangman, the editor-in-chief of the former Central China Electric Power News, touted the Chinese government’s regulatory action as a “profound change,” his article was picked up by major Chinese state media outlets, but Global Times editor-in-chief Hu Xijin refuted that Li had misinterpreted the country’s general policy and that the regulatory action was not intended to subvert the existing order. These two articles have led to a debate on

“the future direction of China’s development and the possibility of a repeat of the Cultural Revolution.” Liu Yawei, Director of the Carter Center’s China Program, said that the debate revealed a heated argument within the CCP about the value of reform and openness, about the state of social and political stability in China today, and about what kind of country China wants to become.¹⁹ According to academic Deng Yuwen, the Cultural Revolution had four characteristics: a dispute over the lines facing the top leader, large-scale mass political movements initiated by the top leader, a mass rebellion against the leaders, and a dominant ideology. Except for the fourth point, Xi Jinping’s current actions do not conform to the characteristics of the Cultural Revolution, and they are more like creating a “clean society.”²⁰ Katja Drinhausen, an expert at the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) in Berlin, argued that while the tactics and rhetoric employed by Xi Jinping against his opponents are “strikingly similar” to those used by Mao Zedong during the Cultural Revolution, his aim is to ensure political stability within the country, the power of the Party and the rise of China as a world economic and technological power.

Under the “new normal” of U.S.-China tensions, the CCP is concerned that the U.S. and other Western countries will exercise market power to influence the development of China’s technology industry and national security, and may even shake the foundations of its rule. In addition, Xi Jinping’s desire to extend his rule at China’s 20th National Congress in 2022 calls for domestic political, economic and social stability. In the meantime, the many social grievances that have sparked public discontent and threatened the prestige of the CCP’s leadership, as well as the legitimacy of Xi’s re-election, have become a key reform priority. Xi Jinping said at the opening ceremony of the training course for young and middle-aged cadres at the Central Party School in the autumn semester of 2021, “As the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation enters a critical period, the risks and challenges

¹⁹ “Hu Xijin’s Confrontation with Li Guangman Implies Anxiety about the Direction of Xi Jinping’s Policies,” *Central News Agency*, September 10, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3nrcFNI>.

²⁰ “Guest Commentary: Xi Jinping’s ‘Clean Society,’” *Deutsche Welle*, September 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3uAertQ>.

confronting U.S. have increased significantly, and it is unrealistic to want to live in peace and not to fight. We must dispel our illusions and be brave enough to fight, not give an inch on matters of principle, and protect the sovereignty, security and development interests of our country with unprecedented quality of will.”²¹

From the above remarks, it can be seen that Xi Jinping's recent series of regulatory policies are not intended to take a more “leftist” route of the “New Cultural Revolution,” nor are they based on the belief that the regime is on shaky ground, but rather on the idea that the challenges facing China are becoming more and more dire, and that a more consolidated Party spirit and a more cohesive and stable society are what is needed to rise to these challenges. As such, Xi's grip on the Internet and the media, on the military and social groups, and even on ethnic groups, serves not only to consolidate his own authority, but also to strengthen the Party's leadership at all levels of society, so that the CCP can govern effectively in the long term. Against this backdrop, it is expected that China will see a more powerful and centralized “Xi core status” in the future, which will lead to more frequent, extensive and in-depth regulatory policies in various areas in response to its huge industrial upgrading requirements and social development goals such as “common prosperity” and building a prosperous society.

²¹ “Xi Jinping: China's Risks and Challenges Grow, We Should Dispel Illusions and Fight,” *Hong Kong Economic Times*, September 1, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3A5xqSP>.

Conclusion

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The year 2021 is an important year for China to achieve its first 100-year goal of alleviating poverty and building a moderately prosperous society on the 100th anniversary of the CCP, which is emblematic of the Chinese regime and Xi Jinping's personal leadership. In 2020, problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S.-China relations and the domestic economy have posed a challenge to the CCP's governance. In 2021, China is not only exposed to these relentless headwinds, but must also confront new crises and challenges. For example, unlike the former Trump administration, the U.S. President Joe Biden has taken a different approach to China, but his administration persists in its containment of China as the competitive situation and value differences between the two countries remain unchanged. As a result, to facilitate further understanding of China's policies, challenges and responses on the 100th anniversary of the CCP, this report looks into the political, military and socio-economic aspects of China, with the conclusions of each chapter set out below:

Firstly, the politics part consists of four articles. The first chapter aims to examine the 14th Five-Year Plan and 2035 Visionary Goals, and the changes in China's economic strategy, identifying the following two policies that may have a bearing on the development of state capitalism in China. China's "new nationwide system" will lead the development of strategic technologies. China attaches importance to the role of enterprises in innovation and R&D, and to those that possess strategic technologies or hold R&D potential. China's management of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) will shift from "enterprise management" to "capital management" by: (1) reinforcing the state's role to SOEs as capital contributors,

and downplaying the hierarchical relationship between the upper and lower levels; (2) stressing the efficiency of state-owned capital investments, and emphasizing the importance of investment returns and the growth of state-owned capital. Therefore, the Chinese government's involvement in economic affairs in the future will focus on exercising the legitimate rights of a shareholder as a channel for the state to intervene in corporate governance or influence industrial development, for example, by becoming an "investor state," where the CCP holds a stake in a private company with investment potential through the power of state-owned capital or even by treating companies run on state-owned capital as the core, and creating corporate groups with cross-shareholdings in each other, in a bid to grow state-owned capital and strengthen Chinese-funded enterprises.

The second chapter is devoted to an exposition of the realignments and shifts in China's Taiwan policy in 2021, with the Tsai Ing-wen administration taking office and China's unilateral approach to Taiwan and its unilateral threats. Nevertheless, when other policy approaches such as wolf warrior diplomacy are taken into consideration, it can be seen that China is reinforcing its internal propaganda by taking a hard line externally. With regard to the Taiwan policy, the Taiwan Affairs Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC have frequently taken a tough stance in their Taiwan-related remarks, in addition to the various policies they have steadily introduced on a unilateral basis. Overall, under the "Xi's Five-Point Plan," a policy of integrated development, information warfare, disinformation and cognitive warfare, as well as military threat against Taiwan, have been carried out without interruption.

Chapter 3 deals with the division of tasks regarding Taiwan-related issues between the Ministry of Foreign of the PRC and the Taiwan Affairs Office, as well as the strategies adopted by the two agencies, with the former responsible for external affairs, while the latter for Taiwan affairs. In terms of strategy, the foreign affairs ministry adopts a hard-line stance on external affairs with "wolf warrior diplomacy" and occasionally intervenes in Taiwan-related issues against the Taiwanese government, while the Taiwan affairs office takes a "hard and soft-handed" approach towards the Taiwanese government and the private sector

respectively. However, this has not worked well as the use of “wolf warrior diplomacy” not only is greeted with disapproval in the international community and tarnishes China’s global image, but also is detrimental to the development of the cross-strait relations and offsets the soft tactics employed by the Taiwan affairs agency. Finally, the Taiwanese government and the private sector should respond to the respective statements made by the two Chinese agencies, with the former advised to resort to democratic values, technological mutual assistance and pandemic prevention experience and the latter to adopt a scientific approach to evaluating the efficacy of Chinese vaccines or procured international vaccine brands, allowing the public to make an objective judgement without being influenced by political propaganda or false information.

Chapter 4 focuses on the risks and controversies arising from China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative, indicating that the main purpose of the initiative is to tackle its own domestic overcapacity problem and to enhance the internationalization of Chinese enterprises. In this regard, the international community is aware of the huge debt problem that the Belt and Road Initiative poses to the countries along the route. Debt diplomacy has become a convenient and powerful diplomatic tool for China, helping to expand its political and economic influence. Consequently, in response to the implications and challenges brought about by the Belt and Road Initiative, major countries such as the U.S. and Japan have rolled out their own infrastructure projects, which may lead to more intense competition for infrastructure among countries in the future. In addition, the exchange and trade between regions will not only lead to the spread of invasive species, but also increase the risk of importing diseases, and there may be occasions for Taiwanese businessmen to engage in related construction projects in the future, and some of the countries along the “Belt and Road” route overlap with the target countries of the “New Southbound Policy,” which may expose our country to ecological and health risks.

Secondly, the military part contains three articles, with Chapter 5 examining the evolution of Chinese military aircraft flying over the sea, pointing out that the pattern of flight training has shifted from crossing over the median line of the

Taiwan Strait and encircling Taiwan to disrupting Taiwan's southwestern airspace. Chinese military aircraft have frequently made their way into the southwest airspace to highlight Taiwan's defensive weaknesses arising from its emphasis on deployment to the north, to deplete Taiwan's air power and logistical supply capabilities, to demonstrate the PLA's ability to launch multi-directional and multi-domain attacks against Taiwan, and to threaten the outlying islands of Pratas and Spratly. In response, Taiwan should deploy a new type of early-warning radar, build up its southwest airspace surveillance capabilities, enhance its air defense capabilities, strive for the procurement of electronic warfare (EW) aircraft, and foster cooperation and exchanges with its allies on anti-submarine warfare, electronic warfare and surveillance.

Chapter 6 concerns the military preparedness of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the South China Sea. After Xi Jinping came to power, strengthening "warfare infrastructure" has become the cornerstone of military preparedness in the South China Sea. On the one hand, the PLA has been dredging up coral reefs and creating artificial islands in the South China Sea, while on the other, it has been demonstrating its military presence in the South China Sea through military patrols. In terms of the combat activities involved in offshore exercises or distant sea training, China has placed a premium on stepping up the two major operational systems of landing on islands and reefs and joint multi-services operations, accelerating the integration of the new main warships with the existing forces in an effort to meet the need for greater deterrence and intimidation of foreign forces. Meanwhile, the confrontation between the U.S. and Chinese naval forces in the South China Sea has intensified, but the PLA has avoided escalating the standoff or even clashing with U.S. forces. As for underwater patrols and demonstrations of military power, China holds back foreign forces in the South China Sea to a limited extent, but benefits from a degree of "home turf advantage" due to its greater control over the limited underwater shipping lanes in the region. Therefore, "telling the story of the PLA's deterrence in the South China Sea" has become the main instrument for the PLA to showcase its military strength in the South China Sea.

Chapter 7 examines how the PLA takes to social media for military propaganda.

By looking at the four official Weibo accounts of the PLA, it identifies the dissemination and the trend of public opinion created by the PLA. The study found that the PLA's propaganda is highly strategic, capitalizing on seemingly random postings to draw audiences into the its channels and facilitate the implantation of the military's ideas and positions. At the same time, the PLA's propaganda campaigns aim to be more effective by posting messages at the right time, and the proportion of different types of articles is tailored to the area of responsibility of different theater commands. On the whole, the PLA's propaganda is strategic, timely and targeted, moving towards an information-based approach and an enhanced strategic deterrent effect. In the future, the possible weaponization of propaganda in conjunction with artificial intelligence (AI) warrants our utmost attention and vigilance.

Finally, the economic and social part comprises three articles. Chapter 8 probes into the economic situation in China and its semiconductor industrial policy in 2021, suggesting that China's economic performance in the first half of 2021 was strong, but weak in the second half, in the wake of the U.S.-China tensions and the COVID-19 pandemic. China's dual circulation policy and the 14th Five-Year Plan, which seek to drive economic growth through domestic demand and achieve technological autonomy on the back of semiconductor support programs, are proving difficult as China's economic growth is still dependent on government-led investment. Prior to the U.S.' technology embargo, China's semiconductor development was booming, but it still relied heavily on foreign imports for high-end chips. At this stage, despite the Chinese government's continued backing for the local wafer industry in the form of equity investment, tax and fee reductions and preferential loans, the future growth of chip manufacturing will be significant, but it remains to be seen whether it will be able to catch up with its foreign competitors.

Chapter 9 delves into China's aerospace science and technology and industrial development, firstly finding that its aerospace science and technology development is primarily aimed at military applications. While still lagging behind the U.S. in some areas of expertise, its development of space military capabilities has posed

a certain military threat to the U.S. Second, China develops aerospace science and technology principally with the aid of the aerospace and defense industry and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, spearheading the development of critical power and inertia technologies, satellite launching, mapping, software development, and satellite networking. Third, by incorporating its strengths in emerging technologies such as AI, China has developed considerable space capabilities, such as the BeiDou satellite navigation system, space station docking and Mars landing. Forth, China utilizes BeiDou navigation and satellite applications to expand its geopolitical sphere of influence. For example, Laos has fully embraced the Chinese model of “whole-satellite export,” which is tantamount to being integrated into its aerospace sphere of influence. Whether this model will be replicated in other regions remains to be seen.

Chapter 10 deals with China's intensified regulatory measures at all levels of society, the reasons for their tightening, and the future development of the country, pointing out that to preclude Western countries such as the U.S. from undermining the foundations of the CCP's governance by influencing the development of China's technology industry and national security, and to help maintain domestic political and economic stability to sustain Xi Jinping's rule, China is addressing social issues that have caused public discontent and may threaten the authority of the Party's leadership and Xi's re-election. In other words, China needs a more solid Party spirit and a more united and stable society in response to increasingly grave challenges. Thus, Xi Jinping's stricter control over the Internet and the media, the military and social organizations, and even ethnic groups, will not only help to consolidate his own authority but, more importantly, strengthen the Party's leadership position for its long-term effective rule of China. It is expected that China will continue to step up its regulatory efforts in various sectors by means of a tougher and more centralized government system to cope with the huge demands of industrial upgrading and to avert the severe challenges posed by worsening social problems.